

Independent artists workshop transcript

Katie: I think we'll go ahead and get started. Some folks might trickle in, as we kick off, but, welcome to everyone who's joined us. My name is Katie, I'm the Whakahohe a Toi Ōritetanga, the Arts For All Activator for Arts Access Aotearoa. And I'll be joined by my colleague Stace, and by Vanessa Stacey from, New Zealand Fringe. In this session, we are here to talk a little bit about accessibility for, independent performing artists and theater makers. To do that, we will talk a little bit about Arts Access Aotearoa, so I'll introduce a bit more about us and my team, go over why accessibility matters, talking about increasing accessibility for artists and audiences. We'll give you some low- and no-cost accessibility solutions. Talk about budgeting and funding. Also, marketing and promotion, make sure people know about your wonderful, accessible shows, and then we'll have that open discussion time.

So, before, before I blather on any further- This is a workshop co-presented by Arts Access Aotearoa and New Zealand Fringe Festival. It was born out of the collaboration that's been supported by my colleague Stace, who you'll hear from in a moment for many, many years, and Vanessa, who you'll hear from in just a second. To make sure that you guys have as much access as possible, whether you are a New Zealand Fringe artist or an independent artist. Or possibly not independent, but you just want to hear what we're talking to the independent artists about. It was dreamed up by Vanessa to just have this resource available so that people had as much information and support as possible. So welcome along, thank you so much for joining, this session. Without further ado, I would love to spotlight, and hand over to Vanessa to share a little bit about New Zealand Fringe and accessibility.

Vanessa: Kia ora. Thank you, Katie. Kia ora whānau, my name's Vanessa Stacey, I'm the Director of the New Zealand Fringe Festival. I've had the pleasure of working with both Stace and Katie over the last 4 years I've been the director of the festival, and we're all very passionate about making the festival as inclusive and diverse and as accessible as possible. For not just our amazing artists, but also for our audiences, and for everybody that we want to come and enjoy arts. So, thank you so much for joining us tonight. I'm going to let both Katie and Stace talk about all of the amazing information that they have about accessibility, and what we can do to help support you, and I'll be here at the end for any questions that you have that might be Fringe-specific.

Katie: Awesome. Well, thanks so much, Vanessa. Yeah, so it'll be great to have you... have you at the end to... to chat some specifics as needed.

Vanessa: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Katie.

Katie: Alright. So, I wanted to share a little bit more about Arts Access Aotearoa, the other partner in this workshop. Some of you will have connected with us before, and

some of you might be quite new. So Arts Access Aotearoa broadly works to remove barriers to the arts. This is for all New Zealanders. And we do this in a few different ways. We provide free information, advice, resources, and connection opportunities To support, anyone who's wanting to engage with us. To improve their accessibility to Deaf and disabled people, both as artists and audiences.

The two main ways that we'll talk about today, and that are represented in this Zoom room today, are the Arts For All Network, which I facilitate. It's a disabled-led national network of individuals and organizations in the professional arts sector, who are working to be more accessible and inclusive. So, while this session is going to focus specifically on theater makers and live performance. We also work with GLAM sector, so that's galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. We work with local councils, we work with basically anyone, in the art sector in any sort of capacity.

And then... Also, you'll hear about Taha Hotu Deaf and Disabled Artists Initiative. This is a very new, disabled-led platform for deaf and disabled artists, specifically, to create work, navigate the arts sector, advocate for change, and develop creative practice. This is the brainchild of Stace, who I keep name-dropping. And it is an... it's a... yeah, it's gonna be an amazing resource, for deaf and disabled artists, so it's really exciting. And we're very excited to tell you a bit more about it.

But basically, in a nutshell, if you're in the arts in any capacity, and you're wanting to increase accessibility in any way, for yourself. for your audiences, for your artists, etc, please do connect with us. We would love to, love to connect with you.

Alright. So- why accessibility matters? I know that you all have an idea of it, because that's why you're here with us this evening, but I'd share a little bit about why Arts Access Aotearoa, and New Zealand Fringe thinks that accessibility matters. So, we see accessible as meaning, able to be used and experienced by all people, regardless of disability or impairment. So, it's total access. It's being able to enter the room, belong in the room, create in the room. We think that all people should be able to access the arts as audiences and creators. And we think of arts access as a human right, rather than a privilege or a favor. Some interesting stats for the numbers people. 24%, or about 1.1 million people in Aotearoa identify as having a disability or an impairment. So, that's a lot of potential artists or audiences who are excluded when accessibility is not considered. So that's why we're so excited to have you with us, to be continuing your accessibility thoughts and goals and ideas. Now, I want to hand over to my colleague Stace. Who is the visionary behind Taha Hotu, and the Lead Accessibility Advisor for Arts Access Aotearoa, and Stace is going to share some information, about accessibility from the Deaf and disabled artist's perspective. So, Stace, I'll just get you spotlighted. And click over to your slide.

Stace: Awesome, thanks, Katie. Thank you for the introduction and the shout-out. Cool, so as Katie said, I'm going to talk a little bit about accessibility from an artist's perspective. So, in this context, thinking about accessible auditions, rehearsals, and shows, and communication is really key here. You can be explicit in your invitation, to

audition, so really reinforcing that you do want deaf and disabled artists to audition. And be receptive to people's access requirements.

Some accessible ways of working are setting up baseline accessibility. Sharing important information about the demands of the role, the physical space you'll be in, and any support you can provide. And it's really important not to let perfect be the enemy of good. So don't worry so much about having perfect accessibility that you don't, make any steps to make things more accessible. It's really important that you let the artist decide if they are happy to work with less than perfect conditions. And what we mean when we talk about baseline accessibility is the balance between setting up general accessibility standards and getting specifics from the actors themselves.

So, there will be some things that you can do regardless, and there will be some things that you need to know from the actor, that you need to provide. But you can include things like asking if anyone wants a large print script. Opening a discussion about how the... how actor notes are given. Giving people time to write down notes in their script that doesn't take away from their break time. And letting people know when breaks are, and how long they are going to be, so you can collaborate on the best schedule for your team. As I mentioned, it's really important that you don't choose for the disabled person. It's really important that, as disabled people, we have our autonomy. You can just be honest about what you can provide, and let us choose how we want to navigate that.

So, moving on, it's really important that you let actors be actors, and have a different process for navigating accessibility. Often what happens is that disabled artists are also asked to be the access consultant and share how to make things more accessible. But it's not fair to ask an actor to do that on top of their acting work. You want them to be at their best, and be able to focus on being an actor. So it's useful to have a process for accessibility check-ins or questions, so access doesn't get mixed in among the performance work. And you can talk to the artist about how they'd like to do that. And when things are mixed, it can replace... it can put an imbalance, on the disabled performer, and it demands more of them, and it can also remove the ability to focus purely on the artistic process, as I mentioned. And it can also mean that your accessibility gets lost. So it's really beneficial to separate those things.

So, some ways that you can ensure accessibility for disabled artists are hire an access consultant. Hire the disabled artist on a specific 3-hour call to review accessibility, processes, physical space, and so on. You can contact us at Arts Access Aotearoa. We're always available to support, and... It's also important to remember that consultancy is work, not a favor, and it's not the role of the artist to be the educator, unless you're asking them about their specific requirements. And if you're not in a position to be able to hire an Access Consultant, There are options that are mana-enhancing, that you can work with. And it's important to remember that fair compensation That's not demeaning, is good, even when it's not money, so there may be other things that you can offer. And as I mentioned, it's okay to ask an artist about their specific access requirements that will enable them to work at their best.

So, Taha Hotu, as Katie mentioned, is a new disabled-led initiative from Arts Access Aotearoa. It's focused on supporting deaf and disabled artists in the whitest sense. And it includes things like resources, particularly in this context. Our Access Rider Guide and Template might be useful. We provide support, opportunities for networking and collaboration. And we also can promote work by different disabled artists, and, there's opportunities to collaborate on advocacy, and just to, mention in this context, when we say artists, we mean that in a really broad sense. So anyone working with a creative practice is welcome to join Taha Hotu if they're Deaf or disabled, have an impairment. And likewise, the term 'Deaf and disabled' is an umbrella term, so you don't have to identify specifically as Deaf or disabled to join. And just a note, another thing to think about is if you are doing budgets or applying for funding, To make your work accessible, or for your friends' show, you may want to consider budgeting for access costs and intimacy coordinators and things like that. But yeah, if you're a disabled artist, please check out Taha Hotu and get in touch if you're interested to know more, where you'd like to join.

And... I wanted to touch specifically on self-advocacy, because as disabled artists and actors, people are really good at the push-through mentality, particularly in the art sector anyway, but, has particularly exacerbated for Deaf and disabled artists, so it's important to remember to prioritize your own accessibility. Make sure... make sure that you have support where your access requirements, And it's... it's... Important to remember that we all have access requirements and benefit from accessible ways of working, so even if you don't have a disability or impairment specifically, you will have things that you need things to be accessible to you.

As I mentioned, access riders might be really useful. Crip hacks are something we talk about a lot in Taha Hotu, and those are the ways that Deaf and disabled people have of doing things differently that make things more accessible for them, so sharing those with your Deaf and disabled collaborators is always useful. And a big thing when you're working with... with... if you're a Deaf or disabled person, working with other Deaf or disabled people is negotiating access clashes and compromises. Often what, one person needs for things to be accessible, makes it inaccessible for somebody else, so there's always lots of conversation and compromise that's needed. And... It's... yeah, disabled artists are great at providing accessibility for audiences and their own creatives, and sometimes we forget to focus on ourselves as well, so it's important to remember, especially in a busy Fringe season, it can feel like a race to keep up, and it's tempting to cut corners, in terms of preserving your own energy, so... Everyone will have access, will have requirements and need access in one way or another, so communication is key there, really, just... Checking in with your team and working out how everyone's doing and how you can support each other.

Katie: Amazing. Thanks, Stace. Yeah, thank you so much, Stace. So I also wanted to talk about support, for Deaf and disabled theater makers, artists, practitioners, actors, anyone in the position of being inside that rehearsal room or on that stage. Finding out who is in your corner can be really important. So, my background is as a stage manager. I worked as a stage manager for many, many years, and know intimately that actors are

often put in a position of not being able to speak up or advocate for themselves. And this can be compounded, especially for Deaf and disabled artists. So, as part of your care for yourself and your artists, your fellow artists in the room, you could establish who's available to raise concerns, if it's for yourself, asking, you know, is there a production managers, there are company managers, there's someone I can go to, and offering that line, to your artists. Even if you think you're a really wonderful person, and open, that everyone can talk to you and be comfortable, understand that sometimes, maybe if you're the director, you're in the room, it can be difficult, and having that extra outside space can be fantastic.

Additionally, no one likes to be singled out, and spoken to kind of directly as like, oh, what do you need, Katie? How do you need this to be done? That can get kind of taxing, especially for Deaf and disabled people, where we get that question a lot out of care and people wanting to do, to do well for us, that it can be a little difficult to feel alone there. So, setting up that pathway, like Stace mentioned, for sharing accessibility requirements, and also for checking in so that a single person doesn't have all the pressure to either raise concerns or have, all of the focus placed onto them. Something that I've found really, really useful is, early on in the rehearsal process, a group discussion about access requirements. This doesn't have to be a discussion about impairments. You know, you don't need to be asking questions about impairments. But by just saying, hey, would people like to say anything that can be done in this room that can make this process better for them? It really opens the floor to everyone. Disabled people, we're not the only ones that need access, of course. And so we can all be on that same page. And, it's only by working together and knowing how to work together, that we'll be able to have that good cohesion.

Okay, so this next section that we'll jump into is all about some kind of hard and fast practical tips. for what can you do? What can you do with your, your upcoming fringe season, your upcoming independent show, for your artists that are coming into your venue, so whomever you are, I hope this, information will be useful.

So, this is... this first section is focusing on pre-visit information. Pre-visit information unlocks the first barriers to access, when it comes to getting to shows as audiences. Getting into the rehearsal room as performers, getting to the backstage door as technicians, everybody. Everybody needs to know the key information. And this is also a very low-cost kind of DIY way to start. So, pre-visit information. should include things like getting here. So that's transport options, parking, how to find the front door, or the back door, or the stage door, or the loading door. So whichever door people need, all that info. Getting around the venue. It's so helpful if you can provide photos, videos, and text information so that people can have a bit of that orientation. This can help on a lot of different levels. Some people might carry anxiety and need to know as much as they can beforehand. And it also helps people know the logistics. You know, is that doorway wide enough? Is that, floor flat? Is there a carpet that I need to call about? So it's really handy. It can show those things like wheelchair and physical access. And also, sharing information about the visual, auditory, and sensory access. So, what's the lighting like? What's the sound like? Is the space really echoey? Is it really muffled? Is there a buzzing

air conditioner? So those things can really help people ahead of time by knowing how to prepare. If someone needs to bring a hat, because there's bright overhead lights, if someone needs to bring earmuffs, so knowing can be power.

Also, describing what the show is like, or how the rehearsal will work. all of you will do your shows very differently. Every rehearsal room is unique, every show process is unique, and not assuming that people know everything, and really putting it out there and saying, this is what you can expect, this is how we like to take breaks. as today said, it opens that dialogue to be able to say, actually, this note-taking process, could we do it like this? You've said how you like to do it, and I take that, and what about this consideration? And then you can have that great dialogue.

Also, include in your pre-visit information what is not accessible. don't let your actor turn up to the rehearsal room, and find out that actually there are stairs, and they thought that there was a lift, and there isn't. Or your audience member coming and discovering that, oh, actually these seats aren't positioned so that I can see the stage well. So it's good just to be very clear and let people know what isn't accessible so that they can either contact you and say, can we work together on this? Or they can decide for themselves, actually, maybe this one, this show, isn't for me. And that's the segue into the last one, contact details. So, you want people to be able to get in touch with you to get the rest of the details they need. This feeds into that baseline accessibility, having as much available as possible, but letting people get in contact if they need that info.

So, where do you put this information? Everywhere. Put it on your website, put it on your event listing, put it on your social media, put it in your direct send-outs. just any ways that you communicate or advertise, it's good to have this information available. If you're sending out things like flyers, you know, the short format things, just let people know where to find it. But it's really good to have it in your mainstream communications.

So I've got a couple examples on the screen of pre-visit information. There's so many different ways that you can do this. You can include HTML text on a website, you can include things in print. You can also include downloadable guides, like the example that's on the left side of the screen. So it's labeled Visual Guide, and it's got two photos, and some text, and it's from the ASB Waterfront Theater in Auckland. And it talks about what this visual guide does, that it uses pictures and descriptions to let audience know what coming to the waterfront theater is like, and also includes information about building access and amenities. There are captions underneath the images, so that people can access the information in the images non-visually. So maybe using a screen reader. The first image isn't the exterior corner view of the glass-fronted ASB Waterfront Theater from Madden Street, and it's got a street sign included. And then the next one is the exterior view of the theater main doors, with two patrons on the footpath outside. And then it goes on to describe, basically, what I've said. So this guide, takes you from the front door all the way through the space, and it's printable so that you can refer to it when you're there, you can pick up a copy. And that's one option. You can make these guides in Microsoft Word, you can make these guides in PowerPoint, Canva, they're really easy.

On the left, I've got a screenshot from a welcome video. So this is from Gardens Magic, in Wellington this past January. And it was filmed on a smartphone. And so this video does the same thing as this visual guide does in video format. It takes, attendees from the entrance, from the gateway, all the way through the experience. And I'll send you links to these resources in the follow-up notes, but it's a really good resource for letting people see what the space is going to be like. check out what the navigation pathways are, and it gives that live stuff, like, what is the crowd noise, going to be? So there's a lot of really useful info. And again, it could be on a phone. Do caption this resource. That's... it's... we recommend captions on all of your video resources, and it can be really handy.

So... Let's dive a little deeper into venue accessibility. what needs to be included, and what you need to be thinking about when you're thinking about, how do I describe my venue accessibility? So some really good kind of baseline things to think about is, can a wheelchair user get inside, get to all the spaces needed, and go to the bathroom? A lot of theaters and performing arts venues were designed with pretty good audience accessibility. I mean, some weren't, but some, many, many that are accessible. It's focused on the audience accessibility. What about your performers? So, really double checking that your backstage spaces are accessible, that your backstage dressing room and toilets are accessible, so getting to all the spaces needed, and not assuming that just because the front of house is accessible that the back of house will be too. We really urge you to consider accessibility when you're booking a venue. And I know that as independent artists, you will not have 100% autonomy in choosing a venue all the time, but when you do, when you are able to either ask for a venue or make the choice fully yourselves, we really recommend, all things being equal, if you're able to make the choice to book the most accessible venue possible, to consider that. When it comes to putting venue accessibility information out there. connect with the venue for sharing this mahi. So check in with them to get the right information, and also, it's really helpful to ask the right questions. Accessibility is not a universally understood concept, so finding out... getting a little cheat sheet list of what you need to ask to really get all of your accessibility goals and dreams ticked, can be really important, and Arts Access Autara can help you with this.

You can ask the venue to host the accessibility information on their main page, so that you can link to it on your event page, because access info for the venue, it's going to stay with them, it's going to be a really useful resource, so hopefully, if they're open to it. that collaboration makes a lot of sense to them, because if they get this information right, it's going to be useful for them long past your show, but it's also going to be useful for you. And if you want help with that relationship. Again, contact us, because we'd love to help support, you know, you both, both your venue and you as the producer, the artist, the create.

So, we also have accessible programs. So these can help make your show more accessible by including accessible programs on top of your standard show, and you can also integrate accessibility into your show. Some accessible programs can be provided externally, by people that you can hire, like, outside contractors. And some can be do-it-

yourself. And some can be both. So, accessibility that you integrate or layer into your show, there's quite a few different options here. So this is kind of getting more into the side of access for the audience, but there's going to be some nuggets of useful information for Deaf and disabled artists on stage, with this access integration.

So the first one that I'll share is audio description. So, audio description is the process of turning the visual into the verbal. Trained audio describers describe the visual elements of the work for blind and low vision audiences, and this is often done through a headset that the audience members wear, so that only the audience members with the headsets are hearing the audio description. This is maybe what we might call the traditional audio description, and it's provided, by a few different people and services in Aotearoa. Audio Described Aotearoa as maybe the biggest service, but there's also independent providers, and we can connect you with all sorts of ideas. And then another method to consider is integrated audio description. This is included in the script or show for all the audience members to hear together. So, one example, if anyone saw it, was the performance, *Illegally Blind*, by Susan Williams. The audio description, it was a funny gag of describing sock puppets. And, like, beautiful, you know, they looked... they were all flash, and they had great costumes on, these sock puppets, and the joke was they were actually just white, plain socks. But the audio description came over a speaker to the whole audience, so everybody accessed that kind of joke about the puppets through this integrated audio description. And it was a beautiful part of the artistry of that performance. So it's not, as with kind of everything that we'll talk about. You can really integrate this access right into the creative process and play with it. Touch Tours. sit alongside audio description a lot of the time. They're often paired with audio-described events. So what touch tours are, are opportunities for attendees to touch. Handle and hear items. Check out costumes, maybe meet the actors. Go onto the stage and walk around and feel the dimensions. And so they help increase access to blind and low vision patrons, either with or without audio description connected. You can do a touch tour without audio description, and you can do a touch tour all by yourself, so you don't have to hire someone, doesn't have to cost you anything. But your time. And again, we can support.

Another example of... access programs, this being so beautifully demoed by Platform Interpreting right now, is New Zealand Sign Language Interpretation. So this is New Zealand... so New Zealand Sign Language Interpretation provides access for the Deaf community via qualified New Zealand sign language interpreters. This can be done in a few different ways. So, interpreters can stand to the side of the stage, and they will have worked to translate the show from the spoken language that it's in to New Zealand Sign Language for the deaf audience members. But it can also be integrated into your show. And this can either be through interpretation in the show, or just through having New Zealand Sign Language on the stage. So if you're a Deaf artist, or you're working with Deaf artists. There are so many different creative options for integrating New Zealand Sign Language, and this, of course, is best guided by Deaf creatives themselves. So, connecting up with some consultants and finding out what those options are. If New Zealand Sign Language interpretation isn't available. You can create a do-it-yourself show summary resource, or you can provide captioning, and this can increase Deaf

access. It's definitely not the same as providing the interpretation, which is in the first language of the Deaf community, but it's something that you can do if you can't interpret your show, or your Deaf consultant says, actually, this one, you know, it's not right, not right for interpretation. Few options there.

Alright, so... You can also consider relaxed performances. Relaxed performances take a relaxed approach to noise and movement from the audience. They focus on relaxing the rigid theater etiquette. Of what sometimes that theater experience is. They use resources, preparation information, maybe a breakout space or a quiet space. Pre-show demonstrations and other features, to create a welcoming space and a welcoming environment. Relaxed performances focus on that preparation, information, and resources, so that audiences know what to expect from the show. And they focus on this over internal changes. So, this can be a really great option for touring shows, or shows with limited tech or pack-in time. I know this might be a new concept for some people who think that relaxed performances basically mean turning down the lights and sound, and you must do that, and you also must reduce capacity by 50%. There's quite a lot of different ways to interpret relaxed performances. It's certainly a passion project of mine. I love relaxed performances. As an autistic person, they're really handy, and I love working on people to develop them. So I'd love you to talk to us about all the different options. One of which is... Sensory relaxed performances.

So, sensory relaxed performances can include everything that a relaxed performance does, but with that addition of shifting those sensory elements. So this might be what you might think of more traditionally as relaxed performances, which is where you might turn the lights down on stage so they're not as bright. The sound might be lowered, and intense, startling, or sudden effects might be removed or altered. That's the reason they're called sensory relaxed performances, is because it's the sensory elements that are also being relaxed, alongside that more rigid theater etiquette that can make shows so inaccessible. It is, of course, important to note that nothing has changed to make the experience less than a standard show. We don't want to go to a relaxed show or a sensory relaxed show that's a watered-down version of your beautiful work. We just want to know what to expect and have the ability to find the environment that is right for us. And it'll be different for different people, so working with consultants, can really help to guide you.

On to the DIY accessibility section. So I've got a great little list here of A lot of things that you can do for little or no cost. Because I know that as independent artists, cost can be quite a barrier. So I'll run through this list.

You can provide descriptive notes. So, descriptive notes basically describe the visual moments in the show. They might describe the costumes, the set, how the actors move. All of the visual things, and they can be provided to audience members before the show begins. So, let's say you can't get ahold of an audio describer, or you don't have the budget, descriptive notes can help to bridge that gap. Where the visual elements are provided. Maybe not as good and as fun as the live audio description, but this is one option

So, as I mentioned already, that pre-show information, all DIY, very easy to include. You know what your show is all about, you know, you can get all the venue details, and that's so useful to provide.

You can create a show summary document with photos and text. So, this can be a summary of your entire performance, and you can sum it up with words and with images, so that people who would like to know exactly what they're going in for, they can know by flipping through this thing and reading, oh, okay, cool, so this moment there's going to be a big explosion. oh, at this point, someone's going to get murdered offstage. Some people would like to know everything, and this document can provide that information. It can also really increase access to a whole range of folks, such as audience members who are hard of hearing, but can't access New Zealand Sign Language. Audience members who have English as their second language. audience members with learning disabilities. So heaps, heaps of different people can use these, these documents and these resources.

I already showed a couple demonstrations of the visual guides or the welcome videos that you can create. You can make these for your show or your event, or for your venue, or for both. So a few options there.

Of course, you can provide a touch tour, which I mentioned, so you can set that up yourself. It's always a good idea to get a little bit of support and information before you set one up, just so that you know maybe what's interesting to provide, what sort of language to use. One of the audio describers that Stace and I are connected with shares this story where they described a piece of art During the touch tour, and they said, it's the size of a giraffe. And the blind person said, I've never seen a giraffe. So having some guidance as to, you know, what's the right language to use, in your descriptive notes, in your touch tour, can be really handy.

You could do a pre-show demonstration. So these are often done during relaxed performances, or sensory relaxed performances, where they invite audiences to come into the space a little bit early. And they demonstrate some of the lighting, some of the sound. Maybe they demo a confetti cannon, or, the thunder, you know. foil, you know, whatever it is on stage that you think someone might want to know about this. You can introduce the actors, and they can go through, their voices, if they're yelling or other things. So, can take minutes, and let people know, okay, yep, I have a good understanding of what's to come, now I can relax or prepare as I need to.

You can do opt-out audience participation lanyards. So the photo that I've got on the screen, is a, actor modeling one of these, during an improv show. So this actor, Frankie Brown, had the wonderful idea of if audience don't want to do the audience interaction. They could put on these lanyards, these yellow lanyards with this purple symbol that says, basically, just leave me alone, just let me sit back and enjoy and relax. Because audience interaction can be quite intimidating for some people. And the beautiful thing about these lanyards is that people could take them off. once they got into the show, and they decided, actually, I'm comfortable now, and I would like to participate. Or, halfway

through the show, they decide, I want to put this thing on, and I kind of want to back out. So, good options.

You can provide content warnings, say that there's going to be haze, smoke, themes that are difficult for people, to be blindsided by. So this is some stuff that I'm sure that you do already.

You can have an open door policy. You can say, look, during the show, if you need to get up and take a break, just get up and take a break. Don't worry about it. Not feeling trapped, can help people relax and feel much more open. And that's welcoming people to be themselves. You can say. Hey, would you like to use a fidget toy quietly during our show? That's fine. Would you like to wear sunnies because the lights are bright, or wear headphones because it's a bit loud? That's okay.

You can have a pre-show announcement that welcomes people to be themselves, you can have signage, you can show that Manakitunga in many different ways. So, Stace and I made sure that some of these on the list here We know that there are things that you do already that you might not have connected to accessibility. But it really just goes to show that accessibility is not a unique concept. It's something that you want to do for all of your audience members and your artists all the time. And a lot of the things that you're doing already to provide that care It is all part of accessibility already, and you're basically just continuing to expand what you're doing already. And with some, maybe, new stuff added in.

Alright. Budgeting and funding. So, plan for accessibility from the very beginning, and set aside budget. I know that your budget may be limited, but what we do see a lot of the time is that folks get right up to the end, everything is allocated, and suddenly Oh, we want to include accessibility, but oh, we've spent the money. So, set aside an access budget, even if it is small, so that you have it. There are no dedicated funding sources specifically for arts accessibility, at least at the moment. But there is funding out there. So, Arts Access Aotearoa has a funding page, and it has heaps of different resources. It talks about different, kind of, search engines that you can use to find funds. It's got all sorts of good info. So please check that out. And I can also send through the notes from the funding hui that Arts Access Aotearoa did in August, and I've heard lots of different options, and I'll send that through to everybody that's on the... on the Zoom with us today.

Creative New Zealand also have funding advisors, so you can contact them, and you can say, I want to apply for this, but I need some support, and they can do that, they can provide that. Arts Access Aotearoa, we do not provide funding, and we don't provide funding advisory, but Creative New Zealand does. While, of course, though, we can help you with things, we can help you with letters of support, we can help you with your looking at the accessibility of your project, or connecting with Deaf or disabled artists, or, of course, supporting you as a Deaf or disabled artist yourself. We can't give all of the funding advice that you may want to access, but they can help you. And there's also a \$5,000 accessibility top-up for individual Deaf or disabled artists. to receive funding from Creative New Zealand. So, this is new as of 2024, I believe. If you apply for Creative

New Zealand funding as an individual, and you are successful, you can apply for this extra \$5000, that goes toward your accessibility costs. So, that is, hiring a support person, that is, getting equipment, that is, getting NZSL interpretation hours. So there's a lot of different ways that you can use it. So, again, on their website, they'll have that information, and check that out.

Last thing I wrote is get the most bang for your buck. Make your resources and your mahi always do double duty, so that everything that your limited time and resources goes into, works for you as best as it can. So, as an example, the welcome video that you create, make sure that that welcome video also captures the width of the doorways and the gradient of the floor, as well as, you know, showing where the bar is and where the toilets are and what the experience is going to be like. So that you're in one resource, giving people navigation, physical access, showing the lights, the sensory access, and captioning that resource, so that as many people as possible can use it, so that you're not having to create each specific resource, you know, for each specific access requirement. It's completely fine to get started with one specific access requirement in mind, or one specific community in mind, but then think broadly, how can I make this as accessible as possible for as many people as possible? And that will ensure that your budget goes as far as possible, and your work goes as far as it can. And again, we can... we can help you with that.

Alright. Marketing and promotion. So you want to make sure that everybody knows about your shows. You want to reach deaf and disabled artists and audiences. So there are a few things that you can keep in mind. Language matters. So the language that you use when you are advertising, when you are putting out your audition notices, when you're writing up your character bios. Words matter deeply, especially in the deaf and disabled communities. And there are resources out there to see, kind of, what the up-to-date language is, because language changes all the time. You've heard us say and write, Deaf and disabled, and as Stace said, it's a broad term, it encompasses a lot of different things, and the way that this term has been broadened, has meant that the language has shifted some from what it might have been used in the past. So getting your words right will give you that confidence and comfort to know, you know, that yes, I can reach people with my language. We recommend that you put your access information on the top of all of your communications. You don't know where your deaf and disabled talent or audiences or VTs are going to be coming across your information. So, avoid the temptation to segregate your accessibility info into specific Instagram posts, or a specific page, or just stick it in one specific thing. Assume that, you know, anyone could need it, and everyone could benefit from it, and put it everywhere. And put it at the top. If it's all the way at the bottom and someone has to scroll and scroll and scroll, or dig their screen reader all the way to the bottom. It might get missed. And you want to make sure it's front and center.

Use image descriptions, or alternative text, and descriptive hyperlinks in your emails, on social media, on your website, everywhere. So, these are navigation recommendations to make the internet and the digital world more accessible to blind and low vision users. Using screen reader technology. More details will be provided in the follow-up document,

but alternative text basically just describes an image, and descriptive hyperlinks. You might see the click here, or read more, or book tickets, on websites. What that does for a screen reader is it brings up a list of all of those links, but it'll just say, click here, click here, click here, book now, book now. If you use a descriptive hyperlink that says, book tickets for Matilda. That's what it'll bring up, and boom, it saves heaps of time, makes sure people can get to your, your tickets, to your venue, to your auditions, really useful. Reach out directly to community groups and organizations for Deaf and disabled groups. So, reach out to deaf clubs, reach out to disability services organizations, reach out to peer groups. Go specifically and say, okay, where is everybody?

If you don't have connections, reach out to these different groups and say, I would like to find connections, please, can you help me? Arts Access, of course, can. But many, many, many different groups can. Find out how the community shares news. So, you might work only on Instagram. But does, does the community that you're trying to reach work on Instagram. So, let's say you're trying to reach the blind and low vision community that's over 65 years old. Do they use Instagram? Maybe I'll say, I don't think so. They do some, but I know that there is a massive email newsletter list that goes out across the country, run by a wonderful volunteer, Mary Schnackenberg. And it hits so many different people, and that's how the blind and low vision community of a certain age hears their news. So, find out how that community communicates. And communicate that way.

Use accessibility symbols. So on the screen, I've got some examples of those access symbols. The R for relaxed, the, two hands length and opposed, that's New Zealand Sign Language interpreted. The AD with the little sound icon coming out is for audio description, and the double C in the black box is for closed caption. So there's lots of different access logos, and symbols, and they can be really handy.

And last thing is post on the Arts Access Aotearoa events calendar. We want to see you succeed, and you should... you can post on this events calendar, and it goes out to all sorts of different, platforms, and yeah, it can spread far and wide. Vanessa, I wondered if you actually wanted to jump in real quick to say how Fringe is able to support with the marketing and promotion.

Vanessa: Yes, absolutely, Katie. We... thanks to our good friends at Arts Access Aotearoa, Katie has been very helpful this year. As I say, the festival's really passionate about being as inclusive as possible. And, making sure that, for the shows that are presenting relaxed performances, audio-described performances, signed or closed caption, that our audience are aware of them. So we've made some fantastic changes in the last, couple of years within that space. We're still trying to get Red61 over the line, who are a UK-based ticketing service, but we've made big leaps in the last, year. So now, all of those, shows that have are more accessible. Or have, relaxed performances, or audio description, or signing, and now that's the first thing you see on that listing, on the website. And it's been really amazing. It's been wonderful to have that feedback from our audience.

I have also, for the last 4 years, Photocopied out large print, versions of our program. And hand-delivered them. to audience members who have requested them. Very happy to do that. We have also been working with the website to create a very, high-density visible program on the website, so that's going to be available for the next season coming, which is amazing. But I still will photocopy and deliver if needed. Very happy to do that. So yes, we've made some really wonderful leaps in the last few years, and as I say, that's not about just making sure that our audiences feel as included as possible. We really want, to... the festival to be as accessible to our artists who are deaf or have disabilities, so... We also, which I'll discuss afterwards, or... maybe right now.

We also have funding that supports, accessibility, so we... this year we'll have \$50,000, worth of Kakano funding. and \$20,000, worth of Fatu funding, and all of these funding rounds are adjudicated by independent, practitioners and artists. We really try and make them as diverse as possible, and one of the... Pillars that we're really looking for in applications is, shows that really wish to make their work more accessible. So, we'd be really happy to see those applications come in, and to be able to support them with some funding.

Katie: Amazing. Thanks so much, Vanessa! That's all really, really good information, and we'll very shortly be going into the... to the kind of question and answer side of things, so you can... you can pick Vanessa's brain even more, if you'd like to. So, before we... before we get into the chat session, this is just the key takeaways, the kind of summing it up. Of, what has this hour really been about?

Get started early with accessibility. Seriously. You don't need to be perfect, you don't have to do absolutely everything all at once, but if you begin, then you can chip away.

Build accessibility into your budget and your planning. And commit to being more accessible. So, yes, not perfect, not totally, just more. We can always be more, we can always do more. If you are in a venue that has two flights of stairs, to get you to your stage, please do not let that stop you and say, well, that's it, we can't be accessible. You can still be more accessible. You can provide information, you can... You can tell people about sensory access, you can do all of these different things, and that is still better. So we know that it's never going to be 100% right off the bat. But it can always be more.

Consider Deaf and disabled people, accessible programs, venue access, and information access as integral parts of your Mahi for your upcoming shows and performances. And advocate for your own accessibility and use the available resources. Your own accessibility matters, and it's just as important as those... as that for your artists and for your audiences, and there's a lot of support that's available for you.

So, we certainly invite you guys to get connected. You've got my email, and the Taha Hotu email, tahahotu@artsaccess.org.nz, will get you connected directly with Stace and the Taha Hotu Network. You can jump onto our website, artsaccess.org.nz, to check out all sorts of different things. Oh, bother, sorry, Stace, and also tahahotu.org.nz. To check out Taha Hotu, you can give us a call. at 802-4349.

Please join the Arts for All Network, or Taha Hotu network, and you can sign up for our newsletters, you can connect with us online and in person, so we will have ongoing ways for you to continue, so alongside the support, if you're directly working with New Zealand Fringe Festival, we are available to you Always. You can get in contact, you can have one-on-one chats with us, you can join, I've got monthly meet-up sessions discussing accessibility, we do in-person regional visits all over the country, so there's just so many things available to you, to keep this mahi going.