

FRESH MEAT

Digital Town Hall
on
Diversity and Inclusivity:
April 10 – April 23 2017

Full Answers

Question 1: Would you like to remain anonymous? If not, please let us know how you would like to be identified.

Anonymous

yes please

SI

This is a weird question and without context how can I possibly answer it? In what way would you use my identification?

Yes.

Anon

Anonymous

So I'm a pretty regular euro-white person. That's an important caveat to this all.

Anonymous

Gabrielle Lazarovitz

Anonymous please and thank you!

Anonymous please.

Question 2: Do you think Fresh Meat needs to increase its focus on diversity?

No

Yes

Not if it means policing diversity into reality by mandating content from specific groups... that gets into murky territory.

Yes

Yes

Yes

Equity and inclusion better describe a useful goal.

Yes

Yes

Yes

See next answer

Yes

Question 3: If so, in what way would you like to see an increase in diversity?

Since the Ottawa theatre community is relatively small, I find it often feels as though it lives scrutinized under a microscope; in turn it's become too complacent and too insular. I'd like to see plays that challenge the audience, and festivals that really try to step outside the community. So part one would be diversity in content: to keep moving toward plays that confront the audience in their habits, expectations, and assumptions. Part two would be diversity in community: to create a less cliquey environment, to welcome outside voices, and ease the divide between the

anonymous and those who feel safe to leave their names. Art is a product of the time it's in, and right now everybody's looking pretty scared.

A diversity of artistic offerings is always a good thing. I just think we should focus on equality of opportunity (i.e. ensuring there are no unfair barriers to members of specific groups) rather than equality of outcome (i.e. ensuring that the groups represented in general society is represented numerically in the offerings of Fresh Meat in lockstep, an exercise which has little to do with art). Artistic quality should come first.

Focus on primarily having acts put on by people of colour, members of the queer and trans community, and members of the disability community.

Ethnic diversity

More artists of colour.

ALL KINDS.

I think young artists (16-25) do not get enough support as independent creators. Theatre from young artists isn't perfect, often due to a lack of resources and still developing artistic vision. There's no better way to solve these problems by creating a place for young people to collaborate and evolve. By promoting theatre by young artists, it also brings a younger crowd into theatres, which is necessary for the survival of the art.

Less white meat on the stage behind the scenes and behind the pens/keyboards
Blind read of proposals (read about the show without seeing the artist/company who submitted the proposal)

I would like to see an increase of visible and invisible minorities representing themselves through their own work.

Question 4: Do you think diversity and inclusion should be part of the selection process in programming the Fresh Meat lineup?

Yes

Yes

No

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

Like yes, but look at the next answer

Yes

Question 5: If you agree or disagree feel free to tell us why.

It keeps art relevant (festivals need it more than it needs festivals).

Diversity can, and frequently does, result in better artistic offerings. But there is a difference between recognizing this fact and mandating that diversity be reflected by mechanisms that do not arise naturally. (Unless you have a good reason to believe that there is a systemic problem at Fresh Meat where diversity and inclusion are currently being shunted aside by specific people. Do you?)

It's important to hear the voices of those who are under-represented in the mainstream. If you aren't doing that, than what is the point? Why hear the same point of views over and over?

Ottawa theatre scene so white.

<http://www.onstageottawa.com/freshmeat2016weekonereview/>

Diversity in all kinds! No one wants to see seven(10?) of the same show in a festival - or 10 different shows from the same people - like DIVERSITY even in the least politicized version is absolutely what you are (hopefully) aiming to program.

And then the kind of diversity I think you mean - audiences want to see their stories on stage so... Even from the shitty capitalist perspective it just makes sense. Honestly it's kind of obvious to me - diversity is good (for art, for audiences, for whatever change art can massage). Can we all agree on that?

But it's also important specifically for Fresh Meat, I think, because this conversation is happening everywhere in theatre/arts/etc. and THAT'S GREAT. I'm really glad a black dude finally played one of the Kings at Stratford but that's not how this REALLY changes right? There were no women's roles and then women started writing plays and now it's shifting (blah blah blah side note about lack of women directors, ADs blah blah - but still shit is way better and way better than -). Point is you've gotta get in on the ground floor.

And Fresh Meat is all about making new shit - so diversity and inclusion fuck yeah. okay time to get a little philosophical - because we're all ultimately telling the same fucking stories in our art - like just about what it feels like to be a human - to be a person in the world and so you make shit and tell stories and hopefully people recognize themselves in it and we remember that we're all the same and we're all going through this together even though we're *really* all alone - and we've spent A LONG TIME listening to a bunch of white people tell those stories in their LIMITLESS ways. And that's cool and we shouldn't stop that - but we've seen those ways of telling these stories A LOT - and it's pretty boring when that's all there is.

So let's see some new ways - some new forms - some new shit.

and new shit MAKES BETTER PROGRAMMING AND MORE MONEY - and it's also the right thing to do like for the world/being on the right side of history (this part seems honestly obvious to me).

Providing opportunities is the first step to creating a more level playing field

Personally I hate the idea that you must box yourself into a category in order to be considered, whether that means visible or invisible minorities.

Believing that everyone should be given the chance to propose their work for consideration, prioritizing artists purely for their visible minority feels a lot more like tokenism. I believe that the strength of the proposal itself should be considered.

Question 6: Would you like to see any changes to the physical space of Fresh Meat in order to make it more accessible?

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Not from my experience.

I personally am okay with it as is.

All spaces should be fully accessible. Why is this even an opinion question?

I don't know.

Arts Court is not a friendly building when it comes to accessibility, but it could be much worse.

Arts Court is a maze and a pain for all kinds of accessibility but there's not too much you guys can do about that. How accessible would the space be for a performer with accessibility needs of their own? I guess it's okay, but not great. Have there been any requests for ASL interpretation at shows? Or like relaxed performances ?

I don't really know what changes could be made to make it better? Is the physical space a problem??

No.

Question 7: Fresh Meat would like to solicit more submissions from artists in underrepresented communities. What barriers, if any, do you see in the way of soliciting those submissions?

This is tricky because Ottawa is so small that every member of the theatre community becomes its ambassador, whether they signed up for it or not. So on one hand, members of that community have unrealistically high expectations to fulfil, while on

the other, those outside the community who don't identify with that group are likely to exclude themselves, precisely because they don't represent it.

This ambassador status is the real white elephant: it's mostly unwanted, it's hard to get rid of, and it's maintained at the cost of precluding diversity.

I don't know enough about the solicitation process. I heard about the festival through word of mouth.

I don't know enough about your submission process to adequately answer this but there are professional consultants who can help you look at your processes and make them be inherently more inclusive and accessible.

White board, white staff.

Trust of the underrepresented. Inability for the festival to pay enough.

In terms of racial diversity - there's a lack of diversity in our larger community, when compared to the rest of the Ottawa population. Even encouraging pieces that are not 'theatre' - like not assuming the euro-centric model of THE THEATRE on everything that appears because that's already maybe a barrier. I AM NOT FROM AN UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITY THOUGH - so I really don't know.

Access I guess? Like where does the call for submissions go out?

I really don't know - does Ottawa U/ Algonquin have the same issues in their classes? Who would you do outreach to? How do you find a way to avoid the tokenization situation? I do recognize that form is not neutral - that the space is already in this one model of theatre. We are working within a paradigm that is historically pretty exclusionary. Having other kinds of performance is cool in this way - even like the little closet show and that live art and stuff like that. More timeline and assistance in the application? What kinds of questions do you guys ask?

There must be some people who KNOW about this stuff to talk to - who know what these barriers are, even in a more general sense, to talk to.

Not advertising enough to young people, simply not knowing about the festival if you are not already "in" the theatre community.

I don't have a great answer. I feel like changing the landscape starts with kids. If kids are engaged in theatre and the arts from a young age, you are cultivating passion early on in life. Perhaps you could give a couple of workshops and encourage kids from all backgrounds to attend? Therefore you are personally growing the next crop of fresh meat? Tough but necessary question, folks.

Ah, like I said, underrepresented communities to me means more than just visible diversity in terms of race, but also age, education, etc.

I believe it comes to the outreach. Underrepresented communities could mean a whole slew of things -- lower income households/neighbourhoods, sex, race, age, location, sexuality, neurodivergent -- so I don't know the answer to that.

Question 8: How would you like to see those barriers overcome?

To overcome this, first I think members of the Fresh Meat community need an opportunity to talk about it openly - this town hall being an excellent start. Do others think this problem exists? Who's comfortable with this status, and its subsequent responsibilities? For whom is it unwanted?

For those who seeking to uphold that role, there would be added implications, but with them, the chance to realize it as a genuine gift. In committing to greater diversity in the shows you see, in seeking out events and experiences where for a night you are the minority, you are walking the talk. Anyone can throw a welcome mat on their doorstep - real change comes from knocking on the door.

So for more diversity, the best way, always, is to sincerely seek it out. Don't wait for these communities to trust you first. If the submissions aren't coming to you, then go looking for them... and if you don't find plays, look for music - why not? Diversity in curation suggests a sincere desire to showcase a culture, however it emerges. Look outside the frame of theatre you received from the English and French and Russians and Germans and Americans. Call out for work that perplexes, confuses, complicates, blurs. Too often we think of diversity on our terms - in terms of exoticism, with an idea of exactly what we're looking for - and communities know this. Ask sincerely, open up to unexpected answers, and within a year I swear there will be more dialogue that you imagined possible.

Inviting/encouraging applications from specific communities is fine if the goal is to increase the amount of good art for you to consider encouraging via your festival (and assuming that you currently have a gap with those communities). But again, mandating that a quota of specific communities represented is murky territory, because it is at placing the importance of group identity over artistic quality.

Usually, the most inclusive organizations have a diversity of people in positions of power, or with decision-making capabilities. Examine if this is true for you and if not, how you can make it true?

Reaching out to BIPoC creators to receive their input on how.

Federal funding

broad definitions of what performance forms you're seeking - more outreach? see literal paragraph of questions above

You should make an effort to reach out to high schools and universities, as well as youth programs like Youth Infringement and The Hive.

See above

Blind proposal readings.

Potentially going to different help groups and promoting there (ex. Kind Space in Ottawa) and high schools?

Question 9: Have the shows you have seen at Fresh Meat, or the experiences you have had at the festival made you feel excluded or unsafe in any way?

As someone with a lot of social anxiety, I'd say I generally steer away from events where everyone already knows one another, because you tend to feel like you're crashing someone else's party. That said, that's definitely more on me than on you !

No.

Yes

No.

It is exclusive to a young demographic. There is not much of interest to my generation (50 yrs).

naw

Personally, no.

Nope!

Not to my knowledge! Except of course some ill framed jokes here and there, but that could whittle down to personal taste.

Question 10: If so, tell us how we can improve for next time.

The Dream: Fill the room with enough newcomers to make the clique into the minority.

N/A

Have shows that are more representative of the real diversity present in our society.

Consider diversity of age.

Y'all were good in my opinion

Question 11: Do you have any other thoughts on this topic you'd like to share with the Fresh Meat team?

You guys are still the best <3

Artistic quality over group identity.

I'm glad you are doing this town hall to start with. It's disappointing that there is an opinion question on whether or not diversity is needed for your event. Do you only want to be more diverse if the majority of respondents think it's super important? Do

you not yourselves recognize there is value in this? I hope this is a first baby-step toward something that could be really great for Ottawa.

No.

I don't know anything about this festival but calling it "fresh meat" is very off putting and inherently dismissive from the get go. You will never be "as inclusive as possible" until you change the name

probably but i feel like i wrote a lot

I guess just that I think it's important that we difference of all kinds on stage/in art. like that is essential to the whole thing.

and that this is a messy conversation, but it sort of has to be and it's important and lastly - let's make sure we find that fine line between not asking members of underrepresented communities to do the work for us by making them instruct us on how to be good allies AND not putting on our wings and taking on some saviour complex bullshit.

Oh God I just read - are you putting this all online for real?

Thanks for making this a priority. I feel like if we keep this conversation going we can more easily encourage radical change! #theatreisforeveryone

You're kicking ass for ensuring this town hall was done. A+ work, Fresh Meat Team!

I love you all!!!