

What is "audience"? *An assembled group of spectators or listeners at a public event, such as a play, movie, concert, or meeting.* What is "advocate"? *One who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.* [Definitions from the Oxford English Language Dictionary].

"Audience Advocate"

Got it!

I am an audience advocate.

I am participating as an Audience Advocate for Advanced Beginners..

Am I [your] audience? In public spaces, I often feel as though I am the one being closely watched. But I am in the audience?

When? And, how do I watch while being watched?

Straighter, proper(er)...

Not freely

Do you choose your audience? POWER

Who gets to be among those considered "audience"? PRIVILEGE

This response is derived from an examination of my experience at various sociological levels (of a system) and from a much, much longer collection of notes.

Building community.

in a digital world.

can look very different but is made up of the same values that create community

physically

in space

: accountability, openness, CARE, justice, stewardship/service.

For this term of engagement, the virtual zoom space happened to be the setting. The tools or equipment used to connect were just that-- tools. Because I saw them as such, I entered the setting as myself and used the tools freely! I am most comfortable in my skin, in my space.. so it would have been harder to be myself in-person. I noticed there were some participants who seemed more comfortable engaging directly on video. I am certain some participants would have relished an in-person setting. I felt most comfortable sharing ideas on the mood board, through words and doodles. The benefits of the digital age are having modern tools at our disposal.

Gathering in a virtual space made it harder to feel together, but easier to feel safe/comfortable.

On an individual level:

I am a stubborn and defiant advocate. *Why was I chosen? Is this AA group representative? Who gets the most value out of my participation and out of the production?*

I am a bit of a hardass. *Why does this matter? Is this going to keep someone from dying? Why does this matter (again)?*

I am grieving. ---- *fucking sucks. Everything fucking sucks*

I was primarily interested in this program because of my involvement with another project from Southern Futures by CPA. I was struck by how resistant my ego was to this new experience: coming together with strangers around the idea of creation, being with a group of artists or artistic minded folx, offering up my personal insights. All of these experiences by themselves are inherently desirable and valuable to me, presently.

Immediately, my defenses were triggered.

Even as an almost grown, grown-up, I am surprised by how quickly I can blow Defense bubbles, by how big they get (because I am A-B-C and was X'ed-Y'ed-Z'ed)!

Within 8 minutes of logging onto the first session, I was judging everyone in the pip screen; I was angry, jealous, judging myself now; then became intrigued and activated, excited and connected and ..invested.

I am adept at watching the bubbles float—I am no longer compelled to chase after them. And, eventually they land and pop. Whatever was inside the bubble is comingled with matter outside the bubble.

On the community level:

There is space:

to create distance from defense and other bubbles

to seek, to make space with Others

to see Object(s) outside of the Self

The magic that happens at the community level is being able to provide new context for individual histories. My questions or issues have not gone away; but they are no longer the main feature. Other questions emerge. Some in the community can help me find an answer to one of my questions. I may be able to answer someone else's.

Understanding place (and finding belonging) through a collective intention/objective makes one feel both small enough to be part of something Gestalt and big enough to take up space, to "matter"!

Showing up has never been the same

Johnathan Holt

What does it mean to show up, to really show up, when the conversation is hard?

What does it mean to show up, to really show up, when physical togetherness isn't an option?

One answer that I took away from the CPA Audience Advocates sessions with Marcella Murray, David Neumann and Tei Blow is that showing up can be as simple and as difficult as making the commitment to sit together — virtually or even cosmically (as fellow astronauts), if that's what it takes.

Another answer is that metaphors can transcend awkwardness and access hard-to-reach truths. Although (Warning!) there may be as many interpretations of any metaphor as there are people in the "room".

I wrote down: "You can get into the trap of telling someone what something is. ... I don't know. I know what I experience." (Marcella)

And: "Our known patterns are confounded, making us more alert." (David)

And: "Wide angle vision." (Tei)

I wrote down: "All these different perspectives. Eventually you have all these facets and that's how you know what the thing is." (Marcella)

If you grow up white, queer, Baptist and shy in the South, as I did, life equips you to be polite and to talk about certain topics without really touching them. Linguistic deftness, in other words (or in other words, deafness?). Learning how to face conversational headwinds with an open mind/heart/sensory system is a lifelong project.

The best kinds of art, in my opinion, illuminate familiar or even ordinary things by changing how we can see them. And the best conversations expand like galaxies. These four Zoom sessions combined the two. We were talking about what art and technology can do, and we were trying on new kinds of connectedness, new methods for registering distance.

Jasmine said: "I had to show up in a different way in 2020 for Zooms."

Tommy said: "Was there a lot of caution in the room? Did it change over time or remain? Caution with one another..."

Anthony said: "Humanity's relationship with tech and its relationship with itself are two sides of the same coin."

Amanda said: "It's all about close listening, getting to know people as humans."

Marcella said: "The thing that lasts is the conversation."

Audience Advocates Reflection 2022

Anthony 'Otto' Nelson Jr.

I identify as a somatic practitioner through the medium of dance and work to bring movement and physical shape to ones embodied emotions. My lived experience has led me to have a deep desire to gain new perspectives, greater understanding, and has cultivated a yearning to building a stronger connection with others through deepening my appreciation of their artistic lens. Having the opportunity to engage in Audience Advocates with Marcella, David, and Tei, allowed me to broaden my scope of how art and socially significant topics can be communicated to audiences; through the many possibilities of digital art, theatre, movement, and virtual spaces. Marcella and David truly allowed themselves to utilize their relationship and lived experiences as a tool to communicate a critical conversation in such an educational and accessible way.

This invites me to become more curious about how my lived experience truly shapes how I show up in my own work during the creation process and during performance. Identifying as a queer, cis, black man, I am deeply devoted to creating and being involved in contemporary work that is emotionally charged with a social conscience and goal of bringing movement to a broad and diverse audience. I am equally dedicated to creating platforms and spaces in which one can undergo personal transformation through experiencing movement by means of various mediums and inspiring freedom of expression. Through this, we all foster a stronger sense of understanding and compassion. I also believe community is built upon similar – _If not same – _pillars and notions. I equally believe we can gain this empathy through dialogue that encourages expanding our scope of information that we are receptive to. Through becoming more empathetic of others experiences, we are able to become an ally in their story. This program served as a great example of how even during times where so many continue to be isolated and during a time where we are unable to connect in “traditional means”, how important human connection is. Through the sharing of art, engaging in dialogue on artistic engines, inspirations, and personal experiences, we can continue to build community.

Audience Advocates Spring 2022 Reflection

Jasmine Powell

David Neumann, Marcella Murray, and Tei Blow created a space for immense rarity spiraling around unconscious considering and communicative acknowledgment when they introduced *Primer for an Impossible conversation*. Sitting inside my virtual square, I held space where I was in the minority and skeptical towards my representation at first, as usual. As the visual/audio/choreographed content shared moments of reading the room, interdimensional conversation, realization, and the acts of perceived self, my curiosity sparked how this cerebral-emotional work would be sustained. Referencing the Butler-Rose interview, their rendition bordered a conversation style that was all too recognizable; authoritarian mindset to belittle the validity of my work/voice, and the imposition to shape the words of my expression. It exposed these three artists by showing how difficult their own conversations were and shared how it felt to re-enact those moments and move beyond. That was the primer for understanding the importance of their platform's why and how.

David exclaimed, "I could read a lot of books, and not get as far!" referencing the artistic process. He emphasized the work supported authentic layers of feeling, while sometimes portraying an opposite viewed character and other times playing himself. Marcella coupled that by exploring vulnerable comfort in holding her own space with, "what do I NOT have to say," while reinventing a sense of self as the only black body present. In my history, online platforms provide two extremes. They either fade you into the background of participants, or they grant others the choice to zone in on your square at will, rendering you vulnerable unless the power is given to you. I resonated strongly with the dramaturge's audible exhale that, "Sept 2020 exposed how exhausted she was from being a black woman." These memberships that I inherently subscribe to highlight a shared trajectory of a default aficionado. Alternatively, these online conversations opened space for perspicacity to debrief with interdependence of the group and the artist's content. Appreciative that the work is not complete, nor all the answers explored yet, the brainstorming invited my creative process to support a talk back & talk forward audience experience.