

INTRO

(The following is read by Laura Colby over jazz music composed by Manual Cinema)

Hi, I'm Laura Colby and this is the Middle Woman, A Roadmap to Managing the Performing Arts. I'll be sharing personal anecdotes from my 30 years in the field, exploring the nitty gritty and the technicalities of this job. I'll tell you the story of how I got here and what it's taken for me to work in the industry of the performing arts.

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EPIISODE 20

LAURA COLBY: Hello, this is Laura Colby, founder and president of Elsie Management. And I'm so happy to be able to speak to you today about international showcasing and platforms. And Anna Amadei, Elsie's Vice President, is here with me to have this conversation.

ANNA AMADEI: Hello.

LAURA: You hear this term all the time, showcase. What the hell does it mean? Because it can mean a million things, depending on the context and who you're speaking to. To us, when we say the word showcase, we think immediately of an organized or curated showcase featuring selected artists, each performing, say, 15 minutes of their work. Be that an excerpt or a compilation of sections from a full length work specifically for industry people. Meaning it's industry facing. The public probably doesn't or may not have access to that showcase.

And also, showcase can mean a straight up engagement, a fully produced show as part of a festival, for example, such as the annual Under the Radar Festival for Contemporary Theater that takes place throughout New York City each January. This is during the massive industry convening that happens around and during APAP's annual conference. That gathering of the industry is organized under the umbrella known as JanARTS NYC.

If your work is curated into Under the Radar, I would consider that engagement a quote showcase because of all the industry people who will be in town during your performance dates. Your show will be on sale to the public, But there will be an organized effort by the good people of under the radar yourself and hopefully your management and representation to get other industry people. to your show. Thus, it's a showcase.

So the key thing here is that a significant number of industry people, these are the programmers, the presenters, other artistic directors who might commission you for new work. That's the key, that they will have an organized way to see your work. That's what makes it a showcase - be it 15 minutes of a low tech presentation or a fully produced evening. It's a showcase because you have an opportunity to bring a hopefully a high quantity of industry people to see your work.

ANNA: From a European point of view, I've got to say, I learned this term when I came to the US and I started working for Laura. 20 years ago, it was not such a common thing to mostly spend your own money to be seen and be booked.

LAURA: From your European experience.

ANNA: Yeah. And I think it has to do with the different mindset of the two continents where in Europe people think about the performing arts, not as a business, but as a cultural activity that has nothing to do with negotiation and money. And it's not a commercial activity, where in the US, showbiz extended also to the cultural world. And we all know that it is business. It is very much business. And when you do business, you have to spend money.

LAURA: There's an investment.

ANNA: You make investments. Exactly.

LAURA: Big investment.

ANNA: Yes.

LAURA: And your investment in showcasing can reap benefits, but it can be so random, but also with thoughtfulness and care as you approach, how are you going to use this showcase time? What piece it is, what you're showing, all of the above is so critical for landing a great showcase. Because here's the other thing, and it's important to say that you have to be careful when you showcase, whether or not it's that 15 minute scenario or the full evening work, you have to be very careful because I tell you this kids, if you have a bad showcase, it's a really tough thing to shake.

ANNA: Yeah.

LAURA: So. This is one of those moments you really, you have to land it beautifully.

ANNA: Yeah, it's a risky business that can bring really amazing rewards. Cause we do have that experience, but it's a risky business first because yes, you bring your own money in. And also because you have those 15 minutes, like you have one shot and that's it. And you have to be imprinted in people's brain, even if there are other 20 artists showcasing.

LAURA: Yeah. Let's name the range of the kinds of showcases that we've experienced. So what is that range?

ANNA: Well, so you could self-produce your own showcase. You pay for the space, you rent the space, either the theater or the studio, you, send out all the invitations, you pay for your own artist time, and you put on your own showcase, whether that is 30 minutes, 15 minutes, you do it on repeat for an hour, or you perform a full length work in an actual theater.

You can buy a showcase spot from a showcasing producer. You can be participating in your representation's organized showcase, or you can be selected to showcase in a curated conference showcase. And lastly, and the better of all, you can be programmed into an international festival that industry regular attends.

LAURA: Great. So going back to self-producing your own showcase, I'm going to add the challenges in that is that you're not in the official conference or convening schedule, you are inevitably opposite the curated showcases or performances and you are the one who's absolutely paying for everything, including the marketing and the major hustle to get attendees to come.

Self-producing your own showcase is always an option. And sometimes it might be your only option. Maybe you've put in an application and you keep getting rejected. There's no producer producing a so-called off site showcase, so you never have an opportunity to participate in anything and you just decide, screw it, I'm just going to do this myself. That happens-

BOTH: All the time

LAURA: All the time. And most especially in our lives, in our world, we see that at APAP all the time.

ANNA: Yes, because APAP is one of those international convenings that does not have a curated showcase system. So everybody does it independently and everybody competes against each other to get people to come to see the showcase because there's so much going on. The biggest challenge at APAP will be getting presenters to come and see it.

LAURA: Right. And that whole thing about getting people to come is so critical. And you may be heartbroken when literally two people show up. But, it might be that those two people, one of them is the programmer from the Kennedy Center, and the other one is that guy from Chicago you've been dying to get your work in front of forever, and they're the only two people who show up. Well, bless you. Didn't you just win that one?

ANNA: And presenters see each other all the time, and they talk to each other all the time, so what you need is really that one presenter seeing you. Because international festivals are attended by a public audience as well. That's the example Under the Radar. So you might have a full house of regular audience and one or two presenters that see the show. And again, those two presenters might just have been enough to spread the word about your work and what they've seen.

LAURA: Right. And those two presenters got to see your work fully produced, surrounded by audience. They had the same electric experience that the audience did and they walk out of there and they are your mouthpiece and they will serve you.

ANNA: Yep.

LAURA: So our second example of a kind of showcase is buying a showcase spot from a showcasing producer. So again, I'm going to reference APAP and The Hilton producers. So the Hilton is a big hotel. It's got a lot of different little ballrooms and big ballrooms. And what APAP has done is made in a certain room spaces available specifically for showcasing. And what happens is a producer, typically a manager rents a room and builds out a performance space. They typically bring in pipe and drape to hang some black fabric to demark a performance space. They build a stage. They bring in a sound system and speakers. They also bring in the chairs. Sometimes the chairs are raked. Sometimes the chairs are not raked. If you're a dance company, it's pretty important information to know if the chairs are raked or not. So, they have found space, they have paid for everything, and now they're selling showcasing slots, as they call them, for specific periods on specific dates that are in alignment with APAP's conference.

This showcasing will start at 10 in the morning and end at midnight. And so yes, it's opposite. There's so much competition and so much to go to and see under that roof that is The Hilton, but that's just the way it is. The advantage of buying a showcase slot from a showcase from producers, they've done a lot of the work for you. And also, you have a great showcase spot in the conference.

The disadvantage is that sometimes, especially for dance, not the best quality or circumstance. And even for music, I've heard our music mates complain about the quality of the speaker system, or the sound in the room. And so this is where you need to get to know who your producer is, because some producers rent the most expensive equipment because they want the absolute best sound quality, not just the average sound quality. This is where you get to know kind of the nerdiness, if you will, of certain showcasing producers.

ANNA: When you speak about quality, it also makes me think about finding a producer that is aligned with the kind of work that you do. Thinking about the Hilton producers, it's a great opportunity because it's, it's, literally under the same roof where conference happens. So presenters don't have to walk outside, don't have to take public transportation. They can just walk straight into a room and see showcases and they do it all the time. Because presenters hang around showcases and they might be in between two artists that they want to see and they will stumble across your showcase and they will see your work just by mistake and they might like it.

When we talk about buying a showcase spot from our showcase producer, it also makes me think, Laura, about what we do with the Dance Managers Collective.

LAURA: We, the team here at Elsie, and several of our dance manager colleagues formed the Dance Managers Collective 11 years ago in 2014. The Dance Managers Collective came about because we at Elsie were not having a good experience showcasing with a certain producer and we weren't alone. It was us and our pals where all of us were frustrated and having a tough time. So we gathered together, we formed the Dance Managers Collective to cooperatively schedule our showcases, quite specifically, in the two studios at New York City Center. And here we are 10 years later, and we are still successfully doing this cooperative scheduling.

And basically what happens with us is after we, those of us in the collective, after we are done scheduling our showcases, we make available all the other dates and times to guest renters. So this gets back to our second point here of you can buy a slot in an existing producers showcase and the dance managers collective is a great example of that.

So how much do these cost, Anna? Because we hear at the Hilton, that 15 minute showcases are going for upwards of \$1,500 to \$2,000 for 15 minutes, folks.

ANNA: Yep.

LAURA: This coming year, the Dance Managers Collective, our numbers are the highest they've ever been, unfortunately. But our hourly rate is now going to be over two thousand dollars an hour. But that's an hour not every 15 minutes and we don't sell 15 minute slots. We sell 30 minute slots.

And then other kinds of showcasing slots, you can buy from a showcasing producer, again, using APAP as an example are basically, if you have a dance studio in New York, you're probably renting your dance studios out every January. So, for example, there are, I think of Gibney Dance Studios. I think of Perry Dance Dance Studios. Most of these dance studios will make available showcasing times that you can buy and purchase. Again, the advantage is, they've set up everything, they've provided everything. But it doesn't mean that you don't have all the work of all the marketing and all the hustle to get attendees there.

One critical thing to keep in mind when you're asking people to venture outside of the place of the convening is that you tell these people who come from out of town exactly how to get to you. One of the best ways to do that is to provide transportation yourself. We've done that in several different ways during APAP. One year we actually hired a bus and we drove people out to Williamsburg for a showcase at the Elizabeth Streb studio. Another way we've done it is just reimbursed cabs. Because we know that when industry people travel to New York, sometimes it might be their first or second trip to New York, and it can be a little daunting and terrifying to leave The Hilton and venture into a different borough or go all the way downtown, way downtown, and people don't necessarily want to navigate the subway system and deal with all of that.

ANNA: Yeah.

LAURA: So the easier you can make this for your attendees, your potential attendees, the better.

ANNA: It might be that it's not the perfect scenario for you to present your work in a dance studio in midtown Manhattan. But it is the best way to get people to come and see you. When we talk about showcasing at APAP, you definitely want to take that into consideration, easiness for people to come and see your work.

LAURA: And that's certainly a huge advantage for the Dance Managers Collective because we have leases now, not just at City Center, but also the Ailey Theater, which is a little farther away, but it's still a five block walk. It's still a walk.

Next is participating in your representation's organized showcases. And this is actually a really good point because not all agencies organize showcases.

ANNA: No, they definitely don't. I know that some agencies are prompt by their artists who do want to showcase, and so there is a deal there of saying, okay, you're gonna be on site, you're gonna have a booth, why don't we showcase? And so the agent goes out and rents and organize the showcase because it is at its own benefit at the end of the day. Or there are managers and agents like us that do organize showcase every single year. And making the effort in participating in those is really crucial, both for the manager, because it allows to showcase the range that we have in our roster. It allows us to attract different kinds of presenters to see work that they would not see otherwise. So when you are part of a roster and your manager comes to you and say: *I'm organizing this showcase at APAP or wherever that is would you consider participating?* Do really consider participating.

LAURA: Yeah. The answer is yes.

ANNA: The answer is yes. And sometimes you're really an out of town artist and it, you know, the effort.

LAURA: It's a lot of money.

ANNA: It's a lot of money.

LAURA: No matter what, it's a lot of money. I mean, we actually have it in our representation agreement. Not that the artist guarantees, but the artist will do everything in their best effort to participate in showcasing because if you're not in the game, you're not in the game.

And the game includes these beautifully designed, organized, and curated showcases. I mean we especially, I know we work differently than our other manager friends. But we, especially with dance back in the day, 20 years ago, dance showcases had a really bad name because they ran over time, they weren't organized well, no one could see, the sound system sucked, you know, well we've really, we've had a massive upgrade.

And at Elsie, our part of our practice is working really closely with our artists to choose exactly what it is they're going to showcase and oftentimes we don't agree on that and an artist may say, *I'm going to do this from Little Red Riding Hood* and we say, to show a work-in-process showing from that piece that we saw in rehearsal last week. It's blowing our minds and the presenters always want to know what's new, what's new, what's new, what's new.

One of the things we learned is yes, you can over showcase the same piece. Don't do that to yourself. Once they've seen it twice, they don't ever want to see that dance again. So don't showcase from the same piece three years in a row, like don't do that to yourself. You have to show something different. And a lot of times we hear: *but it's not done. It's not done.* And we work really hard with our artists to reassure them, it's okay. There is a way to showcase work-in-process, work that is not finished. There's a way to frame it, to talk about it.

But this is the part where our eyes, because god knows we've sat through how many showcases, Anna? Like, we know what works. We hear the room. We've been paying attention. We've been listening. And we know what works, and we know what doesn't work. And we are brutally honest with our artists about what will work, what will resonate, what will be legible, and what is not legible and how you're going to lose somebody. Cause you know what? You can lose someone in two minutes.

ANNA: Attaching to your point about our practice of showcasing and what Laura has learned and taught when you showcase, no matter the way you decide to showcase, either you're self produced, you're buying a slot, you're being programmed. People forget that the main effort is actually finding out who came and who was there. Because everybody's very concentrated in the financial effort, the logistics, how the showcase is produced and what are we going to put on stage and how it - great. Who's taking the names at the door,

LAURA: Who's taking attendance?

ANNA: And who's taking attendance, which is, I've heard, believe me, many times, friends, artists that might not have had a representation and they had a showcase spot in a dance studio. And then I went to them and say, how did it go? *Oh, the house was packed.* I'm like, *that's great. Who took all those names?* It's like, *well, nobody, we don't know.* And I'm like, *so you didn't know who was there from which performing arts centers from which festival?* *No, but they have our contact.* and I'm like, *good luck, my dear. Just good luck.*

LAURA: You got to have some kind of collection method. If it's your mother at the door asking for their business cards. Yes, people still carry business cards, believe it or not. Or if it's just somebody scribbling down names, you've got to have a collection mechanism.

ANNA: And if it's you being programmed within a festival, you might be able to ask the presenter who industry comps were. And contact these people to see what was your experience.

LAURA: There's this whole other way to get a showcase, which is to get curated by a conference. There are plenty of conferences or convenings or markets that have a curation process to select showcasing companies.

ANNA: That's a great way to showcase. Well it takes away the financial implication of renting your own space. So that's great. And also the major benefit of this is that the conference actually brings in the presenters.

LAURA: And you are part of the conference schedule.

ANNA: Schedule.

LAURA: A lot of conference attendees they go with the conference schedule. They go from the professional development, they go into the booth and then, Oh, it's time for the showcases. Here I go.

ANNA: Yeah. So we highly recommend our artists to apply to showcases when the conference is a distance within reach to minimize their expenses. Typically you must pay to apply. This can be upward of a hundred dollars. And that's not reimbursable, meaning that you pay to apply. And if you're not selected, you just lose the money. But then if you are selected, you have to pay for the showcase. Meaning you have to actually pay for you yourself getting there. You and your artist salaries and your per diems and your hotel space. If you're showcasing in the US typically there's also a fee for the actual showcase, which could be \$500. But the conference is really making all the arrangements for the space, the tech and presumably the attendance.

The best way to afford the showcase at a conference is to land yourself a nearby engagement close to the conference days. So you can literally route the showcase day with a confirmed gig, again, reducing your expenses.

LAURA: We have a colleague that works to attain engagements that are on either side of a conference date. She's really good at it. So in that way, the company's expenses are well spent, because then they can just hop on over to the conference town for that 15, 20 minute showcase. It's not a run out.

ANNA: Right.

LAURA: The whole cost is not attributed to the showcase. It's split up. Or even better, you actually get a straight up booking in the town. So this is where it could get a little complicated, but if you are clever enough to, for example, get a booking

in Indianapolis, when the MAX conference is on in Indianapolis, then you have a fully produced performance that you can be inviting the conference attendees. Now, again, the challenge with that is you're not in the conference schedule. And all of the hustle to get the conference attendees to come to your performance is a big challenge.

ANNA: And then of course, you know, putting the two things together is getting programmed into an international festival that industry regular attends. So it's basically getting a gig that is also a showcase.

LAURA: It's a showcase because again, you're, you have an opportunity to get a critical mass of industry people to attend your fully produced engagement that got curated, let's pretend with Under the Radar festival

ANNA: Getting programming to an international festival that is also an attraction for presenters from all over the world, it is obviously, the best of all situations, because your showcase is paid for. You don't have to deal with any of the financial implications. Your only job is to collect and figure out who's coming.

LAURA: Right. And don't forget to ask, cause if you don't ask, you won't find out and don't assume also that that your presenter has a mechanism in place to keep track of who came. But you must ask.

ANNA: Examples of this international festival is, as you mentioned, Under the Radar Festival here in New York City, I can think of internationally speaking the Santiago a mil festival in Santiago, Chile. Which is a great international platform from, especially, the Americas, I would say where you get curated and paid. To actually showcase-

LAURA: Right and just to be clear these are festivals, they're selling tickets to the public. And at the same time they have an organized industry gathering or platform or convening whatever you want to call it. So this is a service that they are providing to the field, which is brilliant. These situations like Santiago a mil, like Under the Radar, like the Adelaide Festival, they are the best case scenario for your work to be seen because again, presumably you're fully produced. You've managed to negotiate a fee that takes care of you, and your presenters are seeing you hopefully in a full house with audience and they themselves are experiencing the audience experience of your work being exchanged with the public, which is, as we keep saying, an irreplaceable event.

ANNA: This leads me, Laura, to ask you this major question because when we think about these international festivals that are also platforms, the first thing I can think of is the Edinburgh Fringe and the role that it plays for international showcasing artists from all over the world. Can you tell our listeners what it is and what it does and how to get into the fringe and all the ways that artists have?

LAURA: The Edinburgh Fringe is certainly the mother of them all. And it was founded in 1947 at the end of World War II. It was inspired by the, an idea of Rudolph Bing. I'm quoting this straight off of the festival's website: *Rudolph Bing was a cultural pioneer and a Jewish refugee of the Nazi regime, and he joined with civic and artistic leaders to create an event that would transcend political boundaries through a global celebration of performing arts in Edinburgh, Scotland. The festival's mission is to create a space for reflection and reconciliation, debate and celebration, and bringing people of different cultures and viewpoints together.*

And that, people, is why I do the work I do, and why Anna does the work she does. I mean, this is why we love our field, and why we do what we do, because it is all about artistic exchange for us, and it's cultural exchange, international exchange.

Edinburgh established the Edinburgh International Festival in 1947, and there were artists who did not get curated, who were not pleased that they were not curated, and they were like, well, screw it, we're going to put on our own show, and they created the Fringe Festival alongside the International Festival. Well, guess what people, it stuck and here we are all these years later, not only did it stick, but it has been replicated around the globe. Edinburgh threw down the first gauntlet, if you will, the Avignon Festival now has the Avignon OFF.

ANNA: Santiago a mil has the Santiago Off Festival that happens right after. And that is attended by a whole different bunch of presenters. Some of them stay from Santiago a mil, but some of them leave and another wave of presenters come in.

LAURA: And the Adelaide International Festival has the Adelaide Fringe. So these are some of the biggest organized international festival plus the fringe methods that are out there. Then there are just straight up fringe festivals everywhere.

Canada has a remarkable circuit of fringe festivals that literally line up. You can work your way around the country performing at the Canadian fringe festivals. The one I think that's best known in our country is the Philadelphia Fringe. So this is typically a buy-in situation for the majority of artists. In other words, like buying a showcase slot, you can buy yourself a fringe slot. But it's the same challenge. Who's your producer? What's the space? Are those the best speakers? or are they renting the cheapest speakers in town? Is the space right for me? Is the show time

good for me? You know, if you're a family show, you should not be performing at 10 pm. That's just kind of 101 stuff right there. But again, this is where you have to be with care and thoughtfulness and asking a lot of questions, buying a slot, in a fringe festival could be a great way to share your work. And it could also be a total loss for you and just a huge \$30, \$40, \$50,000 investment that never reaps any benefits. This is why you have to proceed with caution.

So I will point out that our experience at the Edinburgh Fringe, most recently with Manual Cinema, has been a huge success for us as an example of how the Edinburgh Fringe in particular can work really well.

ANNA: What are the several different ways of get yourself in the Edinburgh Fringe?

LAURA: This is where that the being the mother of them all they're very organized. And you can go on to that thing called Google and you can put in Edinburgh Fringe Festival and it will take you to edfringe.com and there is a whole lot of information there that can help you get into the festival. The first thing I would strongly suggest is you just go see it in person yourself first. It's four weeks long and there are a minimum of 3,000 shows running from 9am till two in the morning, every day, every night of the week. It's insane. It's a miraculous thing to behold. So how do you cut through, how do you get into the Edinburgh Fringe?

You could buy a slot. There are producers once again. It has many producers, but the big four, the four that are the most well known are Assembly, Gilded Balloon, Pleasance, and Underbelly. Those are the big four producers that have leases for spaces all over Edinburgh. There is not an inch of Edinburgh that doesn't have a show in it during the month of August. Literally, every conceivable space is occupied by live performance. There are also presenters who program specifically for the Fringe in their own spaces. Such as Summerhall, The Traverse Theater, and Dance Base.

And there are plenty of other producers that may own a building or perhaps they're a dance studio, for example, or they're a bar, and every year they decide, as a bar, in August our space is dedicated to stand up comics. So this is why going to see The Fringe first is really, really helpful in terms of answering the question, how am I going to do this? So as usual, there's a big scale here from self presenting and doing it yourself to being curated by one of the big four producers or by one of the presenters programming for their space.

In our case, I was attending the CINARS conference in Montreal. And you can find CINARS, C I N A R S, in the glossary. It happens every other year in Montreal. It's a multi-genre conference. It takes place in November. I saw on the attendee list that

there was senior leadership from Underbelly and Assembly attending that conference. I wrote to the person who was attending on behalf of Underbelly and Assembly and said, *Hi, this is who I am. I represent this roster. I would like to speak with you about these three artists specifically because of X, Y, and Z.* It was a very brief, very short email, no attachments, a couple of links. *Can I have 15 minutes of your time?* I did not ask them for an hour. I was very clear because I knew I could get this done in 15 minutes. Because, as you've listened in past episodes, you gotta be able to do this quickly, people.

ANNA: Elevator pitch.

LAURA: These are busy people. These are very busy people.

So I never heard back from the Assembly person. The person from Underbelly responded. And made a date with me. Oh my goodness. I whipped open my little iPad. I said, *here are the three companies.* He did not stop me from talking about the three of them. I showed one minute trailers for each of the three companies. And he said, *Manual Cinema. That.* And he knew from what he saw, he'd never seen anything like that before. He knew it was different, and he was all over it. So that translated into a featured, co-produced spot in Underbelly's Edinburgh Fringe 2016 programming. That was huge. That was gigantic.

So why was that 2016 August presentation of Manual Cinema's *Ada Ava* so successful? It was successful because the space worked, the showtime was good. I had a producer, one of the big four from Edinburgh, but also we hired a publicist. Also, they'd Manual Cinema had never been seen in Edinburgh before. So they were the new toy. They were the shiny new toy. And because of their multi genre presentation, and because it was such an exquisitely beautiful story through physical theater, wordless puppetry, shadow puppetry, it resonated in the moment. And yes, we attracted the producers who Anna eventually coordinated European tours in their singular countries with.

We made those very deep connections for Manual Cinema in other territories that had not seen them. But also even more importantly, we had tons of North Americans presenters who had never seen them see them live in Edinburgh. And it boosted our sales in our own backyard.

ANNA: Yep, of course there were financial risks for Manual Cinema So the way Underbelly produces is that they offer the space, right?

LAURA: Because they were a featured and co-presented show, which is basically first class with one of these producers in Edinburgh, meant that Manual Cinema

didn't have to advance any monies to Underbelly. All the monies they had to advance and take full responsibility for were on their end. They had to pay for their airfares. They had to pay for their housing. They had to pay their salaries. They had to cover all of that stuff themselves.

The deal was a co-production deal. Underbelly set aside I think it was 8,000 pounds of expenses that they advanced and that did include a cut for the cost of that theater. It did include their staff. It did include marketing and printing of flyers and posters and the labor to distribute all of that stuff. So the deal was that all the box office had to pay for that 8,000 pounds first. And then the split was between the artist and Underbelly. And I'm pretty sure it was 60/40. 60 percent to Manual Cinema and 40 percent to Underbelly. So I think Manual Cinema went home that first year with \$4,000. They sold out their engagement. Now that room did not have 600 seats, mind you.

ANNA: And we're also talking about a company of nine people.

LAURA: The majority of the shows you see at the Edinburgh Fringe are stand up comics, first of all. And A lot of duets and a lot of trios. You don't typically see seven people on stage in the Fringe because that's a huge financial risk and liability and burden to have to cover.

So that example that mathematical example with that engagement with Underbelly was a gift because 90 percent of the artists you see at the Edinburgh Fringe are paying to be there. They have to advance monies to the venue to pay for the space. They don't get any technical crew, they barely get front of house. They don't get any publicity. They have to do all of that themselves. Again, there's a range of what the deal is, which is why you need to know what the deal is before you say, *yes, I'm going to do this*.

ANNA: And of course, like if we look at the budget and like the actual, because we say this is a very successful story. And yes, Manual Cinema came back with maybe those \$4,000. And that is a very successful story because in their future, then we were able to realize European tours of four or five weeks straight. And then several other scattered engagements in Germany and Eastern Europe, it, it really brought more international touring for them.

LAURA: This is where you can look at that Edinburgh International Festival/Edinburgh Fringe model and see how well it can work. But again, with Manual Cinema, it was a special show at a special time that really landed and resonated and that doesn't necessarily always happen. Return on investment doesn't necessarily happen overnight. In that 2016 example with Manual Cinema, it

did. But Anna and I know that for the majority of these showcasing platform opportunities that we ask our artists to invest in, they're not necessarily going to get that kind of return in one or two seasons. It might be three or five seasons because this is the part where all of these things add up to your visibility and the presenter's knowledge of your work. It can take a while.

ANNA: When Laura said go visit the Edinburgh Fringe first. A very good practice is just to know the list of all of this industry convenings and festivals and just make the executive decision with yourself to just say, *I'm not going to invest all this money in showcasing quite yet, but I'm going to be in the room* and just being in the room, knowing that so many players are going to be in the room, will still initiate some sort of visibility because in most of these convenings, you will have a badge. If you've registered to the conference or to the convening or the platform or the market, you will have a badge. Your name will be there and no, they cannot see you showcasing that particular year. But then seeing what you're seeing, then maybe you'll decide to showcase a year after and you'll be a returning colleague in the room.

LAURA: What do they say 90 percent of it is being in the right place at the right time. There is such value in just showing up and participating and going to see all the shows and you learn so much from that.

LAURA: Every genre in live performing arts holds some kind of annual convening, be that Dance/USA, Opera America. If you can find your people via these convenings, there is such value for your penny, your dollar, your big dollars to attend those convenings because of whose elbows you're going to be rubbing.

ANNA: The International Society of Performing Arts is an international convening. They have a major convening here in New York City in January during the festivities of JanArtsNYC. They have another convening that moves around the world each spring. And they do have curated pitch sessions and pitch presentations, which are another way of showcasing your work. It is curated by ISPA. There is an application process, like there is for CINARS and like there is for the Tanzmesse. And so you get chosen to stand upstage and present your work and show your visuals. And so the only cost is basically the cost of traveling there and being there and being in the room.

LAURA: Yeah, I'm glad you brought up pitches, Anna, because pitches alongside showcasing are another great opportunity for that visibility for you. Often, the pitch can literally be two minutes. Sometimes it can be quite generous, up to ten minutes.

I will be pitching Minty Fresh Circus at both the Western Arts Alliance Conference and the MAX Conference this September, for example. I'm thrilled. That's a great way for me to show off a new show that hasn't even premiered yet. But we will build a beautiful video out of rehearsal and work in progress footage we have, and we'll have a pitch. And these, that again. Know your opportunities and seize them when you can, because a lot of the pitches also have a very specific criteria. Very rarely will you be permitted to pitch something that's older than a year. Most of these pitches require that it's new work, and they all have their own definition of what new work means.

LAURA: I hope hearing this episode has given you some context and explanation to what the hell showcasing is and what is a platform? And how and where do they happen if they are attached to a convening a conference? A network gathering, a marketplace? The question you have is, *is there a way for me to show my work at this convening, conference, network, platform, marketplace?* Because the mission here is to show your work under the best possible circumstances while there is a significant gathering of industry people. That's what makes it a showcase.

ANNA: Yep. And my suggestion about the money is that when you make your budget for the year, you put some saving away for this kind of opportunities because they are game changers sometimes.

LAURA: Absolutely, the monies that you budget annually for showcasing, don't be shy, call it what it is, damn it, because it's not a dirty word, it can actually serve you very well. Put that money into your budget.

I know I said this in another episode when we had artists who came to us and said, we're going to spend \$5,000 to upgrade our website. We were like, no, no, no, no, no. Your website's just fine. Just leave it ain't broke. Don't fix it. Spend that money to come to New York and showcase with us this year because that money is better well spent.

There are going to be plenty of our colleagues that will tell you that showcasing is a waste of your time and money. We wholeheartedly disagree because we know if you do it well and with care, especially with care you showcase is legible, it reads large, it resonates, it leaves a mark in the presenter's brain about who you are, what your methods and medium are, why you're different from everybody out in the field, what differentiates you, and why they should put you on their shortlist and start paying attention so that they think, *Oh, that was really different. I need to find out more about that artist.*

Thank you, Anna, for having this chat with me about all things showcasing!

We have put together a short list of some of the main convenings, conferences, markets that we have either worked with or rein large in our field for you in the glossary.

We hope this has been helpful, to put this in context and to provide some parameters and clarity around what this thing is and how to get in and how to get there and how to make it work for you. So get to a festival, right? Go see a show live, right?

ANNA: Register yourself for a conference. Be in that room!

LAURA: Go hear a pitch, go see a showcase, start to understand why they're not working or what worked for you?

ANNA: And if you're a student, get yourself a volunteering job at one of these industry convenings. That's really incredibly helpful.

LAURA: You'll be able to go for free.

ANNA: Yep.

LAURA: You have to get there, but you won't have to pay any of the registration and you can see all this stuff and you can see it working and you can talk to your peeps and say, *boy, that showcase just tanked*, you know, but understand why so that when you start producing them, you won't allow an artist to tank. Figure it out. And yes, see a live show.

ANNA: Always.

LAURA: And yes, write to us and tell us what you saw and what happened to you. We'd love to hear from you. Until next time.

(Fade out with jazz music by Manual Cinema)