



Creative Champions Network Webinar – May 1, 2020

Guidance for Arts Board Confronting a Pandemic:
Surviving Extraordinary Times: The Board’s Role in Organizational Resilience

Speakers:

Jaclyn Rodrigues, Community Engagement Manager, Toronto Arts Foundation

Jini Stolk, Toronto Arts Foundation Research Fellow

Owais Lightwala, Managing Director, Why Not Theatre

Paul Nagpal, Board Chair, Why Not Theatre

Celia Smith, Co-Founder, LEAN (Leadership Emergency Arts Network) and incoming Interim CEO of Luminato Festival

Transcribed by: Rachel Kennedy and Alexandra Loewen

00:00:00 – 00:01:52	Jaclyn Rodrigues	<p>Ok, good afternoon, well welcome. My name is Jaclyn Rodrigues and I am the Community Engagement Manager with Toronto Arts Foundation, we are delighted you are able to join us today for this webinar. I am going to keep my remarks brief as my role here today is really as a moderator for our Q & A at the end of this session and to help troubleshoot any technical difficulties that may arise. As some of you may know, the Foundation is hosting this webinar as part of our Creative Champions Network. Jini Stolk, our Network director, will be giving a brief overview of the program in a few moments for those of you who might be new here and have not heard of it.</p> <p>We do hope for a smooth session and we’re grateful for your patience as we troubleshoot any technical issues that may come up. Second on my list is to just set the proverbial stage for today’s webinar. After some introductory remarks we will proceed with the presentation which will take the form of a facilitated conversation. If you have a question for our presenters, please use the Q & A function, not the chat function below at the bottom of your screens. Please feel free to ask a question at any time during the presentation via that Q & A function. We ask that if your question is for a specific presenter, you identify them in that question to us. We will be addressing questions at the end of today’s webinar and will strive to get to as many of those questions as possible, prioritizing the most frequently asked questions.</p> <p>Now, while no one has requested ASL interpretation or any other accommodations for this session, the resources that were circulated will be made available again on our website following</p>
---------------------	------------------	--

		<p>today's presentation and we are also recording today's session. We will make the recording and transcription of today's session available as soon as possible following today. With that, I'll turn it over to Jini, our Creative Trust Fellow and leader of our Creative Champions Network. Off to you Jini!</p>
<p>00:01:53 – 00:07:05</p>	<p>Jini Stolk</p>	<p>Thank you, Jaclyn, I'm grateful as always for your good work and strong support for everything we do with Creative Champions and especially your very steady hand on our Zoom technology. Today's webinar as you said is the second in our Creative Champions webinar series <i>Guidance for Arts Board Members Confronting the Pandemic</i>. If you were not able to join us for our first session which was called <i>10 Principles for Navigating Through Critical Times</i> as Jaclyn said, the recording and transcription are now up on Toronto Arts Foundation's website. And on that same website you'll also find information on the 27 workshops and learning sessions presented over the past five years. And there's a rich trove of resources available, that are specially chosen to be useful to arts board members.</p> <p>So, today. I am sure you'll all agree the COVID-19 crisis has definitely concentrated our community's mind. For board members, this is a time that calls for deeper commitment to the organizations you've chosen to dedicate your time, energy and resources to. It also I think has created, I think, fertile ground to look with new eyes at the practices and principles for arts making and arts governance. Both practically because things are moving way too quickly to fall back on the old ways and because some of the old ways were probably more out of date than realized. This is a webinar about organizational resilience so I thought I should begin before you all enter the chat function with questions about what we're talking about, I thought I would begin by telling you what we mean by that.</p> <p>This is a quote, or a series of mashed up quotes about resilience.</p> <p><i>"Resilient organizations are well prepared for change, regardless of the type or magnitude of the transformation an organization may face, the goal of building resilience is to prepare the company for long term strength and agility."</i></p> <p>This is a definition from way before the time of COVID-19 but couldn't really be more to the point today. I think it's always useful to draw Shakespeare into a discussion like this and as I think he said in Twelfth Night:</p> <p><i>"Some are born resilient, some achieve resilience and some have resilience thrust upon them. Thy fates open their hands, let thy blood and spirit embrace."</i></p> <p>Well said. It's already possible to begin to identify arts organizations who are responding well to this current crisis, with confidence, clear communications and ideas that feel really</p>

		<p>appropriate to the situation or even better in some cases, ideas that capture the imagination of the public which I think is yearning for innovate new shift at all levels these days. Many of these companies were born resilient or have quickly adopted the lessons of resiliency.</p> <p>We're going to be speaking with two members of such an organization today, Paul Nagpal the co-chair and Owais Lightwala the Managing Director of Why Not Theatre. If your organization, like Why Not, demonstrates all or some of the qualities of resilience, I'm sure your working really hard right now with the confidence that your board is doing all that can be done, to the best of your abilities to help your organization come through this crisis successfully.</p> <p>If that however does not describe how your organization and board have been functioning, there's no time for regrets right now. Resiliency has been thrust upon you. Now is the time to look clearly at how you can bring all the energy, ideas and compassion you can find to the table. Remember, it is the board's role to protect the mission and sustainability of your company. Celia Smith is the second person who is going to be speaking today. She's the leader of many arts organizations, she's the incoming interim CEO of Luminato Festival and she co-founded the Leadership Emergency Arts Network (LEAN) which is currently bringing experience of Canada's senior arts leaders to assist those working in companies who are struggling [inaudible] into their futures.</p> <p>Just before we begin, I think it's a good time to reflect on the fact that many people before us and around us have been challenged in existential ways. The land we're speaking from has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years and has been the traditional home and territory of many First Nations people. We live, work, learn, struggle and share on this land as they have done before us. Thank you everybody.</p>
00:07:06 – 00:07:53	Jini Stolk	<p>So, shall we begin our discussion about resiliency? I have a few questions for both Paul and Owais. I wanted to just being by saying Why Not Theatre has, from the time it was founded 13 years ago by Ravi Jain, I remember it well, has defined itself as challenging the status quo. Questioning everything about what a theatre company can be, rethinking how stories are told and who gets to tell them, forcing doors open, inventing, encouraging and creating a creative community.</p> <p>Paul, you are co-chair of the board. I would like to ask you what has this meant for how the board functions and understands its role?</p>
00:07:54 – 00:09:05	Paul Nagpal	<p>Sure, that's a great question. I think, for all who may or may not know Why Not already, it's all been about creating amazing work. I think one of the key things that we've always thought about is to make sure we had them think about what else they</p>

		<p>should be thinking about beyond that artistic capability. For us, we always said, we're not trying to change the art, we're not trying to help them on that side. I think from a board point of view, it's "hey keep up the good work", to looking more at what else should we be thinking about, how do we stay more resilient and continue to thrive, you know, even prior to this pandemic. But through this now, looking at how do we start make better decisions, how to we continue to think through into the future as well. I'll turn it over to Owais actually, to talk more about kind of the way we think about things from a management point of view and then I'll add on from leadership as well.</p>
00:09:06 – 00:10:26	Owais Lightwala	<p>[False start] To build on that point that Paul has made about our understanding of the board's role, I think it really is encapsulated well in this anecdote: There was a moment a few years ago when we were still pretty early in our growth, when we just had enough money, the company was just myself and the artistic director Ravi Jain and we had finally gotten a little bit of operating funding and we decided that we should finally get salaries instead of doing this work for free and we presented the board a budget and said this is what we would like to pay ourselves and I remember Paul saying to us, "is that what you'd like to make" and I said "it's what we can afford" and he said "That's not what I asked" and I think that spirit of asking us the questions that we don't even give ourselves permission to ask ourselves by taking this role of custodian and supporter rather than, never feeling like they were our boss never feeling like we had to serve their vision. They were very much coming to us and saying "tell us what your vision is" and also let us help you protect yourself and do it in a way that manages risk in a way thats sustainable and responsible so that you succeed rather than us succeeding or any idea of success being the priority.</p>
00:10:27 – 00:10:50	Paul Nagpal	<p>Yeah, I would say that it's a combination of the leadership team as well as the board. We don't have a separate goal, we don't have a separate vision compared to them, it's supporting them for success, right? And putting all our trust and all our strength into them to say we know what you're doing, we appreciate that and we love that and how do we support you to continue to thrive.</p>
00:10:51 – 00:11:17	Jini Stolk	<p>So, there's very much a common culture that runs between the studio, the staff and the board which is good. So, what type of individuals do you look for to bring on to the board. Do you have...there must be special personal characteristics as well as professional expertise you have in mind when you're searching for people to ask to join.</p>
00:11:18 – 00:13:25	Owais Lightwala	<p>I think it's exactly what you said about the consistency of culture across the organization. So, just in the same way we were very deliberate in building the company, which started with just Ravi 13 years ago and now a team of, we were 9 full time and 8 today. But, that team has been built very carefully to share an</p>

		<p>entrepreneurial culture, a spirit of innovation has been built into every member of the team and that's very true of the board we built as well. So, one thing we kind of eschewed a little bit was we didn't really go with the standard role based board fulfilment a lot of people do where you have one accountant, one lawyer etc etc and it was very much led by trying to figure out, first of all the biggest priority was value alignment and are we on the same page in terms of our spirit, our culture and what we're trying to achieve and then figuring out what roles mean in terms of perspective, in terms of skill set, in terms of thinking that we don't have in our team that can be supplemented by people with other experiences, with other perspectives.</p> <p>And so, the board in a lot of ways mirrors the organization's culture but also looks very different than the organization because it's trying to bring diversity to our thinking not more of the same. I would say that's kind of been the overall strategy and it's been very, very slow we've been very careful about bringing on board members because just like all of our staff and all of our artist relationships, for us, the emphasis on relationships over transactions has meant that we've been very careful about who we are working with and really understanding each other rather than get to any kind of pre-defined idea of success which is "oh you have to have a board of 10 really important people" or "you have to have this much money that your board gives you before you can call yourself a real org". Instead of thinking of external benchmarks like that, it's been more like "does this relationship work?", "does this feel like the right fit?", "are we working in the same direction or is there a difference in our vision?".</p>
00:13:26 – 00:14:27	Paul Nagpal	<p>Yeah and I think we spend a lot of time with every new potential board member and before we bring them on we look at, as Owais said, the values that they bring to the table, not necessarily kind of the functional skill set but also that entrepreneurial spirit and that understanding that in this type of organization in the arts world, it's not a linear path, it's not going to be pretty straight forward. Things are going to continuously changes, there's risks they have to jump into and we as a board have to be very comfortable with that.</p> <p>But when we look at professional board members as we continue to grow and adapt, it was making sure that they really understood the vision and the desires of the organization and of course, Ravi and Owais have always been extremely ambitious in what they want to do, so we have to be there to support that and not just kind of tamper that down and change that vision.</p>
00:14:28 – 00:15:02	Jini Stolk	<p>Really important, but Paul your day job is in finance. You work with chief financial officers in the corporate world. And I just wonder how does the board manage to both embrace and at the same time mitigate risk? And are there any things that you've learn from your experience with Why Not that carry over into your other work with corporate financial officers?</p>

00:15:03 – 00:16:25	Paul Nagpal	<p>That's a great question. I think you're right, it goes back and forth, so the types of things I was looking at with my corporate perspective bringing to the table, you know, ensuring there is a surplus of funds, ensuring that we had at least 3 months of operating funds available, starting to build up a reserve fund. Trying to do these things that you know, ensure the sustainability of an organization as they go through tough times where there may be minimal or zero revenue. So that the type of things we started putting in place and really coming in and saying how do we grow this organization as well.</p> <p>Pre-pandemic, we looked at this as a high growth start up. They were scaling, they had great ideas there was not a lot of opportunities, so of course it was how do we continue supporting an organization like that. From a risk point of view [inaudible] there's this fine difference between creating amazing work and spending an inordinate amount of time building something. And understanding there will be twists and turns along the way before that gets to stage and before you see that end result. So, you have to be comfortable with that, at the same time putting in the fiscal responsibilities of do we have the funds, will we be able to maintain a certain amount and how really go from there.</p>
00:16:26 – 00:16:57	Jini Stolk	<p>Slightly different perspective and emphasis from the board and staff to ensure you're all going in the same direction. So, I have a question for either or both of you: what particularly about those ways of working and thinking you just described are being kind of brought to the fore or highlighted in the company's response to the pandemic?</p>
00:16:58 – 00:18:48	Owais Lightwala	<p>[False start] Yeah, discovering the vaccine I think was the smartest thing we did. It made it a lot easier. I'm totally kidding, we have no vaccine [laughs].</p> <p>[False start] We are also very much in a form of crisis and I think to your point, nothing has changed about our organization significantly in that we were always very responsive and built to be nimble. We created a structure very intentionally because we came up in a time of scarcity, we came up before the Canada Council doubled its budget, at a time where every level of funding was telling us there's no new money, there's no new money. So we built a digital first infrastructure. We didn't have an office for many, many years. We still don't have a venue and we're never going to get one, because that capital heavy model doesn't really work in the financial economics of today. So, by avoiding some of those structures and creating new structures out of necessity, we've positioned ourselves to be able respond to this crisis the same way we respond to every year we make a plan. Which is we don't do a season ever because we have never been in a position ever, because for us, consistency is less important than really figuring out where the right impact is, where's the right positioning, where is the place we should be right now, rather than trying to go "we did this last year, so we must do that now this year and do a little bit more of it next year".</p>

		So that's the attitude towards planning, towards long term planning, towards a kind of what is that a company is supposed to be doing and that's been consistent since pre-crisis and post and that I think that's made it not as difficult for us as for some of our peers.
00:18:49 – 00:19:19	Jini Stolk	For sure. Paul, unless you have something to add I had one final question for the two of you. Have you found it possible to continue your commitment, which has been very strong and very significant, to sharing resources and removing barriers to other artists, to other [inaudible] in this time of crisis, how are you thinking about that aspect, that important aspect of your work.
00:19:20 – 00:20:42	Paul Nagpal	So, a couple of thoughts from my point of view and then I'll turn it over to Owais as well. In terms of specific activities that are happening right now. Understanding that this has been a huge financial hit for our organization as well as pretty much every organization. You know, budgets had to be cut dramatically and there's a lot of uncertainty too about when theatres will be able to open and when will people want to sit in seats side by side in a hundred- or thousand-person venue and see what that looks like and feels like. So really, spending time thinking about what does theatre look like going forward. I think too many people are saying well "when do we get back to the norm? When do things just go back to normal, when do we open again?". And I think it's [inaudible] need to understand, there will be a new normal. Just going back to the way it used to be, we need to be thinking about what's coming up next, what can we start to do? We work with [inaudible] but then in the future as well, what sort of activities should we be doing that will accommodate the new norm so that we know and be more comfortable and expecting actually from an audience point of view.
00:20:43 – 00:20:50	Jini Stolk	Ok, Owais, did you have one last thought to share with us there?
00:20:51 – 00:22:28	Owais Lightwala	[False start] One example actually of a program, we'll be announcing this program soon, it's called This Gen Fellowship. It's a mentorship program we created for BIPOC, female or female identifying artists, that was national in its original intention and then COVID hit us just before we were about to announce it. So we'd picked out some mentees but we hadn't figured out who their mentors were and we hadn't figured out what the delivery was fully. But the original intention was they were national artists and they were going to do placements across the country. And then responding to the crisis rather than again, it being a limitation for us, where obviously those people couldn't go and work in any physical building any more, they couldn't spend time with their mentors. We expanded the program, took advantage of this opportunity to make it an international mentorship, and now the collaborations that those mentees are getting are really high-level international people as well as national people because that's what digital offers us. It's about the spirit that Why Not I think has always had in our

		<p>work which is there is no such thing as a bad or good anything, There's just what works in this context and what doesn't, and rather than fighting against it, we kind of went this is what the terms are now, so now we're going to take advantage of this opportunity and changing the shape of our programming as quickly as we need to without losing our values, without losing the reason why we do things, which is more than just the act of putting on plays.</p>
<p>00:22:29 – 00:23:08</p>	<p>Jini Stolk</p>	<p>Great segue, thank you both. I am going to move to Celia and ask her a few questions. Celia Smith, not every arts organization has been as consciously built around resiliency as Why Not. Yet most I think, have been in process, over the past few months, of finding new ways of creating and connecting within an incredibly accelerated time frame. How, in your experience, has this changed the way boards are being called on to help their companies respond quickly and effectively through the current crisis.</p>
<p>00:23:09 – 00:27:57</p>	<p>Celia Smith</p>	<p>Thanks, Jini. I just should say at the outset, since I'm supposed to do like the downside of this because those two are superstars [laughs].</p> <p>I serve on many arts boards, I have in the past. I'm also, as Jini said, I'm one of the co-founders of LEAN so I am working sort of indirectly with a couple hundred arts organizations across the country so take my remarks as very much generalizations, so please don't try to find companies specifically in the anecdotes I might tell you. And some of our advisors are actually on this call so nice to see you guys.</p> <p>Well, I was thinking about this, I think my observation in the last month is boards kind of find themselves in one of three categories right now in their relationship to the organization and the situation. They're either absent, and that is absolutely the case in a very high proportion of boards at the moment. Possibly because they're distracted with the free fall in their own lives or businesses or health or whatever...or they don't know what to do, so they're absent. And the leaders of the organizations have forgotten they have a board and actually it's easier just to make these decisions themselves. So, you are off the hook and you are not participating.</p> <p>Secondly, you're present in the normal way. You know, you're showing up to meetings and you're present and you're trying to do your normal role. But the normal role isn't needed at all right now because we're actually not in active fundraising, we're not in active marketing...actually, even the financials are straight forward, you know, you just cut all those lines out so there's not a whole lot to discuss really, because we're not producing.</p> <p>And then the third group, which is the minority but is quite powerful is board members who are omni present. Who are actually over involved, and in some cases, bullying executive</p>

		<p>leadership and artistic leadership to do the stuff that they think should happen. So, why haven't you applied for that wage subsidy yet and why don't you know that 500 gazillion dollars the government is giving to the arts sector and why aren't you applying for it yet? Well it's actually not even open yet as a program so I can't, thank you for your idea. So, I think also coming from a position of anxiety, I'm feeling so helpless I'll go overboard with my pressure on the leadership.</p> <p>So clearly none of those three are actually acceptable. I'm sure there's a fourth beautiful harmony which is actually what these guys present so there are four camps..you guys are in the fourth.</p> <p>So, I was thinking about, you know, I think this stage is about ad hoc governance. Because the governance rules we normally would expect, at a resilient organization or the rest of us who are not quite as great at that You know we're fairly structured and we know what our roles are and we have the list of the 10 things we're supposed to be doing. But this is requiring a different kind of governance. You need to be risk assessors. So, whether you form a risk committee or whether it becomes part of the whole board's job or whatever, you suddenly become, people who need to assess risk and advise leadership about risk and usually isn't generally that isn't in your portfolio.</p> <p>If you're a larger group and you have an executive committee and you're a regular board member you usually just let the committee you know, sort of, take care of the tough stuff. In this case you really have to show up as a regular board member and participate in the tough stuff and that's usually not your role. The standing committees that you usually sit on fundraising, finance/audit, maybe there's a marketing and programming thing, maybe there's some other ones. Those actually aren't really needed right now. If you have those meetings you're going to be wondering why am I even wasting my time, why are we talking about nominating, no one wants to talk about that right now, that's not our highest priority, so those things are all kind of not necessary at the moment.</p> <p>You're finding that weaknesses in the organization are exposed but the strengths are also appearing and you didn't have to think this way before as a board member. The life of the organization was not under the microscope at board meetings and now it is. And your assessment frankly, of your staff leadership and their capacity...you maybe haven't thought this hard about it before. You might be in awe of what they are doing or you might be really worried. So that's all completely different than what we usually have to do when we show up as board members.</p>
00:27:58 – 00:29:00	Jini Stolk	Well maybe not completely. What I have found is that each board is different from every other board just like each arts organization is different from every other organization. Those are the things, the more troubling things, the more challenging things that some of us have been finding. For sure that these days, the

		<p>new ways of delivering [inaudible] they definitely seem to require boards to govern from a position they governed from previously, but maybe not. A position of strength, of trust, of speed, of courage and ferocious commitment to the art and to the mission and to the artist. So, do you have any thoughts on [false start], how people are rising to those expectations and frankly needs, these days?</p>
00:29:01 – 00:30:45	Celia Smith	<p>Well I think it's obvious from Paul and Owais, if an organization already has a really clear vision and reason for being and everyone is there because they are actually supporting that kernel of what the art is and what the purpose of this organization is and what you're trying to accomplish. Then as all of that has been sort of literally been taken away during this time, if you know what that is than it's going to be easier to stay on mission. If that was vague to begin with, and there are many organizations who can't remember why they exist, they haven't gone back to first principles for so long. They exist because someone keeps giving them money to continue, it's July so we're doing whatever we're doing, right? If that's the kind of organization that your part of and that is taken away, then you're wandering in the wilderness right now. So, you can be ferocious and courageous and love your ED, but if you actually haven't addressed that, then you have an issue.</p> <p>So, I think this is an opportunity. I mean in some cases for some organizations who will have a very hard time having some kind of legitimate activity for the next several months; this isn't the case for everybody but for some there's nothing you physically can do, and you haven't been able to figure out how you're translating digitally successfully. It's a time for regroup, it's a time you know, to get back to those first principles. Because if you do that and really solidify around something then you'll go forward. And if you can't, chances are you won't actually be going forward. Because, not everyone is going to make it through this. And those organizations who have a very clear indication what they're doing, why they're doing it and for whom and it's centred around the work, have a chance in this.</p>
00:30:46 - 00:31:39	Jini Stolk	<p>And that's always what we hope and expect and talk about, those of us who run arts board networks for example. Those are the sorts of things that we encourage and emphasise. Many Executive Directors and Managing Directors are determinedly following or encouraging those attitudes within their organizations. There might be a particular sort of individual board experience, expertise, or values that are most needed and what managing directors are most looking for at this time.</p>
00:31:39 - 00:33:29	Celia Smith	<p>Some of you have mentioned these things before, but right now organizations need your highest capacity of intelligence and of generosity and empathy and compassion for this situation. They also need you to be really flexible because they are going to present you with something next week that will be different. That's how this whole month has gone. Any scenario planning</p>

		<p>you're doing, you can plan for certain conditions but you can't rely on dates anymore. We used to think that June was possible or maybe September or January - but now I'm not thinking January even looks so hot. The flexibility and spirit of innovation and collaboration is really what's going to be necessary and boards that are distant and not paying that much attention or seeing the nuance are going to be in trouble. I've been in touch with organizations about how often to meet and in some cases I think you have to meet every week even if it's just for 30 minutes otherwise you're going to lose the train of where you're going. Otherwise if you meet 6 weeks from now it'll take 9 hours to get you up to speed. In other situations, AD's are saying that they don't have any band width to prepare, report to, or discuss with the board and are just going to keep them away for a little while, while the AD's figure out what to do. Obviously, I don't think that that's the strongest approach but it might be the most practical one in that situation.</p>
<p>00:33:29 - 00:34:56</p>	<p>Jini Stolk</p>	<p>I am still a believer in September, but I am also a believer in insisting at this point that "reporting to" the board is not the way that things are going to go. But rather discussing, problem solving collaboratively. "Reporting to" the board might have a little bit more relevance and importance when we are talking about finances. Somebody on a board (and many people on the staff) are hopefully taking a really close look at what the finances look like. At the very least we want to be prepared for what is coming in the future. We want to carefully think it through in terms of what that means for what we do now and we also want to really understand where we are going to be in September. I don't know what it will look like, but finances are an area where board input and understanding is very important.</p>
<p>00:34:56 - 00:36:58</p>	<p>Celia Smith</p>	<p>I think right now everyone is combing through the expense side to make sure that you are only spending on the things you really need to. You'll be happy later that you didn't spend it now because we are going into a cold winter next year. Regardless of whether we are performing or not performing it is going to be really hard. Depending on the timing of your year, in many cases organizations have already raised the money and in some cases people were not in full production and are actually in a decent spot right now. But as you go forward it's just about expense. So people are combing through the expenses and figuring that side out. On the revenue side, if we are not producing and performing then it's easy to cross out box office. Hopefully the Councils can sustain their funding and possibly flow additional funding through, but as Owais was mentioning, if you didn't get a significant portion of your resources from the government, then as someone said to me yesterday - the entrepreneurial among us are being punished. Those of us who actually found other sources of revenue and set up social enterprise options and were looking at alternatives and were less dependent on the government have less security now. So that needs to be addressed in some of the funding.</p>

		<p>The risk line in all of these budgets is the fundraising line. And again, those who were very successful at doing that are possibly also the ones who are going to suffer because they are really dependent on private support. When all is said and done, risk is the line that board members can influence, can have an opinion of, and can maybe help forecast.</p>
00:36:58 - 00:37:45	Jini Stolk	<p>It really comes down to those people who have been committed to your organization, who deeply believe in it and who really seriously do not wish it to go out of existence because of the pandemic. I would just guess that that's not all of these organizations' donors, but hopefully it's some. And the board's role in connecting those people I think could be really important.</p> <p>So Celia did you have any thoughts that you wanted to leave us with before we go on to a more general discussion and take some questions? I have a few overview questions in case we aren't getting enough questions from our listeners.</p>
00:37:45 - 00:38:50	Celia Smith	<p>Obviously, I am an optimist - I wouldn't have survived this long in this sector if I wasn't. I think that the things that we have demonstrated every day for those of us who have been active as volunteers or as workers, or creators, are the attributes that are going to serve us very well in this crisis. Everything that we do is a team sport. None of us do any of this stuff by ourselves - we have always had to work with others to be successful. We naturally are all creative people whether that's our job or not. We have a really strong sector with some really brilliant people in it and our citizens need us. So I don't know why we wouldn't take this tragic opportunity to really put our best feet forward collectively. I think it's a huge opportunity for us to really share our value with the country.</p>
00:38:50 - 00:39:14	Jini Stolk	<p>I agree, and I for one am really missing going to theatre events and music performances, immensely. So I'll be back as soon as theatres are open I can assure you. Hopefully me, and many others like me.</p> <p>Jaclyn, do we have some questions from people who are listening in that we can put forward right now?</p>
00:39:14 - 00:39:44	Jaclyn Rodrigues	<p>We have three questions right now on the docket so I encourage all other attendees to get your questions now as we are about 15 minutes from ending.</p> <p>The first question isn't directed to any particular presenter, but the question is:</p> <p>"Does the current situation require that boards take a greater role in finding ways to deliver the performance for art during the pandemic?"</p>
00:39:45 - 00:40:57	Owais Lightwala	<p>I think for me, the job of the board is to support the people who do the work, not to be the people who do the work. So for me the</p>

		question of what the art is, how it gets delivered, and the best way to make the impact - that is what we have staff for. They are the experts of that. One thing I have really valued about our board is that they trust our expertise in that and their job isn't necessarily to come up with the solutions, but it's to help us find the solutions and to make sure that we have considered everything in what the solution could be, but not to be the expert. That applies now more than ever because nobody knows anything more than anybody else about what the future is. Literally no one knows anything at all. So there's no sense of significant expertise to be offered anymore, and the people who have been doing it on the ground are, I think, where the answers to that are going to come from.
00:40:57 - 00:41:10	Jini Stolk	And the response to what the artists are putting out there in the world, which is a lot - a huge amount actually. Did you want to add anything to that Paul, or Celia?
00:41:10 - 00:41:36	Paul Nagpal	I would say I 100% agree with Owais - the board is there to support them and to help them think through financial implications and risk implications, but we are not there to be creative or to define what the art is. We have to trust in the organization.
00:41:36 - 00:41:43	Jaclyn Rodrigues	Next Question: Are legacy practices still relevant? How do we embrace "the new normal"?
00:41:43 - 00:42:11	Owais Lightwala	I love this question. The definition of legacy is literally "something that is outdated". That's what that means and to me the idea that legacy practices would ever be accepted as normal speaks to the sector-wide addiction that we have to the same-old-same-old and the fear of innovation that I think is endemic in our community.
00:42:11 - 00:42:16	Jini Stolk	Is that on the board side or on the artistic side?
00:42:16 - 00:42:22	Owais Lightwala	Everywhere. It is much more infectious than covid-19 and much more fatal.
00:42:22 - 00:43:22	Celia Smith	There are no antiques at Owais' house, if anyone's questioning that. I think you're on the right track. I've been thinking about how we have all now been thrust into the digital world. It's not like we haven't been there for 10 years or more - of course we have been. What's amazing is how quickly we've all adapted to trying to replicate our lifestyle through this format rather than the one that we're used to. I think obviously there is no point in looking backwards. We aren't ditching everything that's behind us but if you aren't actually adapting in every part of your life in general then why bother continuing.
00:43:22 - 00:43:43	Jaclyn Rodrigues	The next question challenges something that was said earlier:

		I'm curious as to why you feel that it may not be a great time to attract new board nominees. The media keeps saying that people are bored at home. Perhaps talent on the sidelines are waiting to contribute and just need to be approached with the right ask.
00:43:43 - 00:44:43	Celia Smith	Certainly if you have people that you've been courting who know and love you, who are about halfway through the process that Paul and Owais spoke about then why wouldn't you do it? Don't you find that, now, when you ask people to meet they're ready in 45 minutes to talk to you? It used to be, "I'll talk to you in 3 weeks". We are no longer commuting and I think that actually helps, and people are more open and available. I think that prospecting for new people when you don't have any work to acclimatize them to what you're doing and show legitimately who you are, and when we are preoccupied with other personal things going on - that might be challenging.
00:44:43 - 00:46:44	Jini Stolk	<p>I think this is a time when a board might not have the experience or the energy to contribute to new projects, new online work, new plans for the future. It probably is a really good time to bring people to the table for particular purposes. To help think through a project, to help make a couple of specific fundraising asks around something really important that you're doing, or to help with communications. All core staff are overwhelmed with the work that they have to think of and put into place and deliver effectively right now. On my board we are looking for people who have been previously involved, previously expressed interest, or have been stakeholders in the past and are devoted to the organization, and I think that's going to work out really well.</p> <p>In this current situation with the types of demands, expectations and desires of board members to help in different ways than they might have been used to - do you think that the board's role and our expectations will change, and that some of our basic understandings of good governance might undergo a significant change in the future?</p>
00:46:44 - 00:47:39	aul Nagpal	It depends what the existing board looks like and feels like. We are definitely going to have to embrace more uncertainty, and get comfortable with looking at the different risks that exist for arts organizations, both from a fundraising point of view and a fiscal point of view and how that art will be delivered in the future. It's not about predicting the future - it's about trying to understand stability and what that could look like, and sustainability. So having some understanding from a fiscal point of view is important for all boards, but really understanding what risk and uncertainty looks like and being able to manage that and help the team understand that as well.
00:47:39 - 00:48:00	Jini Stolk	So you're really saying that every board in the future should be, in a conscious way, looking to make their organization more resilient, contributing to that in how they function and how they

		provide the support that their organization needs. Is that what you're saying Paul?
00:48:00 - 00:48:06	Paul Nagpal	It's unfortunate if boards weren't providing that already, but going forward 100% that is necessary.
00:48:06 - 00:49:12	Owais Lightwala	But I think a lot of boards in our sector were not built for that - which seems like such an obvious necessity for a board - to prepare your organisation in a way that is resilient to change. I think some of the contributors to that are funding structures which have for a long time incentivized conservation and preservation over innovation and it has led to a tendency for boards to respond in kind by becoming risk averse. I find it really interesting what is the "normal" that we say is going to change and the expectation that resilience is not part of the job description is interesting to me. For us, we were always precarious - We were always in very uncertain waters and we had a board that supported growth as the only way out of uncertainty because if you didn't have a growth plan you were going to die. I think it's interesting the difference in the legacy part of our sector and some of the other parts of the sector that have different models.
00:49:12 - 00:49:50	Paul Nagpal	I think that came through the organization itself. We treated it like a tech start-up. It was a young organization, constantly growing, pivoting, changing, and adapting to the needs of the community and saying "how do we continue to grow in scale within this uncertainty?" So that's how we as an organization and a board have always treated uncertainty, by asking "what do we do, and how do we continue to thrive?"
00:49:50 - 00:50:03	Jaclyn Rodrigues	We have a question here specifically directed to Celila: Celia, what is your sense of how we should be engaging with private patrons or donors at the moment in organizations that rely heavily on that resource for fundraising?
00:50:03 - 00:52:36	Celia Smith	I think every day is a day to support fundraising. It is a constant relationship, it's not just the day that you ask people for money, it's everyday that you've invited them into the organization and they are participating in it. That's how you should see these donors. Right now would not be the time that I would ask for a new major gift but I would certainly nurture those relationships that we already have and be in touch. Understand their point of view and what's going on in their lives and try to figure out "when is the time that we're going to talk about your further commitment to the organization?" Especially if you have some major principal corporate or individual donors who are significant - make sure that they understand what's going on on the inside. Not that you tell them the worst, most scary bits. But that you tell them the truth about what's going on so they are a participant in wherever you're headed. As Owais said, your future is going to look different from your past. They were funding your past so you will need to bring them along and bridge them through this

		<p>period. I'm not saying you are calling them every day, but you need to show you're thinking about them and about that relationship. Do they know what's going on? Are you seeking their advice about anything? Are you telling them about a fork in the road? Are you letting them participate however you're disseminating your work right now, and making sure that they feel special in the way that you're sharing it with them?</p> <p>As Jini said, if you're lucky you have people who are crazy about you and so you just need to keep nurturing that. If you're not that lucky and you don't feel that you have that relationship with your donors currently, then maybe now would be the time to start trying to nurture that because you're vulnerable, they did support you at some point. When we all go back to active fundraising remains to be seen. In terms of the corporate sector, frankly, they don't even know what their envelopes are going to be moving forward. There are relationships to be managed, but if you don't have to have discussions about specifics for future funding then save that for later on.</p>
00:52:36 -	Jini Stolk	<p>I look a little on the bright side here in two ways... I think that the various arts funders have been terrific in their understanding of what's going on, stepping up to the plate and trying to do what they can do to make things possible for their arts organizations. I do think that they are doing important things. And equally so, the government. It's quite interesting to see the sorts of care and detail with which they are forming programs that are going to be useful to artists as entrepreneurs, nonprofits and small businesses.</p> <p>I had mentioned before the idea that there are some organizations who are responding really creatively, really energetically, and capturing their own audiences, community and people out there in the world. I think that optimistically, with all of the downside and the challenge there is also an opportunity to get people involved in your energy, your new ideas, your new ways of going at things, and your courage. Courage is a hugely important word these days.</p>
00:54:26 - 00:54:40	Jaclyn Rodrigues	<p>We are one minute to 1:00pm and I know that one of our presenters has to jump off so perhaps we leave things there</p>
00:54:40 - 00:56:13	Jini Stolk	<p>I do want to make a point that cultural diversity and diversity in general on boards, in organizations, in our city, and in our world, is a source of resilience and adaptability to change. I think that contains a message to Toronto's arts community, to the business community and to our community overall that different ways of thinking, different backgrounds, different approaches - all of that that you get on a diverse board, within a diverse organization, from actively reaching out to diversity your audiences, I think that is a component of resilience and I think it is really important to keep that front of mind for all of us.</p> <p>When everything is back to normal, we should get together</p>

		again and talk about “ have we gone back to business as usual? In what ways have things changed?” I think it’s going to be really interesting. As I said, looking on the sunny side, I am kind of excited about it I have to say - even though it’s terrifying and horrible.
00:56:13 - 00:56:28	Jaclyn Rodrigues	We are planning a third session and topic. Beyond that, we will be sending out a quick survey that we encourage everyone to fill out. Thank you all so much!
00:56:28 - 00:56:33	Jini Stolk	I had a great time with this discussion. Thank you all.
00:56:33 - 00:56:55	Owais Lightwala	Thank you for all of your work Jini in planning it, and the discussion, and moderating, and Toronto Arts Foundation for hosting.