

## Filming the Unfilmable? The role of Live Broadcast in Outdoor work

### Panel Discussion

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July, HOME Manchester

These notes were compiled after the *Filming the Unfilmable* panel discussion event, taking place at HOME in Manchester, July 15, 2019. Speakers have been paraphrased.

#### Event Overview

The aim of the event was to bring together a group of specialists who have incorporated live broadcast of outdoor performance into their work, as artists, directors, organisers or broadcasters to share expertise and advance the discussion of the role of live broadcast in the outdoor arts.

This panel discussion will be chaired by **Lina Johansson**, Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director of the female-led acrobatic theatre company [Mimbre](#).

#### Speakers

- **Martin Green** – currently [Birmingham 2022](#) Chief Creative Officer, previously Chief Executive for Hull City of Culture and Head of Ceremonies for London 2012
- **Tim Dollimore** – Managing Director at [The Media Workshop](#)
- **Janie Valentine** – Freelance Producer at [The Space](#)
- **Kevin Finnan MBE** – Artistic Director at [Motionhouse](#)



From the top right: Birmingham 2022 Handover Ceremony; *Flood: To the Sea*, part of a commission for Hull UK City of Culture 2017 and live streamed on BBC 2; *Lumiere Durham 2015*; *Watermusic* by Motionhouse.



**The discussion produced some interesting points and advice. We have picked out 10 key findings below:**

1. All panellists are excited about the potential of Live Broadcast within Outdoor Arts
2. The concept is very much in its infancy, with the panellists agreeing that the techniques and methods aren't quite there yet
3. All panellists highlight the difference between making work specifically FOR broadcast and that it's not a case of 'point and shoot'. Ask what can the camera add to make the work exciting?
4. Advise artists who are thinking of creating work for live streaming: What will it add to the work? Is it necessary? Have you thought about working with a professional live production team?
5. If you want to stream shows that are made for outdoors without consideration for broadcast, you have to be aware of how the person streaming the piece will portray the work. Understand that there will be a different but still-meaningful audience connection through broadcast compared to a live crowd
6. All panellists stress the importance of working collaboratively with whoever is directing the piece for broadcast. It needs to be integrated throughout the whole process, not just an add-on
7. Live broadcasting 'properly' is expensive, with alternatives such as Facebook Live Streaming suffering from quality and connectivity issues. The panellists do note that the cost will drop as the tech is refined
8. All the panellists support live broadcasting because of the accessibility it offers. It can deepen reach with people that would never usually engage with the arts
9. There are lots of extra tech to consider when devising a piece that will be filmed: lighting and sound are key aspects that are often overlooked and working with a specialist team is advised
10. Content and quality are key to grabbing the audience's attention: you have a 30-second window to reel them in

Tim Dollimore closes the debate by stating “*the language for live TV & film is there, the language for live events is there but we are not quite there yet with the language for live art events, and that this needs some discussion.*”

## Key points from the Q & A:

- *How many of the panellists have watched an Outdoor Arts event live broadcast?*

One out of four. **Martin:** I go to live events because they are live. The exciting thing about live broadcasting arts events is that they offer a different experience to someone that is at the event. Using the same event to drive two very different experiences and that's where it gets exciting.

If an event is broadcasted, will people come? **Kevin:** Yes, people come because they want the experience, and others will see it from a different perspective on screen. Research has shown that it doesn't really affect live event audience numbers as they have different needs.

- *How important is the liveness (of live event streaming)? Is liveness part of the story?*

**Tim:** It depends on the budget. It's cheaper to shoot and edit beforehand.

**Martin:** The liveness is part of the story; the reason people watch ceremonies live is that they want to see what's happening at that point in time. This is worrying for a producer but adds something for audiences. The excitement is given by the event happening now, there is more risk and more energy.

Live works well around sport and politics e.g. demonstrations, but does art need live streaming? Does it add anything other than just documenting? And the issue around quality is that do you want the audience to see your work in a poor-quality stream? Online audiences seem to be more forgiving of quality, they don't really mind. The makers are the ones concerned about it.

- *Why do we want more people to see our Outdoor Arts? Why do we want to live stream it?*

**Kevin:** We are able to reach more people in a mix of ways. Plenty of other art forms are already geared towards streaming anyway. It goes back to why are you making the piece, it's about communication. The question is whether the media is helping, hindering or bringing something different to the piece. Going through different media can change the way something is perceived. Even with Motionhouse, we have many ideas, but you have to get specific grants for specific things, so it's difficult to realise that digital end of our work.

Events like Tarrega and Glastonbury have already an audience but when you are a smaller company wanting to make a piece of work it's potluck of how much audience you get online. I believe it has a great future but again when is the watershed coming? Is it 5g? As individuals it will always be challenging; it's not to say you shouldn't do it but do it if your content is right for it.

**Lina:** We received support by The Space, in the context of their low-tech strand: we are filming ourselves with phones and tablets and editing the material. We are teaching ourselves in the team how to post content on Social Media, not to replace the existing collaboration with filmmakers and other things we do to promote the show but to be able to do create quick promotional material on the road at festivals we go to. A 30-second film we made in Watford reached a wide local audience, I was shocked at how little money it costs to make a big difference, it's easy to promote material to a local audience on Facebook and Instagram. We spent £75 each and in 24 hours 15,000 people had seen it. The Space has advised us to put more in the budget for things like this.

**Janie:** There are so many ways in which you can 'self-publish' these days, but it's no use having content if people don't know about it and see it. You have to know who your audience is, where you can reach them and tell them about the content.

**Tim:** We have always used our films to show a curated view of our live events, not as 'marketing' as such. When working on London Lumiere we shot some guided walks around the artworks, hopefully to show audiences how to move around the site, assist with crowd management etc. For us it's about adding to the live audiences' experience of the event.

**Martin:** There is a lot of crossover between marketing and an extension of the narrative of the artwork, people are drawn in to watch it because it's beautiful and an extension of the story, but the video has come out of the marketing budget. This is where it's exciting, and also when you have something that audiences can download and engage with after the event, moving into building audience loyalty etc.

- *How are you planning on engaging with Children and Young People (CYP)? Is there anything you are doing to reach them on Social Media?*

**Martin:** What's important is to make and show work by CYP. This is the approach we are taking for Birmingham 2022, using their stories to produce work. Getting them involved in all areas and making them the decision-makers.

**Janie:** CYP are just changing the whole broadcast landscape. Broadcast figures for people of a certain age just weren't there, everyone was watching YouTube. They have the opportunity to research and choose what to watch, which is very different from traditional and much more immediate. Where they watch is different too, how it will look on a phone is taken into consideration a lot more, which is depressing but it's how it is! For a programmer, it is a challenge as you have to look at what they are watching instead and how can we make it better.

- *Do you have any thoughts on VR, 360 in creative outdoor arts?*

**Kevin:** If you make visually interesting content that is good, I think CYP will watch. You don't have to make something specifically for a certain age group, just concentrate on

producing high-quality work and people will watch. With VR and 360, they are already fantastic mediums. There are already some shows touring now that use this technology, the interesting thing is that the tech gives you a deeply personal experience. You don't have a communal VR experience unless you count the chatting about it afterwards. It would be interesting to see VR, AR, 360 etc. on a larger scale with more engagement with other people. Having said that I have enjoyed all my VR/AR experiences to date!

**Martin:** VR hasn't grabbed me yet, it's too isolating. AR, on the other hand, is amazing, it will revolutionise the way ceremonies are done. It will have such an impact on the way people see it at home compared to being there live. Also, interestingly it will bring the cost of these shows down, you won't have to build all the sets etc. Particularly with the Commonwealth, we wanted to make the shows more affordable and malleable to go to the smaller countries in the Commonwealth. The opening ceremonies will be able to be no less impressive than the larger countries. Watch this space!

**Kevin:** Also, research show CYP are more comfortable splitting their attention across multiple platforms. This gives exciting new possibilities in creating outdoor work, with the use of multiple screens and reality being worked into new work.

- *Any top tips?*

**Tim:** Start planning early! Involve the technologist/artist right from the beginning. Really think about if it should be there, does it add anything to the work? With live sports it's obvious, you want to see the score now, not in 3 seconds, with a durational art piece it's a different consideration.

**Janie:** Yes, the starting point is always what's your content, what's your piece, why would you film it? I absolutely agree that if you are interested in using this you need to collaborate right from the start. There will be compromises working across different mediums but also a lot of learning which is exciting.

**Lina:** Going back to low tech, there are lots of cheap or affordable apps that you can use yourself to produce content. Look at what the young people are doing and do that! They often use cheaper methods.

**Kevin:** One warning, technology is seductive: don't make the show about the tech make it about what you want to say. The tech is a tool, and you employ it when you can see how to use it meaningfully.

We'd like to say a huge thank you to all our fantastic speakers for sharing their expertise.

## Useful Links:

**The Space** has some good resources for those interested in producing work for live broadcast:

- [Live streaming for the arts: lo-fi and low-cost options](#)
- [Capturing live performances and events](#)

Arts Council England's Digital Culture Network is putting together some useful resources, like this one:

- [Live Streaming, The Basics](#)

The live stream of the event can be found [here](#).

## Glossary:

**Virtual reality (VR)** is an artificial environment that is created with software and presented to the user in such a way that the user suspends belief and accepts it as a real environment. On a computer, virtual reality is primarily experienced through two of the five senses: sight and sound.

**Augmented reality (AR)** is the integration of digital information with the user's environment in real-time. Unlike virtual reality, which creates a totally artificial environment, augmented reality uses the existing environment and overlays new information on top of it.

**Fifth-generation wireless (5G)** is the latest iteration of cellular technology, engineered to greatly increase the speed and responsiveness of wireless networks. With 5G, data transmitted over wireless broadband connections could travel at rates as high as 20 Gbps by some estimates -- exceeding wireline network speeds -- as well as offer latency of 1 ms or lower for uses that require real-time feedback. 5G will also enable a sharp increase in the amount of data transmitted over wireless systems due to more available bandwidth and advanced antenna technology.

**360° video (360)** is a fairly recent technology in which omnidirectional cameras are used to grab a spherical video capture of a space, rather than the rectangular capture in traditional videography. The perspectives of the omnidirectional cameras are then stitched together to generate an immersive experience for viewers to experience, placing the viewer within the context of a scene or event rather than presenting them as an outside observer, and giving the viewer the ability to control the orientation of the scene and viewing direction.

## Speakers Biographies

### **Lina Johansson, Joint Artistic Director of Mimbre**

Mimbre is a female-led circus company using acrobatics, high physicality and strong visual imagery to illuminate human connections. Mimbre has toured across 23 countries and has created performances for both the small and big scale, for indoor venues as well as outdoor settings. Most recently Mimbre performed at Dior's Haute Couture show at Paris Fashion Week, where Johansson choreographed 18 female acrobats to fill the runway with acrobatic gates and arches framing the models and the collection. Mimbre's 2018 production, *'The Exploded Circus'*, was a visual extravaganza weaving a physical story about how we deal with change and new beginnings.

In addition to her work with Mimbre, Johansson regularly works externally as a choreographer, director and movement director for circus, theatre and opera. As well as with Dior, she has collaborated with English National Opera, The Roundhouse, Royal Shakespeare Company, National Centre for Circus Arts among many others.

### **Martin Green, Birmingham 2022 Chief Creative Officer**

Martin has earned an international reputation for delivering world-class, large-scale events. As Head of Events for then-Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, he produced more than 60 events, including the City's New Year's Eve celebrations. In 2008 Martin was appointed Head of Ceremonies for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, where he oversaw the delivery of the Welcome and Medal ceremonies, Torch relays and Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Games. He recruited Danny Boyle and other artistic directors and hand-picked the artists, production and back-of-house teams that showcased the best of British culture on a global stage. He was also Director of Hull UK City of Culture 2017, which saw him manage a ground-breaking 365-day world-class arts festival that reinvigorated Hull and fully engaged its residents, with nine out of ten local people attending at least one event. He is currently Chief Creative Officer for Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and will be responsible for the official opening and closing ceremonies at the Games in 2022, as well as the wider cultural programme.

### **Janie Valentine, Freelance Producer at The Space**

Janie is a very experienced programme maker who has worked in all areas of production. She has worked on a wide range of music programmes across all musical genres and was Production and Commissioning Director overseeing production and all content on C4's music channels. She is a very experienced live producer having worked on a broad range of live OBs, shows and festivals. Her festival credits include Glastonbury, Latitude and V Festival. For the last few years she worked with the Space working as a consultant and producing a wide range of multi-camera live captures for TV, online and cinema broadcast including Akram Khan's *Giselle*, Northern Ballet's *Victoria*, Cheek by Jowl's *Winter's Tale*, Streetwise Opera's *The Passion* and the Royal Court's *Cypress Avenue*.

### **Tim Dollimore, Managing Director at The Media Workshop Ltd**

Tim set up The Media Workshop originally as a digital arts collective back in 2002. The intention was to develop a skilled network of digital creatives that could be shaped and moulded, building bespoke teams to meet project requirements. This is very much still the case and The Media Workshop is constantly growing and evolving, gaining experience all the time. With an extensive background in media, video production, the arts, education and event management Tim brings a high level of experience and knowledge to The Media Workshop's activities. His passion is in working on projects that push new boundaries creatively and technically.

### **Kevin Finnan MBE, Artistic Director at Motionhouse**

Kevin is known for his dynamic, highly visual productions integrating dance, circus and digital technology. He is responsible for the distinctive style that Motionhouse is renowned for. He is passionate about exploring and questioning the traditional use of space in performance, which has led to the creation of an extensive body of work developed over three decades. He is regularly commissioned to develop extraordinary dance spectacles, most notably as Choreographer and Movement Director of the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. More recently he developed Watermusic, a large-scale outdoor spectacle for the Aarhus 2017 European Capital of Culture celebrations in Randers Harbour, Denmark in September. Kevin has created major productions celebrated globally, including more than 35 theatre and outdoor festival productions and large-scale outdoor spectacles, bespoke performance events to mark cultural capital celebrations in Copenhagen and Marseille-Provence and the launch of the London 2012 Festival with The Voyage in Birmingham city centre.

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## **Special thanks**



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