

A joyful path: transition and live performance

This episode of the Early Music Podcast follows the conference on transition and sustainability in live performances that took place as part of New Deal 2021 on 2 June. The speakers on that day, Sophie Lanote and Nathalie Moine have agreed to continue the conversation with us for our podcast. Sophie Lanote is the founder of Galatea Conseil, a society that offers guidance to private and public actors of the cultural sector in terms of strategy, management, and transformation. Nathalie Moine founded Florès, a society that accompanies cultural organisations in rethinking their relationship with the territory and its inhabitants.

They collaborated to create a white paper containing the results of their observations and advice on social transition and environmental change. This common effort is linked to a desire to contribute to social and ecological transition in their professional lives. In a world where the environment and the living realm are in danger, what are and what can be live performances. To create their book, they interviewed about 60 persons from varied background: actors of the live performance sector and of the cultural sector in general, but also specialists in human sciences or environmental studies, anthropologists, philosophers and even the director of a psychiatric hospital. These encounters and interviews helped them in establishing a picture of practices and common questions linked to their subject.

The Covid crisis has surely accelerated things and made them more urgent, but the tendencies were already there: 2019 can be considered as a pivotal year with the #Metoo movement, #BlackLivesMatter and the marches for the environment that took place in several countries.

They prefer speaking about a path towards transition, rather than making a list of instructions to follow. Indeed, there isn't one magic formula to apply that will solve everything. The goal is rather to interrogate ourselves, to put things in perspective and their role as consultant is to accompany cultural actors on that process and make it as smooth and joyful as possible. Environmental change and sustainability are often linked to constraints and obligations, but these words have a negative meaning that take the fun out of the process – instead, they prefer speaking about “creative constraints”.

The main question they ask is How? How do you create and get inspiration from social and environmental preoccupations, how to use artistic impulse and extend it towards a reflexion on the way we address the world and our place in it?

In order to change our practices, we need to change the way we see things, revisit our misconceptions, and deconstruct them. For example, we are used to seeing dichotomies between responsibility and freedom, cultural rights, and excellency, the local and the global etc. But these elements are not so much dichotomies as dualisms that we can use to create our own paths towards a more sustainable work environment.

To achieve sustainability and social transition, the cultural organisation must create spaces where people can speak up, think together, and express their views. Thanks to those spaces, everyone can have their say and become more involved in the organisation for example.

Le Spectacle et le Vivant, 20 propositions pour contribuer à la transition écologique et sociale was published in March 2021. Head to Galatea Conseil or Atelier Florès' websites to access it.