

Big 30 Website

Heart n Soul– Long Edit - Transcript

MUSIC: Cheryl Lyte improvisation

MAT: It means love, it means complete commitment to that belief in a way of life where we all belong.

MUSIC: Heart n Soul Anthem

MARK: The picture was taken on the stage of The Albany and you, Geoff, Winston and Alix were all sitting round, clearly getting your ideas and Alix is writing them down. And that was the essence of how we always worked. We never came and said, right this is the show you're doing. So I think that probably has been the most important thing.

PINO: It came from our ideas, from us.

MARK: We've tended to say and do things that we're not supposed to

PINO: That's right

MARK: And we won't stop, will we?

PINO: No we won't, we'll carry on. (laughter)

RIKKI: The first ever tour we did was of day centres in and around London. It was quite a shock to me – I mean I'd visited the Mulberry Centre, which is just up the road from here, as part of that tour I think. But a lot of the things that learning disabled people were doing were putting like crayons in boxes, very menial

tasks, so what Heart n Soul were doing, doing musical shows, writing music, and performing musical theatre was very new then.'

MAT: The first time I was really blown away by Heart n Soul, was I was working with a music company, we went to the Schlachthof in Bremen in Germany to see a show. And we were doing a show the next day but Heart n Soul were in there the night before so we went in to watch the show. Eight hundred people being entertained by Geoffrey just doing his sexy guy Elvis stuff. But he had them in the palm of his hand like any really professional, seasoned, experienced performer. I was like, wow this is different, this is really different.

HANNAH: There's always been that thing that I've felt working with Heart n Soul is that lack of inhibitions and people are just like, right, let's go! They'll walk through the door and they'll be like what are we doing, I want to work, I want to create, I want to make something, I want to express myself. And I had worked with loads of other people from all ages, teenagers and older people, children...Nothing was as creatively free as working with people with a learning disability, specifically at Heart n Soul. It's not just, oh all disabled people...no, it's very much the culture of Heart n Soul. And the complete opposite was working with teenagers, which was just excruciating to try and get them to even do anything for fear of being different from their peers. And it just felt the opposite at Heart n Soul.

MAT: The Open Mic slot, which was freeform jazz music like what I'd never seen before. What I was watching was really well structured, really well rehearsed cabaret theatre, but on the other hand there was also an acknowledgment that lots of people don't work that way and they're much more freeform and that's just as valid. And so you had this tightly rehearsed, costume, do-wop, all the movements choreographed the same material and people who hadn't seen – or maybe didn't think- that learning disabled people were capable of that kind of what we might call professional, polished, syncopation were blowing people

away with that. But also, blowing away our notions of what is and isn't viable entertainment by having this fantastic open mic, where instead of the singer 'failing', i.e. getting the song 'wrong', that wasn't how it went. It was how the singer wanted it to be and the band had to get it right, and I had never seen that before. I don't want to say that people were allowed to be amateur; no one was. But people were allowed to be how they were.

PINO: (Sings) O Gloria, Gloria! That's another one. I don't know, it just comes from my brain really, it comes from the brain. If I say I don't like the way it's done, I tell Mark I don't like the way it's been done. You have to tell them or otherwise they won't sort it out properly. There's Rikki, Ned, Charles... Things that we weren't happy with they helped us to make it more clear.

MUSIC: The Game of Life

MARK: One of the things that I really love about the way that you write music, you would only have to hear those twice and I guarantee anyone could sing the chorus.

PINO: Of course, because they were very short!

MARK: I came from a place of being in a band where we were trying to write really catchy songs to get signed on record labels.

PINO: Yeah I know, and you said it didn't go well.

MARK: Well, it just was hard work. And then when I met you and when we started making music and you started coming up with these melodies, I couldn't believe how catchy they were. And they were effortless, you weren't really having to think about it.

PINO: No, I didn't really have to think about it, it just came up from my mind!

MARK: It's very unforced, it is natural.

CATHERINE: That just led us to doing some more music and things together. We were doing all kinds, weren't we? Doing voice work and then I brought Chris in, because Chris was a friend of mine, a musician, and he started using this little guitar delay sampler with us. I remember us talking about choices and feeling like we weren't being listened to and things like that. So do you remember the questions that we started asking each other?

DANNY: What is your name? Then we started to mess around.

CATHERINE: Yeah so we had these microphones and this guitar delay sampler and we'd say things like, we'd ask each other; what is your name? how do you feel? And what do you want? But we wouldn't answer the questions we'd just keep asking each other the questions but making really interesting sounds with our voices. So you would always make these amazing sounds. What is your name?

DANNY: What is your name?

CATHERINE: What's your name?

DANNY: What's your name?

CATHERINE: What is your name?

DANNY: What is your name?

CATHERINE: What is your name?

DANNY: What is your name?

CATHERINE: What do you want?

DANNY: What do you want?

CATHERINE: What do you want?

DANNY: What do you want?

CATHERINE: What do you want?

DANNY: What do you want?

MUSIC: Black Scissors, The Fish Police

DEAN: There's a song called That Lady Dances Like Linda. It's a song about me going to this club on Friday and I was dancing and there were like VJs and DJs doing their thing in the club. And there was this lady with curly hair, who looks kind of like Linda. And Linda is a character that I made up two years ago, who lives on a different planet. I remember, the other day Charles sending me an email and he said, who is Linda? And I thought to myself, hmmm that's an interesting question, so I sent him a link to the Tumblr site with the information about Linda.

CHARLES: For somebody like me who writes songs, coming from that angle, I think sometimes you tend to get stuck in a way of doing things and you do it in that way all the time or you write about the same things all the time. So to be able to come to this project and work with someone like Dean who has a completely different way of looking at things, and he wants to write about plants and women called Linda from another universe – it frees me up to thinking in a different way and working in a different way so it's really great.

RICKY: Well, we've seen so many amazing performances that day.

MUSIC: Abraham's drumming solo LIVE at the Beautiful Octopus Club 2016

RICKY: One of the most beautiful was Abraham, oh my god! It was a drumming solo, basically. He just sat on the drums, they gave him two sticks and he started performing.

JENNY: Richard's been a bit of genius in working out how to give him some sort of structure and what to do. So, Richard just got a backing track that's quite minimal and it's quite cool and Abraham just freestyles along to the backing track and I just thought it was just a genius way of allowing Abraham to demonstrate his abilities.

And the nice thing about his drumming is that he's so free with it, his dynamic range, it's really exciting what he does.

RICKY: And to see the transformation that someone who generally doesn't really sit on a drum, after three seconds he will get up and do something else, but he did his performance on the drum for three minutes beginning to end, and it was just very beautiful. That was one of the highlights for me, just the emotion going through the guy while drumming was something that I cannot describe with words. He was just unbelievable, and every single beat he was playing he was feeling with his body and I haven't seen that in any musician – it was just beautiful.

ALICIA: Tell us about working with the London Symphony Orchestra.

MUSIC: I love you featuring musicians from the London Symphony Orchestra

SAM: I like watching the musical instruments; violin, cello and contra bass, double bass, flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, piccolo, harmonica and tympani and glockenspiel, vibraphone and percussion and cymbals and drums and trumpet and trombone and the tuba, xylophone, marimba, ukulele, crash cymbal.

WILLIAM: We went to watch them rehearse, then we chose which instrument we wanted. Then we started off by each person trying to collaborate with one of them, trying to join our ideas with theirs.

RICHARD: You played one of your songs to them and they joined in with it straight away.

WILLIAM: They kind of changed it up, but they changed it up in a better way.

MUSIC: See Me by Lizzie Emeh

NED: Lizzie's a very professional, seasoned performer. What you see is what you get – sometimes she's a bit vulnerable, sometimes she's right out there in the

crowd, virtually sitting on your lap. It's just nice to see someone who's so into music that can be so versatile. And she has a big band and she knows how to drive that band and that's not easy for some people. We're both quite passionate about some of the things people say in music. Lizzie's very vocal and I can be as excited not being very vocal.

TILLEY: With every different thing that I do it's a different process. So the comic strip, it's obviously really quite different to the radio, but essentially you need to start somewhere. First of all you've got to come up with some idea. I have quite a lot of ideas of episodes I'd like to do but I'm also working with Ben so I want to know his ideas. We actually did do a separate episode where I turned it on Ben and we interviewed Ben about what got him started in working on comics and Heart n Soul. Basically most of the time, the story is about us. Usually Ben does a really cool sketch, it's a little bit like a spider diagram. There might be one that's like, what is the idea? What is the message you're trying to get out? So then I start planning like that. Sometime I just start writing reams and reams of writing and he reads it, or I read it to him. I mean, we might spend at least the first one or two, two hour meetings chatting and writing. And then we have to storyboard so we try and make sure that we can get as many boxes on that page as possible, I think about 24 squares is the maximum you can fit on a page before it starts to be silly. That's where Ben really helps me, because I tend to be all over the place. I've got ideas and I want to write so many things and I want to draw so many things and we'd be taking a year to do one if it was all left to me. I mean, he's good at the drawing, he's good at everything but he helps me really with the planning and also encouraging, because I lose confidence in myself all the time. I've been crying before saying, I can't draw anything, it's not working, it looks rubbish. I've even got notes that Ben's wrote in my notebook and I've got recordings of Ben saying, don't give up Tilley, you're doing well. I get a lot of support and a lot of encouragement from the people that I work with as well as them being talented in their own right.

HANNAH: It's really interesting for us because you have to learn a new way to collaborate and communicate with people which you've never done before. Before Heart n Soul I had minimal experience of working with people with disabilities, minimal to nothing kind of thing. So it was a real eye opener, how unscary it was. You might see someone on the street and that fear of not being able to connect with somebody or somebody doing something surprisingly that shakes you a little bit. When actually now I definitely feel that that's the stuff I celebrate, that's the stuff that I really enjoy, the stuff that surprises you and that's unexpected.

MUSIC: Too Hot For Candy sing 'Hello'

ARTHUR: Everything that Heart n Soul does, everything that's made; music, all the art, it's really honest. There's no pretence of people trying to make something to be something. Which in the world of music and film, there's a lot of people – myself included, when I'm working elsewhere and sometimes your doing something and your trying to fit a brief or you've got an idea of what you're trying to achieve and it sort of stops the thing actually being very interesting. It just becomes like, oh yeah, we're just churning this out a bit and you're doing a job. But what's lovely about Heart n Soul is that everything, the music that's made there's always this really clear, creative expression and it's just saying, this right now, right here, la, la we're doing this.

ONO: Through working with Heart n Soul, it's made me want to try different things and not to be scared of change. It gave me a chance to do my own project as well, with my friend Holly, called Perky. It's about bras. It was a joint effort between me and Holly. We work really well together so we thought, ah, I think we could do this! We realised that women with a learning disability that came to Allsorts, they didn't wear a bra, or the correct size bra so we were wondering why. We trialled it at the end of last year. We had a laundry line of love where people could put all the funny and embarrassing bra stories up on a washing line

and we had a little tent called the hangout where women could go inside and take their bras off and just hang out. We found out that the reason why women don't like wearing bras because they had never been taught how to get the correct sized bras. So our plan is to take Perky into schools and into Youth Services.

NED: Aldean Blair, keyboard player and solo performer and writer, he's been involved with solo projects as a solo performer as well as working with young children and creating places like xenoverse and designing costumes and I've been lucky enough to be part of what he's been doing. And it's been great because I've been learning things from how he looks at music and how he writes music and I think he's been sharing in how I enjoy doing things as well. Generally I think Aldean's got a pretty good idea, a much better idea of what he wants to do than most people actually. My role is to try and help that happen. And of course, when you support anybody in that kind of way you learn from them and you enjoy what you do. So it's not like, it's so great that I'm around for him, it's not like that at all, it's a two-way thing.

ALDEAN: We were working together in 2010. I was introduced to Ned in Jazztronics. Ned showed me something new, brand new technique called the chords and soloing technique, like this one (PLAYS KEYBOARD). Ned just teaches me all the way, what he does it's like he's showing you how to be free to yourself. What I learned from Ned, sometimes I like that way he just...like this.. (PLAYS KEYBOARD) It's like Jazz. The way I work with Ned, it's like Wow, he just helps me become a musician. Ned's just trained me up, that's all he does. He's the master, Ned's the master, I'm the student. It's like batman and robin. It's like, OK, he's batman and I'm robin and we all work together.

ADELE: What was wonderful about being here is that it felt very anarchic. I really remember going to the annual general meeting here. That is something that if you worked for a normal company, would be super dry and probably a bit stiff.

But they did it in the theatre, for a start. Everyone was shouting out all the way through, just whenever they wanted to. They brought the accountant on, proper looked like an accountant with his suit, to come out and present the numbers. They made him come on to Pink Floyd's 'Money'. And he had to kind of strut on stage, while everyone was like Woohoo! Yeah! And I remember thinking, this is amazing, this is the kind of culture that you want to be part of.

ALDEAN: I was about 17. I came to the AGM meeting. There was a lot of people talking about Heart n Soul, how to get involved with them. And we're talking about how Heart n Soul really grows so fast. Lolita was talking as well, the hosting, all of them hosting together. I want to work with Heart n Soul so much because of my musical career. My first impressions were, some really positive attitudes; freedom and pride and joy, it was like, YEAH! I LIKE IT! And they have this big, huge pride and joy – massive, massive, getting so massive, it's amazing. You imagine they have this suit and tie and everything is so powerful and big and powerful and amazing.

SIMON: Yeah, so I sit on a number of boards. I suppose the difference is the formality and the politics of those big boards which you don't get with Heart n Soul. Which is why Heart n Soul board meetings are just entertaining and a joy to be at, because everyone just says what they want to say and there's no politics about somebody thinking, oh I shouldn't really say that or somebody's going to feel ill of them if they mention something. I'm not saying we're not professional because we are. I think the Heart n Soul board is very professional, but in some of the other boards you have to put your hand up and wait to be asked, whereas Heart n Soul isn't like that at all. If you feel like saying something, you say it. And there's a great mixture of people as well.

LISA: I said to Mark, hang on a minute you need someone with a disability on your board. Ooh, he said, that sounds like a good idea. I said it'd be a challenge to your staff to actually work alongside somebody with a disability, other than just

the theatre. I decided to come off the board and then branch off and go and work with the main Albany. The Albany board is made up of able-bodied people at the moment and there's only me with a disability on there. I went to one of their meetings and I put my card up, and I went, you've got a problem here. I said to them, if you don't change now and accept disabled people on your board it's never going to work, nothing's going to work for you to get things changed for the building. For me, it felt good because I was able to challenge them on different issues for disabled people. We were making sure that things were put right, making sure that the rights of disabled people were put right.

MAT: Before that, people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities were kind of kept in two separate camps. And the Heart n Soul vibe is all like mixing it all up. God it felt great, as a disabled, physically disabled person to be welcome in an integrated, learning disabled environment, as an equal, with non-disabled people and learning disabled people and me being physically disabled and all of us being equals in the Beautiful Octopus Club. That, ah! There's no parallel to that.

TILLEY: For a long time I wasn't really encouraged to be who I am. I had to try and dilute. It's like, I can be myself but only up to a point. It's like, I'm alright if you take me like an orange squash, just put that little bit in and fill the rest up with water. But the thing I noticed instantly about the BOC – I don't remember about the bands or anything like that- but what I do remember is that I did get a feeling that I could probably, well I still wasn't sure but I just got a feeling that I could actually be myself.

CATHERINE: I think one of the things that struck me from the beginning when I first encountered Heart n Soul, it was everybody seemed to be coming here purely to have a really good time. And there was this real open feeling of people just being here to enjoy themselves, whoever we all are, and a real ethos of acceptability, however anybody is, or whoever anybody is. We're welcome and we're all

treated as if we're worthy, valid human beings, whoever and however we are. There's something really unique about that.

DANNY: Yeah, I think we should share what we are, through Heart n Soul. Learning about us. What we do.

CATHERINE: Yeah, reaching more people and showing people who we are and what we do and inviting them to join us as well and get involved. It's like a family, I don't know how my life would be without it. It's a real example of how I think the world should be.

MUSIC: Heart n Soul Anthem

KEITH: They mean everything. They've looked after me, they've given me knowledge that I would never have, they've given me the opportunity to work with people that I would never have thought of working with. They've brought a lot into my life. Even today when I'm talking about various things, Heart n Soul crops up. Or I'll see Stefan Novak on the balcony – hello Keith!- or Janet, working in the library down at Lewisham. Working with Heart n Soul, it's taught me that it doesn't matter how you present on the street with disability, you're a human being like everyone else.

MAT: It means the total immersion of mind, body, heart and soul into a willingness and a determination to live in a world where we all live equally together, and it encompasses our differences. And when we help someone we're liberating ourselves, not that person.

JACQUI: I've seen people develop, I've seen things change and improve and get better. I've seen artists develop, I've seen people like Lizzie gaining confidence and share her life experiences with people. What it means to me is keeping

things real, pushing boundaries and saying there are no limits, that's what Heart n Soul means to me.

ONO: I see little Heart n Soul hubs being everywhere because everyone needs a tiny bit of Heart n Soul in their lives because it's unique and there is never a dull moment.

LIZZIE: Heart n Soul means; education, a lot of love, being in a family, and knowing where you belong.