

## **Big 30 Website**

### **Learning Disability Culture – Long Transcript**

PINO: We should be heard because we are human, we are human and we are people.

MUSIC: We Are Free, by Heart n Soul Experience, live from Munich

MARK: We had this band with three blind musicians and me on the bass and we were in the main space. I remember it was so exciting for everyone to have access to the actual stage itself. It wasn't just seeing someone else's show; it was your show.

PINO: It was ours, yeah.

MARK: I just remember the energy and the excitement; it was like people had been let out of jail, and that enthusiasm and that energy was so infectious. And I remember you said to me, Mark we want to show people what we can do and we want to reach as many people as possible.

PINO: That's right and we still want that today.

MUSIC: We are Free

PINO: I love performing in front of people. People are watching you and they're saying to you, oh this person's good at doing music.

MUSIC: I don't want to be a fool by Pino Frumiento

PINO: You know, they'll think of you as not a disabled person. That's important for me because I think, when I do things I feel like I'm not a

disabled person. When I don't do anything it makes me feel like the story's there as a person that's got disabilities.

TERRY: I always harp back to Pino's 'Dungeon of Love'. I just think that had so much to say for people with learning difficulties. Pino had, still, has got that voice that makes you want to cry for him sometimes. He had this yearning to want to be with the woman he loved and he couldn't. And it was that feeling that he put across and he put into the performance. But he was speaking on behalf of everyone with a learning difficulty I think, whether it was around a relationship or whether it was around what time they went to bed or not.

DEAN: I was thirteen

MUSIC: He likes the girls by Dean Rodney

DEAN: I remember the people at Heart n Soul were saying that they wanted to record some of the songs in the studio, especially 'He Likes the Girls'. And the following year I started to perform that song in different clubs around England, with the disabilities.

It was the Heart n Soul Club Posse. It was a couple of people from Heart n Soul that I remember; Mark Sneed, Pino, Lizzie, a lady named Hannah Marvelley. It was amazing going on tour with Heart n Soul, doing He Likes the Girls for the first time.

HANNAH: It was meant to be that clubs could hire them and there would be DJs as well, DJs and VJs and other clubs around the country could hire the Clubs Posse to come down and do their thing and perform, and there was a set of songs. I think Zoe really wanted to have it a bit stylised a bit more, so it felt like a group.

ADELE: I really enjoyed dressing Dean

HANNAH: Even Dean's outfit – I think a lot of people were like 'whaaaat?!'. Yeah, you put Dean in like, I remember these trousers that had girls on them.

ADELE: Oh yeah, they had all these pictures of girls all over them, but he really liked them, and a t-shirt that had a pattern all over it as well. He was really into the outfit, which was good. Dean's always been into wearing amazing things. And he knows what he likes.

MUSIC: The Beautiful Octopus Club, LIVE!

MAT: One my favourite ever memories of me working with Heart n Soul; it was club in Hackney, opposite Hackney Town Hall called Ocean and it was five floors. It's no longer with us but the Beautiful Octopus Club was at Ocean a few times and there were lots of different stages. By that time I was a regular participant and I had a stage and I did like a half hour set. And at the time I never liked when people in the audience were in the auditorium and you the performer are on stage. If people want to come and dance on stage, great! It means I get free dancers – it looks like there's more people in my band. And so I was like, come on, anybody who wants to come up and dance on the stage with me while I'm rapping away – come on up. But most people nervously don't do that, but at the Beautiful Octopus Club there's no such nerves. So I said that, and I was doing a reggae song at the time and everyone poured on stage. And there was this lady, 'wining and grinding' I believe is the expression. And here we have a situation where there's actual sexy stuff going on onstage and I'm celebrating it and we're all getting into it and I'm singing and everyone's dancing and the audience are really enjoying it. And I think in terms of

landing and feeling right with my people and everyone is people and we are all the same and isn't it beautiful and everyone's sexy and it's all great – I've never been happier.

LISA: The first time I went I got a reprimand from my mum; 'what time do you call this?!' I said I don't care mum. She thought I was going to be home at 10 o'clock – no! She had to get used to it.

LOLITA: The first time I went...do you know what, it was good actually.

RICKY: I think it was a Squidz Club. I remember dressing up and helping people to put makeup on and get ready and I had some pictures as well with some of the people there. And it's just beautiful memories, I just remember 'yeah, I want to be part of this.' It's something that I'd never experienced.

JENNY: It's an extravaganza; colourful, bright energetic, loads of smiley faces, loads of really interesting dancing, just a lot of individuality and loads of creativity. And there's a complete mix of people, people all together having fun in exactly the same way. The kind of club that it is, you can't go in and try and be cool or anything like that, because it just feels so transparent, you're in an environment where you can't put on any sort of front or façade because you're just going to stick out like a sore thumb. It's not like a lot of other clubs where you're going to go and people are trying to act a certain way or give off a certain impression – all of that just goes out of the window, just forget it! You've just got to totally let loose and that's what it's all about and I just think that's great.

ONO: At the Beautiful Octopus Club I was the roving reporter, I had a microphone and a sofa. It was a bit like Lorraine Kelly where people could come and sit on the sofa and I would ask them a few questions about the

night. They would say that they were having a really good night and they want it to be on every week.

ZELDA: It's just a night for so many people to get together from everywhere, people coming in off the street as well. Have you enjoyed that as well, Chloe? When Stera and all her mates came?

CHLOE: Yeah.

ZELDA: It's so enjoyable and it really breaks down that whole mystique of difference. We're all in it together and it's really quite exciting. I've always loved going to the clubs and I have a good dance as well because everyone's hair is down, so I have memories of coming for years and years. I have to say the Royal Festival Hall, it is a little overwhelming but it is an evening where people I didn't know are going to come and they come from Stratford and they've come from Clapham and Battersea and it's just a reunion.

MAT: I've watched first-timers – a social worker- where they come to the club and they look round and they're like 'what the f\*ck is this?!' and that all breaks down. And the social worker watches the person they've been working with finally having a good time in the way they want to have a good time. You watch a transformation, I've watched it keenly, quite a few times, in that person. And it opens up their understanding of who they're working with and then it opens up their own position in the working relationship. And then the next time they come it's all smiles and it becomes an assumption of having fun and it breaks down the strict regimented, clock on, clock off, this is my time, you're my client, I do this and it becomes personal and they become friends.

MUSIC: The Beautiful Octopus Club – LIVE

SIMON: The most recent one was the Royal Festival Hall. I was standing with Sandra, Sandra was counting numbers and we were on the veranda by the river, outside. And I was watching people coming down the Southbank and just coming across lots of people dancing. And there was a moment where they felt, you could see that they felt that perhaps I shouldn't be here and then five minutes later they were all joining. And it was just so all encompassing; it will stick in my mind forever that evening.

I was talking to a few of the parents. One guy had come from somewhere in Kent and had come up with his son and he said it was the only time in the year where he really enjoys himself. And you think this is so sad that he, I don't know what his environment is but for him and his dad, this was the event of the year. Shows you how it's not just for Heart n Soul-ers, it's for everyone.

DEAN: Performing in England is quite good than the other countries.

CHARLES: You prefer it?

DEAN: Yeah, I prefer it, because if we were performing in a different country the audience may not know who we are or where do we come from.

CHARLES: Yeah, I think both things are positive. Playing in the UK, especially playing to a home crowd is really nice. But I think whenever we've played in different parts of the world, people have always been really positive about the experience of watching us play. I remember in Istanbul there was a woman who came up to me and said, you guys are incredible, there's a club, Babylon and you should come and play because you guys are fantastic. So I think people instinctively, they are drawn towards us, even if they don't know who we are, they may not know who we are before a gig.

MUSIC: Monica 3000 by The Fish Police

CHARLES: We've always had a really good response. I remember when we went on tour in 2014, people didn't know who we were mostly, but we always had a really great response. Going away and getting on a plane and doing a gig somewhere else is always really exciting. Getting to play in New York in the Lincoln Centre in 2010 that was a big moment. It was really interesting because it was our first show outside of the UK, we'd never been abroad before.

DEAN: We hadn't been going to any countries from the other side of the world.

CHARLES: Absolutely! So to get a show in New York was just an amazing thing. I think it may have been the first, quote unquote mainstream show that we'd ever done, and that was interesting. We didn't even know what to expect. They really liked the show, which was good.

DEAN: One of my relatives came to see us perform. There was a couple of my cousins, my uncles and aunts and I was quite blown away by that.

ONO: In Heart n Soul's international project 'ART-is, where I got to go to Madrid and show the people in Madrid how people with a disability from a different country work. The disability scene in Madrid is not that good because they have only just started with having activities, because lots of people were in day services. There wasn't very meaningful roles for people out there who have a learning disability. I hope that it would show that people with a learning disability can do anything.

MUSIC: Aldean plays LIVE!

LILLY: Is there a piece of music you think of every time you get on a bus?

ALDEAN: Yeah, it's like this one. I've got two buses, one is at home and one is here right now - the Boris Master. It's not that small, it's just like a big like a box type. It's a plastic one and also its got lights in it, it's really good. It's red, London transport style. Since I was little I loved these type of London buses. You have the routemaster, the Leah Titan the classic routemaster, even the European one as well and also the Evolver E400. The noise and the vehicle and the model of it is amazing, they're the best buses ever.

ONO: I would like to travel. There are a few countries that I wouldn't mind going to see, like going to Australia and going to South America and going to Malaysia. And way, way, way in the future one day getting married, one day.

LOLITA: I set up a company called Stars in the Sky, it was a dating agency that I set up, 2005. Because there wasn't enough, people with learning disabilities wanted to go on dates and that was the reason why I set it up. And it went on for about eleven years it went on for. Two of my friends that have got a learning disability, they got married. I was on there, my ex-boyfriend was Raymond.

LISA: They still show it on the telly, on Channel Four. Yeah I saw him on the telly last night.

LOLITA: The first one that we did was Truly, Madly, Deeply and then it went on to the Undateables.

LISA: Well I met my Andrew from Heart n Soul, I was with him for fifteen years. You might as well say the clubs were a dating agency!



LOLITA: Me and Raymond did a poster together, I think you know which one I mean. To do with condoms and sex and safe sex. Hahahaha! 'Starkers' is the word, I will say that.

MUSIC: Puffing and Wooling soundtrack

TILLEY: Well, Puffing and Wooling is, I don't know if we can read anything to you. If you wouldn't mind closing your eyes. Basically, if you can imagine a scenario where you are encouraged to enter a room that is filled with LED candles, because we've got to be safe, different lighting, blankets and cushions and rugs and beanbags and soft toys – my owner loves to bring her collection. If you can get as comfortable as you can. Imagine that you're wearing the most comfortable, like a onesie or something like that. You've just had the loveliest bath or shower and you're just wrapping yourself in a really fresh-smelling and warm towel. It's really clean, it's like it's just come off the line.

Peaceful, puffing, fluffing, puffing. How softly are you snuffling? Soundly sleeping, lucky you! Is your blanket woolly enough? Cushions, soft toys, rugs, candles, some are old, some may be new. Our aim is for your comfort. We delight in making you feel good.

You can build dens, people feel that they want to write poetry, people want to sing, to debate, people fall asleep, every scenario is OK. And it's a mindset more than anything. Even if you don't have very much, when you have the mindset, you can switch to feeling calmer. And all we're doing is showing you that you can. Because even my owner with her high levels of anxiety, my owner can do it and my owner feels the health benefits. It's true that it's the mind and the body it helps, and you just have fun actually.

We're in a society now where unfortunately so many people are in like a rat race, they're on a treadmill nearly all the time. The reality is, maybe they can make the time but they don't feel they're worth the time, they feel that they're being lazy. And what we're trying to say, we're anti-feeling lazy, it's not being lazy to say that you're going to spend an hour or two a day, or you're going to have a duvet day. That is not lazy, that is what you need and that is good. It should be common sense. If other people are benefiting from this, this is what we want and we hope that maybe it's spreading so that more people will do this at home. And I think that's what's happening, I think people when they've finished and they go home it's resonating with people and they're remembering and they're making time, and that's what we wanted to achieve.

ISAAC: Where should I start? I always do the right thing at the right time. Got my family, I support my family, my friends, even my sister of course. I always look after them, take care of them, just be nice to my family so I can support them.

CION: The Albany has quite a community aspect to itself anyway, alongside of Heart n Soul. I feel that there's just a community aspect that I don't find at home. And for him to be able to leave home and find it here, I think it's great, because I feel like everyone should be used to that, this idea of community and love your neighbour and friends and being able to be yourself and these people will love you and accept you the same way. I think it's a very important thing for everyone.

ONO: I like doing outreach visits because young people that I go and see, they see what is possible for them when they meet someone that's a bit like them. And I think that all schools should do that, or all schools should be integrated so that young people with a disability don't think they are different, because they're just the same.

PINO: People with a disability and without is good to mix up, because some people sort of turn you away, you know? They think that you don't exist.

MAT: Julie said it to me, she said, you know you're different when you're around people with learning disabilities. I said, how? She said, you're more relaxed, you're more relaxed. And I said, yeah, it's because we're finally at a place where we're all equal and we can all put our barriers down. And that's very special because a lot of the time you have to have barriers up. But when nobody's nasty and everyone's the same you relax more and life's more fun, it's pretty simple, innit?

MUSIC: We Are Free

ALDEAN: In my life, I want to be a popular guy. It's important to be a cool guy, it's important to be myself, don't care what everybody think of you. But what's important to me is like, you want to be free, you want to be in your own world, not in the small world, your own big world, to be free.

We Are Free, by Heart n Soul Experience, live from Munich voiceover: Wait, wait, hold on, hold on. I just want you to know, all of you lot to know, right. No matter where we are, no matter where you lot are. We love you. We love you. Hoorah! That's the truth! We love you! Come on, give yourselves a clap. Hoorah! We love you.