



North Lanarkshire Council | Arts Development

Amplifying Artistry

Series 3, Episode 1 – “Arts as Measurement”

Transcript

00:00:02 Scott Fleming (Host)

Welcome to Amplifying Artistry, the podcast that turns up the volume on creativity in North Lanarkshire.

From right here in the heart of Scotland, we'll be looking at the creative spark that exists in all of us and the positive impact it can have on ourselves and those around us. In this series, we'll highlight people from all over our communities, exploring how creativity can play a vital role in our connections, our outlooks and our well-being.

00:00:28 Scott Fleming (Host)

So wherever you are, wherever you come from, and whatever you're going, join us, and coory in for the next wee while.

00:00:37 Scott Fleming (Host)

Hello and welcome to a brand new series of Amplifying Artistry, complete with a fresh lick of paint, especially thanks to our new music, composed and produced by Scotland-based musician Karen McIver. Don't worry, you'll hear a lot more of her work throughout the series. I'm your host, Scott Fleming. I work with the arts development team at North Lanarkshire Council.

00:00:57 Scott Fleming (Host)

And I'm also a professional creative myself. I'm an actor and a community arts facilitator, born and raised right here in North Lanarkshire, and it's been amazing to watch the creativity flourish across our communities in recent years. Believe it or not, we're already into our third series of Amplifying Artistry. What began as a limited run back in 2023 grew into a full second series in 2024, and now here we are halfway through 2025 with another exciting line up ahead. This podcast is all about turning up the volume on creativity in North Lanarkshire, and over the past 20 episodes, we've done just that.

We've met incredible local artists, explored vibrant creative spaces, and connected with the people who make one of Scotland's largest local authorities so special. In this new series, we're going even deeper, exploring what creativity really means and how it shapes our lives, from well-being and learning, to global opportunities and community transformation.

00:01:54 Scott Fleming (Host)

Will uncover how the arts can inspire, empower, and even change the world around us.

We've got 6 episodes coming your way, released every other month, each one packed with insight, passion, and plenty of creative energy.

Now, before we crack on, I'm aware we have a global audience who listen to Amplifying Artistry, and you may or may not know where North Lanarkshire is. North Lanarkshire is a local authority area in central Scotland, home to around 341,000 people. It sits nestled between Glasgow and Edinburgh. North Lanarkshire has deep roots in Scotland's industrial and political history and during the industrial revolution, towns like Motherwell, Coatbridge and Airdrie became powerhouses of coal mining, iron works and textiles. These were places of hard work, resilience and innovation.

00:02:42 Scott Fleming (Host)

And while many of the factories and plants have quieted in recent decades, that spirit hasn't gone anywhere. Today, the same communities that once powered Scotland's industrial engine are now more vibrant and diverse as ever, and we're thrilled to feel like there is a sense of cultural revival taking place; from professional artists basing themselves here, to our strong live music and theatre presence; the stories of the past are inspiring new generations of artists. It's a transformation rooted in heritage but looking firmly to the future.

00:03:29 Scott Fleming (Host)

In this episode, we're looking at how the arts and creativity can help us measure aspects of our life, not just in terms of productivity or achievement, but in deeper, more meaningful ways. Creative expression can offer insight into our emotional well-being, our sense of connection, and even our personal growth.

00:03:46 Scott Fleming (Host)

We were very lucky to catch up with Doctor Marisa de Andrade, health policy researcher and senior lecturer in Health, Science and Society with a background in Investigative and Broadcast Journalism and Performing Arts. Marissa is no stranger to North Lanarkshire, as with the University of Edinburgh, she was involved with our "Art Is Everywhere" research project, which led to North Lanarkshire Council's first ever arts strategy.

00:04:11 Scott Fleming (Host)

If anyone's an expert on the power of the arts, it's Marisa.

00:04:18 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

So, many moons ago, I was studying medicine and I did not like it very much because I used to enjoy being on stage and dancing and I decided to take a gap year to go to London and dance and be in shows. And then I ended up in New York, and I realised that I loved flip-flopping between medicine and science and health, and also the arts and humanities. And I kept studying, and I worked in radio and other humanities and projects and arts based projects and then kept also studying science, if you like; health, health management, health policy, health inequalities. And I realised that actually these two should not be separate. So part of my more

recent work is, or has been, leading a mass dispel research in health, humanities and arts. So bringing the two together and really understanding how we shouldn't really divide these two things, right. Science and arts are kind of put in different places because there's logic and rationality, and then there's these creative so-called arts-based, wishy-washy approaches and you can't evidence them and you can't prove them and, you know, you can't do that kind of stuff.

00:05:31 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

But actually, it's just a different kind of proof and a different kind of evidence. And so I've been spending the last 10 years of my research career building a programme of research around that called Measuring Humanity.

00:05:41 Scott Fleming (Host)

Okay, lovely. I think that's a really interesting point. You see, you're right. There's no, there's no equation for how dancing makes you feel. So you said that you've been looking at the link then. What has your, sort of, conclusions been at the moment.

00:05:56 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

So I mean to say that I would conclude at the moment is..I mean what I love about this kind of work is ongoing, and I don't think it will ever end, but where it started and where it's at now is...it started really by understanding; what does health mean to people, right? How did they define health in relation to being well?

A lot of people don't define health by health services like going to a doctor or going to...well, of course they they're really clear that they need good, you know, the NHS to be working well and functioning well. But actually what makes them well is about other things, about how other human attributes and it's really relational, right and creative at its core.

00:06:46 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

And it's about connecting with other people. So I, about 10 years ago, was funded by the NHS through what was then Grace of Glasgow and Clyde Health Board before integration, to come up with a framework for measuring, if you like, measuring or capturing what they were calling at the time "asset based approaches" to healthcare. So, you know, what is it that makes me

well, what are the assets that make me well? Because of being in this place, because I'm interested in music, because I'm interested in nature.

00:07:21 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

What do I know about my local community or my local ethnicity? Or you know, like whatever it is that makes me me, that is an asset. It's a positive psychology. Rather than focusing on the negatives and the deficit model of what makes me ill, and how do I fix it with a pill.

00:07:37 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

And so, by reframing that, part of it was like; how do you measure that these approaches link to creative community engagement, make you well and improve health outcomes because that's what the NHS is always trying to do; to meet its targets, to get more money, blah blah blah.

00:07:53 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

I started going into communities and engaging through music predominantly at the start and then through whatever they wanted to, like visual arts or performing arts or performative stuff. Essentially anything that communities wants to do. And it was through that vehicle of creativity and coming together in a creative space that's shared...that's where the magic started to happen, you know? And that's where, you know, the greatest finding for me is that people become well, people become connected, people leave social isolation. People move out of clinical practise at the clinical settings or stop taking medication after a while because they're connected to other people, they're connected to nature, and they're connected to themselves. And that doesn't happen in a cave, right? That happens in relationships.

00:08:48 Scott Fleming (Host)

Of course. So, speaking of community, you've mentioned that you've travelled, you've been all over the place. I think we can definitely hear bits of everywhere that you've mentioned in your accent, which is really interesting. How did you end up in North Lanarkshire?

00:09:02 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

Ohh North Lanarkshire. So it started...my first relationship with North Lanarkshire was meeting Deborah McArthur. I want to say...ohh it was during COVID so that blur. So 2021-ish, maybe?

Maybe 2020. Anyways, we were both on the Board for Youth Theatre Arts Scotland at the time. She was leaving and I had just recently joined and she reached out to me and said “would you want to have a virtual coffee? Because it sounds like you're doing some really cool stuff. North Lanarkshire Council has recently integrated the the Arts team into the Council and we don't really have a strategy. We have a blank sheet of paper, we don't quite know what to do to build an art strategy like you know, how do we do this? I work in policy and health policy connected to particularly creative practise and arts. And so this is kind of what I do”. And I was like, “yeah, let's have a chat”. And it was just so obvious that I was such a brilliant example to have a blank sheet of paper. And move from essentially nothing other than a shared purpose to Co-produce a strategy for the arts for North Lanarkshire Council to tackle inequalities.

And we just put our heads together and we went for a big bid. The first one wasn't that huge. It was, you know, around 150,000. But we got it, right, and it allowed us to start experimenting in different communities in North Lanarkshire with different strands of work and that became Art Is Everywhere, which was amazing and we were able to do some really cool stuff, led to North Lanarkshire Council's first ever approved strategy for the arts, which has been signed off. So the plan and linked to the plan and all of that stuff. But we didn't stop there and we just really, this is amazing. We need to develop this into a model and so again, mobilising our networks, we built more creative hubs across Scotland and we got more funding. We got another quarter of a million and then we got two and a half million and now we're part of this wider project called REALITIES, through North Lanarkshire Council's arts team is at the helm.

00:11:25 Scott Fleming (Host)

We'll be hearing more from Marisa throughout the episode, but for now, speaking of REALITIES, here's a new segment where we'll be doing a regular check in on all the work that we're doing here in North Lanarkshire for the realities project.

00:11:39 Deborah McArthur

My name is Deborah McArthur, I'm the Arts Development and Engagement Manager for North Lancashire Council and a community embedded researcher for REALITIES. REALITIES is a research project funded by the UKRI, mobilising community assets to tackle health inequalities.

We're researching broken systems, causing communities health inequalities and we're using creativity as a research tool. REALITIES is a three-year research project and in this series of Amplifying Artistry, we will be checking in on what's happening on the ground across North Lanarkshire. In this episode, we were grateful to check in with Erasme, one of the artists working on REALITIES, and Vincent, who's a participant.

We hear about some of their experiences in the project and about how communication can lead the way to a sense of belonging and community.

00:12:27 Erasme Kakonge

My name is Erasme Kakonge and in terms of the REALITIES project I am the sound engineer and sort of the musician. That's pretty much my role. So I'm kind of there just to record and capture the data, the footages and all this kind of stuff and then just put it together. Music is important to the REALITIES project because I believe personally it's what connects everybody together and everybody involved within the REALITIES project. So music, in a sense, kind of brings us together. It doesn't matter what's going on, whether we're doing something specifically to do with music or not, having that kind of musical element brings us all on the same train. So in the REALITIES project, the barriers from the musical aspect which I'm in, is getting the music to connect with the people that are coming in because the people that are involved are from different parts of the world.

So what music I would normally understand doesn't necessarily resonate with them. So that's the barrier. So it's not always easy trying to connect with them through the music that I know. But I overcome it by just simply speaking to them, by asking them what kind of music they like. I mean we also have another member, and so I speak to them privately before we do our sessions and things like that. And then I sort of do my research, in a sense, then come back and try and connect with them through what I've researched and their face lights up and like "ohh". I have the information now of what would work with them.

00:14:06 Scott Fleming (Host)

Because as you said, music does connect people, and that is a gap between people.

00:14:12 Erasme Kakonge

Yes, yes, absolutely. Yeah, that's basically it.

00:14:18 Vincent

My name is Vincent, originally from Nigeria, and I moved over to Scotland from my home country. I work with BT Group, you know, and the Voice Services department. The REALITIES program, is something I really welcome because you cannot overemphasise the benefits of being welcomed in any community. Being welcome and not being welcome can make a whole lot of difference. I'm a part of the REALITIES programme, because I believe in Community. That's the only way we can live life optimally as one. So I know what a community can achieve together. The feeling is inexplicable. You can't quantify, and that's the sense of community because you know you have it, you're enjoying it, but it's multiplied by people just celebrating with you. Imagine someone that is down in the hospital and you just get messages or "get well soon" from everybody, trust me; you start feeling well, that is the power of community.

So life was meant to be communal. That's the way God created the world for those that do not believe in God. Whatever you believe, that life is meant to be a community. Because none of us has it all, you could be tall, you can be short. You could be fair. You can be dark.

And I'll put it this way; we are all intertwined and that is what makes it beautiful. The blue, the green, the pink, the purple. So community is the best way to be happy.

00:16:02 Deborah McArthur

Part of REALITIES is about reimagining. Reimagining the barriers that create health inequalities and seeing them as opportunities for change. When the right people come together, when real connections are made, something powerful happens. Obstacles start to shift and new possibilities emerge.

In North Lanarkshire, we're seeing that happen in real time, from building a stronger social prescribing network to supporting those who identify as new Scots. Creativity and collaboration are helping us rethink what's possible.

This isn't just about services, it's about people, ideas and the chance to imagine something better.

00:16:42 Scott Fleming (Host)

We'll be checking back in with the REALITIES project each episode, but for now, let's head back to our interview with Marissa where I ask her her thoughts on creativity being overlooked by policymakers and the general public who don't see the obvious link between artistry and academia.

00:17:00 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

So that's one of the big questions that we faced in Art Is Everywhere which we like to call Phase 1 of this funding because then we got phase two, which was REALITIES 2 and now we're in phase three which is ongoing till February 2027. But when Art is Everywhere was conceptualised, we thought, okay well what is art, you know what is creativity?

And what we were really seeking to do was to not think of it as an elite practise or something that was in a museum or in a gallery or something that you had to do, or only some people kind of do, or you have to be educated in a particular way. That's not to say that obviously...there is huge value in high end art and you know, artistic practise that is, you know, that people spend years studying like I'm not, you know...and performing and I'm not sort of discrediting that kind of art form, but we believe that art is everywhere and it's in every conversation, it's in every encounter and that creativity is sparked in very simple ways in, maybe, sometimes everyday ordinary things.

And so through that lens, I mean, we can be creative in anything that we do. We can be creative about how we adapt a policy and how we try and shape policy, you know, that's creativity, you know. I play a lot with policy. I kind of talk about magical realism in policy because a lot of the policies that are created don't make any sense to the people that they're meant to work for, or the communities they're meant to serve. So I think that's pretty magical. And I play with the concept of policy being a bit of a nonsense, right, for the people that it's created for, and I know that because the community members I engage with tell me that, right. I'm not making this up myself. So, yes, I think creativity is everywhere. But I think what's happened because we live in a very evidence-based society when it comes to, you know,

distribution of funding or funding models or commissioning or approving things and outcomes; it's done in a very particular way that if you, you know, if you can't prove a certain number, or a certain kind of value for money, which is quite often misaligned with the human experience, then it's just dismissed as being not really evidence-based or not really something that can be sustained, or not really leading to improvements in health.

But of course, we know that these kind of things can't be measured in the same way, because when you feel something, when you're watching a play or you listening to a piece of music and you get the shivers, you can't put that on a measurement scale. It's something entirely different, right?

00:20:04 Scott Fleming (Host)

And now we invite you to take a minute for yourself, and just listen...

00:20:39 Mick O'Neil

Bonnie Scotland by McNeil.

Well, Scotland, Bonnie, Scotland. How did you come to be?

In whatever tongue you choose to use, regale your tale to me.

But tell me honest, tell me true. Show your hand that I may see.

Ohh Scotland, Bonnie Scotland. Who did you come to be?

From ancient scribes and warring tribes, Roman walls and roads of stone. Defiances, alliances, pit clans against their own.

In blood soaked glens, friends murdered friends. Black treachery cut deep.

Crops laid to waste folks left in haste made way for grazing sheep.

Ohh Scotland, Bonnie Scotland, whole victories and defeats. Reformation, constipation. Human faeces in the streets.

Politicians, cloaked seditions and religions named forsake. Robbing graves and trading slaves, burning witches at the stake.

Ohh Scotland, bonnie Scotland. Is this what you chose to be? A green or blue divide as wide as one you'll ever see.

The Flower of Scotland wilting, 'midst the land of the wheelie bins, majestic stags and pipers on the lids of shortbread tins.

00:22:21 Scott Fleming (Host)

The music you've just heard is from when Afton Strings performed as part of our Music in the Museum programme, which aims to bring unique performances to North Lanarkshire, breaking down financial barriers by aiming to make these events accessible to everyone.

00:22:36 Scott Fleming (Host)

We also heard from Mick O'Neill, a participant of one of our monthly creative writing classes, reading an excerpt of one of his own pieces, which was devised in one of the sessions.

00:22:46 Scott Fleming (Host)

And now back to Marissa's interview.

00:22:49 Scott Fleming (Host)

Yeah, and you mentioned that earlier that you wouldn't say that you've reached a conclusion so to speak. And you said that you might never reach a conclusion. Is that partly why? Because it's not something you can quantify?

00:23:00 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

Well, we're not trying to quantify it, I mean to some extent we do when we have to. You know, so we have, in REALITIES, 5 geographical hubs, North Lanarkshire being one of them. But we also have 5 work streams and one of them is a quantitative work stream where we look at, you know, big data sets where we're looking at an index of community assets. We very much are embracing numbers as well as looking at different approaches to conceptualising measurement. So one of the things that we're looking at is how do you transcend measurement? You know, how do you think beyond measuring as a yardstick or as something that you can put a number on or something, why not embrace the effective nature of measurement, you know, we were writing a paper with North Lanarkshire Council and a couple of your colleagues on "Music as measurement". You know, why do we always think of

impact or evaluation as something which is about a number when you wouldn't listen to music or go to a festival or watch a film and be like, oh, that was a 4, I mean, I know we still do that, but it's like my 4 is not your 4. What does it mean? It's a meaningless exercise, actually, and it's like, so subjective, really. But we pretend it's objective when it comes to the arts, which actually makes you laugh a little bit. But we've almost like, been Co opted into this space where you're like, oh, if we can prove it in the same way that you can prove that taking a particular pill will make you better then we're onto something. And just so I can also say there are huge amounts of academics who've built really strong evidence bases and careers in evidencing the arts through those traditional approaches quantifying large scale evidence and you know Daisy Fancourt's work is, you know, is really prolific in putting the arts on the map in terms of health and well-being because the approach was predominantly linked to quantifiable data. But we argue that's not the only way. And it shouldn't be the only way.

00:25:23 Scott Fleming (Host)

So I'm curious, in terms of the REALITIES project, you mentioned one of the streams is trying to get quantifiable data. How do you go about capturing that data? What do you take, so to speak?

00:25:34 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

So the big question always is; why are you measuring?

What are you measuring? But the big question is why? Because people measure because they think that, well, they need to prove something. So the bigger question is like, what are you trying to prove and who are you trying to prove it to? And we kind of start from that space of critical inquiry, which is if we are looking at healthy systems, and we're saying that in order for the system to be healthy, let's say it needs to achieve that outcome and we know that in order to achieve that particular thing, we need to arrive at a certain number or hit a particular target or prove a particular thing, what we'll then end up doing is capturing data and evidence to prove it, which we can do, and then essentially we'll potentially maybe be gaming that system, right? And so a lot of our work in REALITIES is about embracing that concept, and there's a lot of evidence around this. It's based on something that Toby Low and some of his other colleagues have created around human learning systems. You know, we know that if you chase something or you kind of say that you have to go and get it, we end up gaming systems in

such a way that you can move further and further away from the truth. I kind of use that word loosely, right? And so actually, what if you approach learning and capturing data or capturing evidence from a learning perspective? A human learning perspective? Well actually we're not gathering this evidence or this data to hit something or to prove something. We're gathering this evidence and this data to learn something. And when we learn it or when we learn a particular thing about the system, it may not be the thing we want to know. And it may actually tell us something that doesn't suit our outcomes, but through this process of learning and being radically honest about it and providing feedback in such a way that we put the context behind the data and the evidence and create the conditions that people don't get punished or then deemed to be failures as a result of it. Then what that does is it leads to learning that flourishes and becomes part of the next learning cycle where you can take that data and use it in a meaningful way, right? But if we kind of capture it in such a way where it's either gamed or it's through a particular lens to prove a particular thing, which may or may not actually be happening or real, then we can actually do more harm than good in our communities and we kind of really trouble that. So yeah, we do create service and we do create approaches where we are trying to understand things about particular places and particular ways. But we're always putting that in dialogue, in conversation with the human or the community on the other side of it. To really challenge or breathe life into some of the stuff that doesn't seem to make sense if you just look at the number.

00:28:56 Scott Fleming (Host)

Hmm is there something that you discovered about North Lanarkshire through this project that maybe you were surprised by or weren't aware of before?

00:29:03 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

In relation to what specifically do you think?

00:29:06 Scott Fleming (Host)

Just the REALITIES project in terms of maybe the data of creativity and the effect that it can have or just something about this community in general.

00:29:16 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

So the work we do in North Lanarkshire is kind of spread across quite a few different communities and so when we think about a community, we really break it down to, you know, how does the community define itself and what community specifically are we looking at? So an example in North Lanarkshire that we're looking at is with so-called new Scots, right? And I love the idea of people being welcomed into Scotland; asylum seekers, refugees, under the banner of New Scots. So the question then becomes “do you feel like you're a new Scot?”

00:29:58 Scott Fleming (Host)

We've been hearing throughout this episode how hard it can be to measure creative impact. Often we can't look at numbers or data, but rather an emotional response. We've spoken to creatives in North Lanarkshire who have shared some of the affect that they've seen their work have on people who have experienced it and how shedding a tear or two may in fact be a good thing, championing our sense of shared experience and community. We'll hear from Siobhan Argyll, a composer; Hannah Doyle, a poet and songwriter; and Emma Ferla, a sustainable visual artist, discussing what they can see happen when people witness their work.

00:30:35 Siobhan Argyll

I've been asked actually by several people, “did I write The Little Iceberg to make people cry”? It's like, no, no, but I think this is where music comes into its own because if the musical resonates with you on any level, whether that's anger, whether that's fear, whether that's loneliness, whether that's about friendship, whatever that happens to be, then there's probably a reason for that, like within your own life and where you happen to be at that, that place and time. So I didn't really anticipate what would happen. I didn't know how people would react, and I probably was quite taken aback at the reactions I had from it, and now we always say if people cry, we go on the basis of a successful performance; how many people did you make cry? But who all could be happy and with a feeling of “OK, what really matters in life”? And I think this is particularly relevant now, actually the friendships that we make, the people who are there for us, even if they don't know the full story, even if they don't know what's going on, you have somebody who can show compassion and who can show love in the moment spirit, we really need it.

00:32:04 Scott Fleming (Host)

Yeah, totally. And it's really interesting you say as well, that music and art has that effect on people and in so many ways, kind of fundamental, I think you're right. We need it. And yet it is one of those things that's really hard to quantify. You can't always measure it or put sort of statistics on it. So it's interesting as well that you say that like if someone cries, it means that you've done a good job. Is that some of the reactions that you look for when you're putting a bit of work out there?

00:32:34 Siobhan Argyll

I guess I don't go with any expectation because of course you will meet people at all different levels of their own journey and where they happen to be. I think what should be telling though is; we did feedback after every performance in Glasgow and Edinburgh as well we had, you know, children writing in a feedback form that this show helped me breathe. This show has, like, helped me get rid of the feeling of being anxious. There was real depth to these, you know, comments and we've kept all of that feedback. And they understood the message.

00:33:33 Scott Fleming (Host)

So I understand, talking about like, you know, the songwriting and stuff, you've worked with dementia patients in the past with the sort of songwriting projects, can you talk a little bit about that?

00:33:45 Siobhan Argyll

Yeah, that was by accident. So I was working in a centre in West Lothian, specifically for those adults who were experiencing memory loss, early signs of dementia, or any kind of degenerative illness and...it was because somebody brought along a fantastic book and it was like all the Glasgow Evening Times front pages over these years. And of course it was absolutely brilliant. So we talked a lot about memory and the fact that song and music allows people to reconnect, you know, a past with a present and what I then found was that tapping into the senses...so if you brought like, the smell of bread, or if you brought the sound of shipbuilding and you brought that to them like, what could they remember? But of course, what you find is that people, regardless of where they happen to be in that continuum of life is that they were able to like...they might only be able to piece together this story of their dad or somebody that they knew who'd worked there or someone else, you know, sailing down the

Clyde...but what they were then able to do was to go, OK? What was the noise at a shipyard? So I remember writing this song with them called “Shipbuilding” and it's probably one of my favourite songs I've ever written with a group and they were fabulous because they then of course were saying. Ohh I have this memory and I have this memory but what was really outstanding about that was week in week out they could remember the song. So whatever song that they wrote then they were like “that's my song. Can we sing my song?” Another one was; one of the gentlemen coming in and telling me a story about gold in the mountains, and he said “yeah, there's gold in the mountain”. He told me this big story of gold in the mountains in Scotland. So of course I looked it up and he was absolutely bang on. Although can I just hasten to add, I have never actually found any gold, partly because I've never gone looking for it, but also because, like I would end up, you know, with, I don't know, not gold anyway. But I wrote this song with this group. Or rather they wrote the song, I just guided them and it was called Gold in the Mountains. And every week: “can we sing Gold in the Mountains?” And they remembered the words. They remembered the lyrics. And I was really, really struck by the fact that then what that does is it creates an even greater bond between myself as, you know, the professional, if you like, and meeting them where they are. And I've done a couple of songwriting sessions in a couple of the care homes near me as well, and in the community and some of the songs are so beautiful and the stories are just incredible. And of course, people being able to voice these and to put these into that creative form, like what you always find is that the emotion flows. So like, people start crying. People start laughing. So you've got this outpouring of emotion And I think particularly in Scotland, where we're very good at suppressing all of that, I think that that is needed again now more than anything. So when I've done the work with those with memory loss and things, it has been an utter, utter joy and especially when they are people who have written songs about people that they have lost, people that they remember, so who can they recall?

I remember going for a walk in the mountain with “Fruitcake”, you know. So you take whatever their memory happens to be and place it in this in this kind of musical form and it's just been one of the most humbling things I've ever done and continue to do and I think that people will say “ohh they can't do that. People can't do this. They can't” and say no. I think everyone's got a song in them. Everyone.

00:38:55 Scott Fleming (Host)

Yeah. Yeah, that's a really good a really good lesson and it goes back to what we were saying at the start as well about measurement because you can't always put a statistic on things, but that is one way of measuring exactly how beneficial the arts can be because they're coming in every week and remembering the songs.

00:39:24 Scott Fleming (Host)

Externally, would effect do you see happening on the people that you're performing your work for, or that that you're showcasing it to?

00:39:30 Hannah Doyle

It depends. So I think, it's nice to see how people react when I sing, because I think, before, when I was singing growing up, I would only really sing in school for music exams, right, and never really obviously sang in front of anybody. So I think that first time that I sang in front people, it was my family, and my family are all very musical, right? There's a lot of pressure singing front of the DoYLES because they're just all so creative. So I think I was so scared to actually perform. But see, whenever that first time I did perform, everybody stood up and they were cheering. And my dad was greeting and my aunties were greeting and all that.

00:40:10 Hannah Doyle

And I was like ohh sugar like this is...I must be quite good. I do remember thinking I can hold a tune. I knew I could sing. I just didn't think I was good to, to like actually perform. So I think whenever they did react like that, I was like ohh OK, maybe I'm actually better than than I ever thought. And then when I sing at weddings and funerals and people will speak to me at the end of it and tell me like that it was amazing or whatever, and I think I'm in disbelief. I'm just like "what, are you listening to the same person"? But I think it's nice because a lot of people say that I've got similar voices to my aunt and my Gran. And when I hear that, I'm like "right, OK, I love that" because I love being connected to them in some way. And I know they're good. So if anybody ever says "oh, you're like them" I'm like, "oh, OK. Right. Maybe I'm doing better than I think", but it's just, it's a really nice feeling to be able to connect with people. I'll joke, I had a gig for my year being sober, I had a small gig just to celebrate my year being sober, and I had my aunts and my friends and everybody there, and although when I was singing, everybody was greeting, I was like, yass. So I must be doing I must be doing good. But it was a good cry. They

were proud and a lot of it was nostalgic and singing songs that my family used to sing, things like that. Then I was holding back tears cause I was wanting to greet.

When you hear people saying that they cry or whatever, then you automatically think the worst thing, but actually sometimes it's a good thing.

00:41:55 Scott Fleming (Host)

We've spoken on this podcast about measurement, specifically in an academical way, but it's really hard to put metric and data on the effect that creativity can have on people. But then you perform in a room and people are crying and you just feel it. And like, that's your data.

00:42:13 Hannah Doyle

That's so true. That's such a good way of thinking about it. Because I really thought for so long that I wasn't academic and I was not smart enough to do these things, and I did a swap-access course through Access to Humanities. So I went and did that later in life, and then went to Uni, went to Glasgow Uni which I never ever thought I could do. When I left school to have a child at 16 I never thought I'd go uni let alone go to Glasgow Uni and I went and it wasn't for me, I did love it, but it was far too hard. And I'll be the first to admit it. And I think sometimes you do need to say "actually these things aren't always the best things for people". And I went to do psychology and didn't realise that I could do theatre so I ended up studying theatre at the same time, but again I was still drinking. I was still not confident in myself to the point when I was studying theatre, I still didn't even perform in the theatre show, and I contributed in other ways and I was dying to be on that stage, but I just was far too scared and I also felt far too old. Like I know I'm not old, but I think compared to all the young ones that just came out of school and I was like, oh, I'm so out of place. Now I would be totally different because I'm in a totally different headspace, but I think that kind of stopped me from leaving, and then I left and I was so, like, disheartened that I'd left uni and I was like, I can't believe I've gave up. But actually I gave up to then pursue other stuff and other creative things. Like you say, you get more from singing for people and feeling that emotion than you do grades. So I've never really thought about that. I like that point.

00:44:04 Scott Fleming (Host)

So you said that you've been displayed, you know, in Bellshill and you had a gallery elsewhere as well, did you get to see the public interacting with your pieces? What was that like?

00:44:19 Emma Ferla

It's fantastic when you see that light bulb moment go off in somebody's head when they've approached the piece, they're like, oh, that's a nice little landscape or a nice piece of jewellery. And then it clicks what it's made from and the feedback from the merchant that might make...I was actually really, really overwhelmed with that in Lanark, the feedback was just amazing from people like "this is amazing" and I've had some..people who are not buying anything but having those conversations about "we really do need to be doing something about rubbish" and telling people: "look at what can be done with it". There's actually no excuse. So, yeah, it's been really, really nice.

00:45:07 Scott Fleming (Host)

Fantastic. So on the back of that then, people saying stuff needs to be done about this, what sort of impact have you seen either in the community or wider as a result of some of the artwork that you've made?

00:45:18 Emma Ferla

Yeah. Impact...I hope that people are collecting their plastic rather than throwing it away. So there are people collecting plastic specifically for me, which is great because that means I've got more material to work with. Yeah, but also people are having that thought before putting it in the bin. Actually this can go somewhere and be used. It's also having an impact on people. We've got local woodland clean ups who are having those conversations as well. I have been a couple of years ago in conversation about having an art piece in the woods to kind of coincide with "don't drop your litter. Look what it could be" kind of thing. So hopefully that will come to something one day.

00:46:13 Scott Fleming (Host)

Thank you to Siobhan, Hannah and Emma for sharing their experience with us. And now for a final check in with Marissa, where she talks about where she sees her work going in the future.

00:46:24 Scott Fleming (Host)

So in terms of the link between creativity and academia, where do you see that going in the future? Is there anything in your particular practise that you're looking to explore further?

00:46:34 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

Yeah. And it's not just my practise. We're part of a massive mobilised network of academic thinkers, funded by governments, research and innovation, like the main funder, linked to government funding, linked to transdisciplinary movements here, so, so connected to medicine connected to science, connected to industry, thinking together about this. So. this isn't a small movement anymore. This is a very mobilised movement. So it's part of that bigger programme. So REALITIES is one part of it. And there are 11 other consortiums, I think, in the programme. It's got £30 million funding. We're kind of looking at the data at a meta level and we're doing it right across the UK, across the devolved nations. So we're all finding that creative approaches, lived experiences are telling us something more meaningful. So everything I'm saying today isn't just happening in North Lanarkshire. We're finding this now across the piece. They're international examples as well. How that connects to reconceptualizing data, evidence and policy making, and how that changes the way that we're influencing government to fund and shape policy in a particular way. For example, HM Treasury, you know...lobbying them and advocating for more funding to go towards creative health. Ensuring that when we talk about lived experience in communities, we're really centering lived experience in terms of everything from IP (intellectual property) to agency, to ownership, to Co authorship, so that it's not that we're using you to get the data that we need, but it's just flipping that whole thing.

Planetary health, how all of this is linked to planetary health...these are all some of the bigger themes that we're tackling.

00:48:35 Scott Fleming (Host)

What advice, if anything, would you give to young researchers or artists who want to work at the intersection of sort of creativity and social impact?

00:48:47 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

Well, I think the first bit of advice I would give is to spend some time with yourself, connecting to yourself and trying to understand what it is that it means to you to be creative and to be

well. And to be connected to yourself, what do I mean by that? I mean, you can chase the money, you can chase the funding. You can chase the programme. Whatever, you know, and have different reasons for wanting to do creativity or be an artist or, I don't know, it can range from anything from wanting to be famous to wanting to work in the arts to, you know, whatever, I don't know. But ultimately I think if you want to really connect your own calling and purpose and creativity to something bigger...because we need to work on these issues in society, we live in a very complex world that's full of trauma and collective trauma. We can do something, but, but in order to do something at that wider level, that systemic level, I think you really need to know who you are. What are you doing? Why are you doing that? What is your purpose? What is guiding you on that inquiry? And then from that place, work on your craft, stay connected to your craft. Have your rituals, have your behaviours, keep them consistent for meaningful relationships with people who are connected to your values, not because they've got money or because they're the big hitters, but because they're in alignment with you and your vision and what you need and what you want and through that path I think you connect to the bigger purpose, the bigger piece, yeah.

00:50:37 Scott Fleming (Host)

You mentioned at the start there taking time to discover who you are. Is there any methods you would recommend for doing that? Anything that's worked for yourself maybe in the past?

00:50:49 Dr. Marisa de Andrade

Yeah. So we're all different, right? But for me, I chopped and changed a lot and I didn't know what I wanted to do, partly because I thought I needed to do a particular thing because that's the thing that would make me happy or that's the thing that looked good on the tin, or that's the thing that would give me a solid career or make me this, that or the other. I don't think anything is guaranteed. So maybe I was too scared to make decisions and fail, right? Or you know, look like I was failing or be a failure or...I don't know. There's like a huge ego thing, so I just tried and experimented lots of different things and then I got to a point where instead of chasing the money, I kind of woke up one day and I was like, if I want to be an academic, a serious academic, then I need to go for these pots of money and I need to go for those funders and I need to research that thing...and I woke up one day and I was like, Oh my goodness, this is deadly boring. Like, I cannot see myself doing this for the rest of my life, I don't want to and it

was like reversing a tanker, right? Because then I was like, well, what do I want to do? And so it was just injecting that kind of energy into...it doesn't matter if you gave me £1,000,000 to do project on that, I don't want to do it. Don't give me the money. And I'm not gonna chase that money and you know, and I'm gonna do the things that feel meaningful to me. And so I've got, like, a meditative practise. I'm into meditation and, you know, into body practises, whatever I like. I just try and do more work to stay connected to how my body connects to my mind, connects to my spirit, and that for me is a part of it as well.

And I just, I mean, I lose my way all the time and then I just keep going back. And going back, just arriving again and just arriving again and then, oh, I'm feeling really angry about the system today or really helpless or really apathetic about everything. And then it's the return and just keep returning and keep returning. And it's moment to moment practise for me, yeah.

00:52:52 Scott Fleming (Host)

Thank you to Marisa for giving us her time and providing such a fascinating insight into where art meets measurement.

00:52:59 Scott Fleming (Host)

As we wrap up this episode of Amplifying Artistry, we just want you to reflect on some of the themes that we've discussed about measurement and artistic impact.

Have a think about how you feel when you engage with the arts, whether that's listening to your favourite song, binge watching a new TV show, or reading a thrilling new page turner...what impact does it have on your well-being and does it change how you look at and engage with the world around you?

As always, thank you for listening and we'll see you next time.

00:53:30 Erasme Kakonge

Amplifying Artistry is a podcast by the North Lanarkshire Council Arts Development Team. To find out more about the team, the work that we do and how you can boost your creative health, search for North Lanarkshire Arts. This episode was hosted and recorded by Scott Fleming, edited by Erasmo Kakonge. Original music was composed and produced by Karen McIver and the episode was produced and directed by Aaron Hawthorne for North Lanarkshire

Council. REALITIES was funded by a UKRI, mobilising community assets to tackle health inequalities, research grant for the project, titled REALITIES in Health Disparities, researching evidence based alternatives in living imaginative, traumatised integrated embodied systems reference AH Z5054561. The project LED is Marisa de Andrade at the University of Edinburgh. Other Co investigators include the University of Bath, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Dundee, Glasgow School of Art, North Lanarkshire Council, Ethnic Christian Trust, Flip of the Coin. Artlink central, Ochill Youth Community Improvements and 9 Worlds Community Gardens. All interview and audio excerpts have been included by kind permission from the participants. You have been listening to Amplifying Artistry. See you next time.

END OF TRANSCRIPT.

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