**(Job 95337) C&A S01E05**

(I: Interviewee P: Participant)

Intro: Before we begin, we’d like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land that we’re recording on. The Wurundjeri-willam clan and Bunurong people and give our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We encourage everyone listening to consider the Traditional Owners of the land, they’re living and thriving on and consider the benefits that may come from a Treaty with the First Peoples. This is, was and always will be Aboriginal land.

[Music]

I: Leisa Prowd is a dancer, performance artist and choreographer. Her main interests lie in Pedestrian Movement, Butoh, Contact Improvisation and exploring the uniqueness of her own body in relation to space and other bodies. Leisa was a member Weave Movement Theatre and Rawcus Theatre Company for several years and has performed in numerous short films, festivals and theatre productions both locally and internationally. She has been touring intermittently with contemporary dance companies, Hodworks in Hungary and Unusual Symptoms in Germany as part of the ensemble of Harmonia, a contemporary dance produced by Theatre Bradman in Germany.

Leisa returned from performing in Germany to be one of the inaugural artist of the Warehouse Residency, a deaf and disability lead arts project of The City of Melbourne’s Art’s House in Melbourne. Through this residency, Liesa developed ‘I Am Not This Body.’ Hi, Leisa.

P: Hi.

I: Hi, a lot of what you do is about your body, can you tell people that don’t know you, can you tell them about your body.

P: Yeah, sure. I am 117 cms tall which is the average height of a six-year-old child and as you can tell from my voice, I am not a six-year-old child, I’m in my 50s. So, yes, I have a condition called achondroplasia which is the most common form of dwarfism and it occurs in one in every 25,000 births, I want to say. So, yeah, that’s my body.

I: How did you find dance as a way of expressing yourself?

P: Well, I’ve always been interested in dance, ever since I was a small child. Like, from the age of five, I went to ballet class in my local community and just loved it but my parents didn’t put me through ballet school beyond that, but I’ve always loved dance and when they had dance as part of the sport in school that was the one thing I could excel at. It really wasn’t until I was in my late 30s and early 40s that I started doing something about it. Like, I joined adult dance classes at my kids’ drama school and then because I was working at Art’s Access, I got in touch with the wonderful Janice Florence from Weave Movement Theatre and I said how much I loved what they did and I loved dancing and she said, “Come along.” And the rest is history.

Dance just really helps me get in touch with my body and the uniqueness of what it is. Before I met Weave, I used to think dance was pure choreography and, on the beat, on the count, five, six, seven, eight and do all these amazing things that I simply could not do with mine, my body but then Weave introduced me to things like Contact Improvisation and just improvisation in general, and Butoh. And in that I found the dance that suited my body.

P: Can you tell me and people listening what Contact Improvisation is.

I: Contact Improvisation is basically dancers moving together with body contact. So, it involves a lot of trust and I think as dancers we tend to get into trust with each other very quickly. And it’s just moving through touch and moving with touch and moving with touch as the provocation. So, you know, if you touch my should, what does that do to my should? You know, what does that make me feel? How do I want to move after you’ve tapped my shoulder or grabbed my shoulder or yeah, it’s that kind of thing.

P: And can you explain Butoh is different from other methods.

I: Butoh, [laughing].

P: How does one describe Butoh?

I: Butoh is called the Japanese Dance of Darkness. It can be sometimes very slow and intricate. It can be sometimes very quick but I don’t really even know how to describe Butoh but it was like once I was introduced to it, I got into my imagination, my head, in my head and really discovered like very intricate movements. Like, becoming very interested in each individual movement of my knuckles, my fingers, my … moving with my breath. Yeah, I really can’t describe it but once I was introduced to it by Yumi Umiumare, she came and did some workshops with Weave, I just thought, ‘Oh, I found my thing.”

Because Butoh doesn’t have to be beautiful, it also explores the grotesque, the ugly, the dark because I used to think, ‘Oh, I need to look beautiful when I move.’ And then I threw all that in the bin and thought, ‘Wow, here I am in this body and didn’t have to look beautiful. It can be contorted.’ And I thought, ‘I love that freedom of just being this body.’ And that being okay. That’s what I really got out of it.

P: Do you find that dance in general has improved your relationship with your own body?

I: Absolutely, absolutely, because I’ve become extremely curious about it. Like, okay, I can’t go ‘en pointe’ like with ballet. I can’t do a marvellous pirouette like you specifically trained dancers to do, but what can I do? How do I translate that in my body? And I thought, ‘Wow, this is really interesting.’ And like, event the way I get up to standing from laying on the floor. I used to be quite embarrassed about that because you know an average statured body tends to just unfold and up they get, whereas me, it’s more like a toddler but I’ve learnt to become innately curious about that and really explore that.

And when an audience sees me do that and really explore my dwarfism, if you want to say, they go, ‘Wow, that was so interesting. I can’t move like that and you do it so beautifully.’ And I go, ‘Wow, really? That’s just me getting up off the floor and me exploring that.’ It’s really given me a new outlook on my body. Okay, I just turned 58 and I’m going, ‘Heck, you know, I really like this body. I appreciate this body and, oh, look it’s gone through all these menopausal changes that I wasn’t thinking about and now I’m learning how to move a different way.’ Dance has just freed me.

I: You look at least ten or fifteen years younger, I think.

P: You’re my best friend, today. You really are. [Laughing]

I: I loved how you said, ‘today.’ Tomorrow it could change.

P: [Laughing]. Tomorrow, somebody else might say that.

I: I know that recently and I don’t know how much you want to get into this but I think it would be interesting, as much as you’re comfortable to explore. You have been through a lot grief in the past few years, have you found that dance or art and creativity in general has helped with that? I don’t want to say that it’s helped, so what’s your relationship been with dance through grief, I guess?

P: Well, just to put it in context, over the past two and a half years, I lost my two eldest daughters. Chloe was first, age 32 and Sarah was six months ago and she was 37. So, I think when you go through such profound grief it gets stored in different parts of your body and I found that my whole body is taken up with grief. It’s not only just in your head, in your heart, it’s your whole being and I found that dance can be a bit of a release for that to just express something you can’t put into words. Like, there are no words to describe what it feels like to loose two of your children before you go.

There’s no words to describe that and movement has and is still helping me process that and to release some of that tension. It sometimes it can be similar to … you try and go about life and just do your things, like go out and buy your groceries and put petrol your car and everything, and you know, you put on a façade of ‘well, I’ve just got to do this because life doesn’t stop.’ And then sometimes you come home and you can’t … you just release it and you cry and cry and sob and absolutely sob. And then after that sob, it's like a relief. It’s like [deep breath] ‘Okay, I can do this next day. I can do this next hour. I can do this next minute or I can do this next breath.’ And that’s what movement has been for me.

It’s like, ‘Okay, what can I do?’ And I move and I dance and I find something to do and then it’s like, ‘Okay, that tension has been released,’ and I feel, I want to say stronger but it’s like I’ve found something to be able to get through the next bit, whatever the next bit is.

I: I find that when, because I do improvisation, and I find that those people that I do art with are some of my closest friends because you bring into that session whatever is going on in your life. You know these people and they know you in a way that you don’t know anyone else. It must be good to have a community of support around you.

P: It really is. You know, when I went back to Harmonia after Sarah died, it was just … it was just so beautiful to step into the rehearsal room and know that everybody knew and know that they were there for me and we didn’t necessarily have to say anything. Although, we did, you know we talked and … but to be able to move with them physically and have them be so sensitive but at the same time not treating me with kid gloves. You know, sometimes it’s really lovely just to go in and just get on with it with people who are aware.

You know, they’re not expecting you to be the same, they’re not expecting you to get up and take on everything that you did before but there’s this grace and time that they just give you and you can feel it. You can feel it physically and because you have so much physical trust with them, you know, they can hold you tighter and they know that you can take it and it’s okay and they understand, like, if I do a solo and I’m particularly passionate during that solo, they know it’s me working something out and it’s okay.

So, yeah, I really appreciate my artistic friends. It’s beautiful, it really is and I really do think it’s that level of trust that you build up with people and it’s also the … I don’t know, I think artists have a different sensitivity towards the world. They see beauty in pain. They see beauty in ugliness, they see beauty in hard times.

I: We met when we were doing some work with Arts Access Victoria, I think, and I had known that you were involved in Weave but it seems like in the past few years, especially, your dance journey, if you want to call it that, or your dance career has really taken off. What is that made you devote more time to dance?

P: I decided I didn’t want to do something that sucked out my soul anymore. Dance just makes sense to me, I love doing dance, I love moving, I love doing workshops and I was getting paid for it and I thought, ‘I don’t want to live the rest of my life just existing.’ I really don’t. I don’t want to just get to the end of my life and say, ‘Well, I just existed.’ Dance was my passion and so I chased it and I thought, ‘Sometimes you’ve just got to take a leap and just trust that the universe is going to catch.’ And so, I did and it did. It caught me and, yeah, there have been times where I thought, ‘Okay, well, how am I going to pay my bills?’ And then something happens and it’s always through somebody that you know or, you know, ‘Oh, I learned about you from such and such, from so and so, and I’m really interested in your work and I’m interested in working with you.’

And that’s how it’s happened each time or they’ve seen me in a show and they’ve gone, ‘Oh, I’m interested in what she’s doing. I’d like to collaborate with her.’ And that’s how it happened. It was a leap of faith.

I: I think that’s really inspirational because it seems to me like you’ve had multiple lives in one. And I think a lot of people get to a certain middle-age and they think, ‘Oh, this is my life and I’m stuck with it,’ for lack of a better phrase. So, I think that’s really amazing.

P: That’s what I keep telling kids. Kids, up and coming or whatever, I say, ‘You know, it’s never too late. It is never too late.’ Like, this … I’ve been doing this for what? Professionally, now, I suppose for 10 -12 years which made like me in my mid-forties when I started this professional dance career. And so, I just keep telling people, you know, telling young kids, ‘It’s never too late. If you don’t like what you’re doing now, you’re not stuck with it and you can start something that you’d always dreamed about.’ But I always wanted to be a dancer, ever since I was a little girl. I love dance and being on stage in theatre.

I loved, loved, loved it but I thought it was denied to me because of my stature and I’d never seen anybody with my stature, I never seen a woman with achondroplasia on stage professionally being anything other than fantasy roles. So, I thought it was denied to me but it wasn’t and I chased it down and I got.

I: Can you take me through a bit of your journey. My understanding is you’ve spent a lot of time going back and forth from Germany.

P: 2020 was a big year for everybody. I’d already been to Germany, the year before, I discovered a group in Berlin called ‘Theatre Thikwa’ which … a group of disabled people who turn out work all the time. A group of disabled artists and they dance and they have visual arts and so I went to visit them and saw what they were doing and I thought, ‘Wow, I want to know more about them.’ And so, I applied for an unpaid internship and Covid hit. I came back to Australia but I still had that thought in my head and they’d already said, ‘Yes, we’d like to have you.’ And Covid hit and I thought, ‘Well, here’s my chance to get out of Australia.’ Because we were in such lockdown, it was terrible and I thought, ‘I can’t survive like this.’

And so, they were my ticket out of there. And so, I went to Berlin and Australia wasn’t going to have me back. They’d … once you left you weren’t allowed to come back and so I thought, ‘Well, I have to make it work.’ So, I had this three-month internship with Theatre Thikwa and did classes with them and then they let me lead some workshops, so that was fun. So, I started getting some skills. I also did a Butoh workshop in Germany for two weeks, three weeks, something like that and met a whole lot of people, so my name was out there.

And then while I was in Berlin in 2020, I saw this call out, I think it was on Facebook, for this new work with Unusual Symptoms and Adrienn Hod, and I clicked on the video of the example of the work they were thinking of making and I thought [deep breath] ‘It’s just wild, that’s right up my alley. That’s exactly what I want to do.’ So, I sent an audition tape because it was still Covid, we had to apply with video and so I got a call back and I had an audition on Zoom where they watched me dance and then there was another call back and the rest is history, I got in. In the meantime, I had to come … you know, Covid postponed what they were going to do, the start of their creative development.

So, I came back to Australia, did some work with Rawcus, did Glass with Rawcus and then I went back in November 2021 to start on what would become Harmonia with these … all these people that I had never actually met in real life. I’d never been to Bremen before, I was just trusting everything and pretty much as soon as we met, we just, all just gelled and hit it off.

I: Have you always had this sense, this spiritual sense to you that everything is going to work out? What is that gives you faith that you’ll land on your feet, so to speak?

P: No, do you know what, I haven’t actually had that always. I haven’t actually had it, I think because of dance and because it was working out so well and I was happy in it but while I was doing there just something happened and I was truly myself and I thought, ‘I’ve just got to trust it.’ And I think with working with Weave and then working with Rawcus, more and more people were seeing my work. So, more and more people were becoming more interested and so I thought, ‘Okay, I’m just going to trust that.’

But like, even getting into Rawcus, that was a very stringent process. Like, they don’t just say, ‘Oh yeah, come and join us.’ You know, there were several stages of that and each time they gave me a call back and said, ‘You know, we’d like you to try this now and we’d like to work it with you, to see how you go with this.’ I was genuinely surprised, genuinely surprised but there was also this calmness that came over me and I thought, ‘Well, whatever will be, will be. If it doesn’t come then that’s not what is meant for me.’ And basically, just letting whatever happened, happen.

I: Is there’s something about Germany, seems to be more progressive in terms of disability and the dance world?

P: I did find that in Europe, that although their physical accesses terrible [laughing]. Like, yeah, Australia, we do physical access really well but then again, we’re a younger European settlement kind of thing. You know what I’m trying to say.

I: Yep.

P: So, when we build now, we build more for access but you know, over in Europe, they’re looking at buildings that are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years old and so, you know, their access is terrible. But there’s something about the Europeans that they’re very, very and curious in art, just for art’s sake. I don’t know, there’s just a lot more people who interested in this kind of work and interested in different bodies doing different things in different places. And they seem to be more open about possibility and performances in different places. They tend to do art differently over there, like, when I went to Europe, I said about our performance seasons. We tend to have performance seasons, like, when you put on show you’re in a venue for like say, two weeks.

If you’re an independent artist, you’re usually in a venue for one, two weeks and you have a block of shows. Like when I did, I Am Not This Body, I think I did six shows in the space of a week. Whereas over in Europe, you put a piece together and you do one or two performances and then you don’t work and then you do it in another month and you don’t. Yeah, it’s very, very interesting the way they do it. But I really do think that they are more interested in different kinds of art and it’s not just voyeurism and it’s not ‘Oh, let’s go and see this group of disabled dancers.’ They don’t see, like, they don’t see that, it’s like, ‘Let’s go and see this interesting show.’

I: Yeah, they see the beauty in the difference.

P: Yes, yes.

I: Can you tell me about Harmonia.

P: Harmonia. I love Harmonia. I love the people of Harmonia. So, Harmonia came about from that very long audition process and by the way there about 150 applicants for these, for six positions and I was one of the six. Anway, Harmonia is 90 minutes long and it’s different to what I have ever done before in that it is … how many bodies… there’s 11 of us on stage, I think, 10 or 11 at once. It is all about the body and the flesh and us exploring our bodies, individually and collectively. Like, for the first 45 minutes of the show, I am moving, dancing with this guy who is a professional, professionally trained dancer. He’s six foot two and it’s just the two of us, like, doing extreme stretching and Contact Improvisation and acrobatics, almost, and it’s bearing each other’s weight, and each of us are doing that with a partner.

And then we move onto the pump section which is just us pumping our muscles and it builds up and it builds up and builds up until this frenzy. And then the next section is, we call it, ‘essence game’ where somebody comes on stage and they start something and now we have it choreographed, so we know who’s coming on and who’s doing what but it’s each of us responding to something that somebody is doing on stage. And it become like a celebration. You know, one part at the end of the pump we’re all in our under- … just simply in our underwear and so you get a lot of flesh and you get lot of muscles movement and … and it can be quite confronting. And Adrienn Hod from Hodworks in Hungary, she has … had, you know, it’s not unusual for people to … some audience members to leave and you know … it’s like, ‘Okay, whatever.’ But, yeah, it is, it can be quite confronting seeing all these different bodies, like moving and pumping and in their underwear.

It’s really hard to describe it but basically, Harmonia is a celebration of the human body and flesh and diversity. It’s beautiful, I love it.

I: Do you feel like you have a different sense, I know we were talking about body image and things before, but do you have a different sense of how your disability has informed your life, through learning more about it through dance?

P: That’s an interesting question and maybe this going to be controversial, I don’t know, but I was kind of raised and was in a space where I thought because I stood out so much … like, from the minute I step out my front door, I’m noticed and so because I was noticed, I used to try very hard to be sensible and not bring too much attention to myself. You know, have a sensible job and not to cause too many ripples or waves or always to be kind and polite and … even if somebody was being absolutely horrible to me in the street, don’t react, don’t bring attention to yourself but it’s impossible.

People are staring at me all the time, especially in Australia. Do you know what, especially in Australia, I’m noticed a lot more and I’m trying to figure out why, I can’t … maybe that’s just our culture, I don’t know. But then with dance and being on stage it’s like, ‘here’s 90 minutes where I am on stage, you are looking at me and I have your attention, so I’m going to show you what I want to show you. You want to look at me, well, here, watch this. This is what I’m doing.’ I feel a sense of power on the stage, as though I’m reclaiming my own power and it was when I was with Weave and we did White Daydream. One of our crew, she actually did the set, she said to me, ‘Leisa, when you are on stage, it is like you gather all the feminine power in the room and you claim it for your own.’ And that’s why I have the tattoo I have on my ribs, it’s two Japanese symbols and that’s in honour of Yumi, Yumi Umiumare and she actually showed me the Japanese symbols to make sure that I got the right one, and it says, ‘Female Power.’

And so, I think I’ve gone on a bit of a tangent because I can’t remember the original question but that’s pretty much what dance has done and my body. I can’t change this body, this is it but it has given, dance has given me a power that I didn’t have before and it’s like, ‘Okay, well, why try and blend in when you were born to stand out?’ And this is how I have … I’ve chosen to do my activism, if that’s what you want to call it, yeah. Well, here's my body and why can’t I be on stage doing what I love the most with this body. Yeah, I have achondroplasia and this is what it looks like and I’m on stage doing this and I’m proud of it. There is nothing, nothing that I have done performatively that I’m ashamed of. I’m proud of what I’ve done in this body.

I: Do you think that that is all conscious or did you come to love it and then realise this is why you loved it?

P: That’s a really sticky, good question, wow. I think I’d started building up this love of my body prior to this, just prior to this career really taking off because I’d always wanted to run, I’d admired runners years ago, years and years ago now. I was in my 40s though, I started running and with the running comes the natural consequence of your body becoming a bit more sculpted and then I would do the gym and more body sculpting and I was fit and I was healthy and, yeah, I was still in this body with achondroplasia but I loved the feeling in my body. I really, really loved how I felt in my body and that’s what dance has also given me.

I love the feeling of dancing. I love the feeling of getting off the stage and my body is … my muscles are singing and sometimes these days they don’t sing so much, it’s more like a groan and a … Oh, please no, let me get into a massage or the sauna or something. It has really given me this amazing acceptance of my body.

I: Can you tell me about ‘I Am Not This Body’, the residency?

P: Yeah, ‘I Am Not This Body’ came out of the Warehouse residency from Art’s House and I’m so grateful to Art’s House for trusting me with that and believing in the vision of what I wanted to put on. Like, ‘I Am Not This Body’ kind of lived in my body for quite a long time before it was on stage. I wanted to do something about my journey towards self-acceptance. And believe me that took a long time, this self-acceptance and this love of my own body. You know, I grew up in the Pentecostal Evangelical church where you are taught right from birth that you are a sinner and wrong and this body that I have, this achondroplasia is because of original sin and I was never supposed to be this body and you know, prayed to make me grow and everything.

I wanted to tell the story of moving through that and the dissatisfaction that I used to have with this body. You know, why am I like this? Why was it me and not one of my siblings? You know, why … yeah, why didn’t I grow? Why didn’t I grow when I prayed like I was supposed to? And so, I put that show together and part of that show was me confronting my own body and I had plaster casts of my body in various poses. And I tell you what, when I was presented with my plaster cast, it was so confronting seeing my own physicality and that … like, I only did that show in 2023, so I met those, yeah, I actually met those casts in 2023.

And there was also the added thing that was the cast of my body made before my daughter Chloe died. So, it was also confronting that too. So, I was very conflicted by them and it was also all the menopause, weight that I’d gained and everything and I thought, ‘Okay, well, here, I am this.’ And I remember getting into the rehearsal room with the plaster casts and I was by myself and I put on some music just to warm up and I just started crying and sobbing and sobbing and sobbing. One, because Chloe had died and two, because it’s like, ‘What do I do with this body, with this menopausal body?’ And I just went to one of the statues, my statues and I sobbed into my own shoulder and it was so healing in a way.

So, anyway, I put that show together and there was … it wasn’t what I thought it was going to be and it ended up being better than I thought it was going to be. But even now, I’d like to remount it and there are things that I’d change about it but it was really a labour of love and acceptance. And I ended off the show with the red pill – blue pill bit, you know, like from the Matrix, and I said, ‘Would I take a cure if, you know, if I could take the red pill and everything is changed and, you know, I’m average sized.’ I’m paraphrasing, ‘Or would I take the blue pill and everything stays as it is?’ And I leave that question at the end. You know, what would I choose?

And believe me, there is no answer to that question because some days, you know, I would take the red pill and some days I would be happy to take the blue pill. And I think sometimes all of us are like that and it’s got really nothing to do with your body, as such, but it’s like what would happen if this part of my life didn’t exist.

I: What could society or the government, you can be as political as you want with this, what could be done to make your life or even your career as a dancer easier?

P: Goodness me. Goodness me, goodness me. I don’t know what the government could do. I think being disabled is inherently political, like when I get on stage, like I’m not being political but I think it was Stella Young that said that, ‘that having a disabled is inherently political.’ And it was Peter Dinklage that also said, ‘People with dwarfism are the last bastions of acceptable social prejudice.’ I don’t know what can be done about this, I really don’t know what can be done about this but people with dwarfism are still ridiculed in the streets. People with dwarfism are still harassed and vilified and it’s not just from people in the streets, it’s … like, on the radio, I’ve heard radio announcers, radio DJs just be so awful about people with disability or with, people with dwarfism and I don’t know how we can stop that.

Like, when I was over in Europe, I was just another person in the street catching the U-Bahn home and doing my grocery shopping. And, yes, people clocked that I was different but I didn’t get harassed. I got home here and within a week I got harassed in the street from somebody yelling out as they passed me in a car, ‘F-ing midget.’ And it only happens here where I was born and I don’t know what … what the government or society can do about that. And like, that doesn’t … I don’t know if that happens to any other disabled group. I don’t know if that happens, I haven’t seen it happen. I haven’t seen people with other disabilities harassed like that in the street, but we do. It’s like, it’s okay and it’s not okay, it is really not okay. So, yeah, I don’t know. More funding into education, I don’t know.

I: Family and friends, aside, where is your home now? What would you classify as your home? Do you feel more comfortable in Germany now?

P: Oh, goodness, that’s really hard to answer given what I’ve just been through in the past two and a half years. Where is home? Home is where I am, I think. There are some days I long for the life I had over in Europe, it made sense to me even though it sometimes, it didn’t make sense. Like, bureaucratic paperwork is terrible over there and I had a rhythm to life over there and because I didn’t know the language so much, like I was picking it up and I had a base understanding. I could filter out what I didn’t need to hear or see or read and engage with those things that I needed to know and so I wasn’t overwhelmed with information.

Over here, I understand the way Australia works, kind of [laughing]. I understand the language, the English language and I can’t filter anything out. So, I do tend to get terribly overwhelmed by information over here that I understand. If I could pick up my two children, who are now aged 33 and 28, and take them over to Europe with me, and my parents and my brothers and sisters and some of my closest friends, I’d go to Europe; I really would. And I feel guilty about that because I love Australia, you know, I land back in Australia and I get away from Tullamarine Airport and I take a big inhale and the air here smells like eucalyptus. It really does, it does.

Our air here smells so beautifully eucalyptus-y and hay and the earth, it’s oh, and I have such a connection to the earth here. I’m not an Indigenous Australian, I live and dance and work on a land that was stolen and yet I love this land. I love the spirit of this land. We are so lucky to have been invited to work and dance and live on this ancient land, it is beautiful. And then I feel also at home in Europe, so I don’t know, Nick. I really don’t know what the answer to that question is.

I: And I suppose it can change all the time depending on what’s happening, as well.

P: It does, it does, like, I was perfectly happy in Europe. I was very happy in Europe and, you know, when I came home and touched based with all of my kids, it was all so lovely and we had a healthier relationship too with distance and when we caught up it was beautiful and genuinely adult respectful relationship. And then I’d go back to Europe again but yeah, I’m back here and I’m carving out a life here. And you know, like, I’m trusting the universe again and small opportunities are opening up again and I’ve got different irons in the fire and I’m collaborating with a couple of people now and, watch out there might be some new shows coming up with some really amazing artists that I’ve wanted to collaborate with for such a long time. So, yeah, I’m home.

I: Speaking of ‘irons in the fire’, I know that you’ve just been in rehearsals and had some shows at Abbotsford Convent, could you tell me about that?

P: Oh, ‘ButohOUT!’. ‘ButohOUT!’ is led by the amazing Yumi Umiumare who is a Melbourne living legend and Takiguchi. ‘ButohOUT!’ is the world of Butoh cabaret at the Abbotsford Convent. And how do I describe ‘ButohOUT!’, it’s dark, it’s funny, it’s whimsical, it’s … it was the bizarre and I think that’s what happens when you work with Yumi, is prepare for the bizarre and that’s what I love about working with Yumi, is that you can be as bizarre as you like and it’s all okay. So, yeah, ‘ButohOUT!’. We’ve just finished it, it was a great season. Packed out, sold out every night, so, yeah.

I: How can people support you?

P: I once said in an acceptance speech when I got an award, I said, ‘Awards are all well and good but what an artist lives for is bums on seats. Come to our shows.’ And I haven’t got anything on the go at the moment. Well, there’s embryonic seeds but if you see that I’m in a show, come to it. There’ll be more news about that later but I’m just in residencies at the moment with another artist, Emma J. Hawkins, by the way, who is another short statured dancer. We’re about to embark on a creative residency where we’re going to put together something quite whimsical and funny and serious at the same time. But, yeah, come, come to shows. I will advertise them up the wazoo on Facebook and all the socials. If you see a link to a show, come, that’s how you can support.

I: Does your residency with Emma have a title yet? Like, how would we find out about that?

P: No, it doesn’t, well, it has a working title but, yeah, it’s … because we’re both short statured dancers or just short statured people in general, we tend to be mistaken for each other. Even though, sometimes, like, I’ve been mistaken for a short statured male with a beard of a different culture, they said, ‘Oh, I’ve seen you on such and such.’ And I said, ‘No, that’s not me, that’s this guy.’ My brother-in-law was at Tullamarine Airport, a number of years ago, and he’s very masculine, masculine man and they thought it … a person mistook him for me and I’m going, ‘Eer, no.’ Like, at the time I had very, very long hair and I’m obviously not male, well, I don’t identify as male. So, yes, Emma J’s show and I has something to do with that.

I: People, look out for that. Thank you so much for your time, it’s been amazing to talk to you.

P: It’s always a pleasure, Nick.

I: Thank you so much. [music] Thank you so much to Leisa Prowd for the openness in her answers. It’s given me a lot to think about. Create and Amplify has been assisted by the Australian government through [00:48:20 inaudible] Australia, it’s principle arts investment and advisory body. Thank you for listening, until next time.

[music]

[end of recording]