

**Joyce:** Welcome to our podcast Kulturmanagement Innovativ

**Eva:** Kontakt, a project of the Hamburg Open Online University by and with students from the Institute for Arts and Media Management at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Hamburg, Germany. My name is Eva Hüster.

**Joyce:** And I am Joyce Dietrich, and this time we speak with Helen Marijic.

**Eva:** Helen Marijic is the director of Artichoke, the arts production company she co-founded with Nicki Webb in 2005. It specializes in creating disruptive whole-city arts events.

**Joyce:** Her TED Talk, Art that transforms cities into playgrounds of the imagination from 2020, has gained over 44,000 views so far. With Helen Marijic, we discuss the differences between German and British audience development, while she also gives us a critical viewpoint on the current trend of outreach formats. She generally asks questions that inspire us to take a step back again and focus on why we are doing what we are doing and who it is for.

**Eva:** We were particularly impressed by the part in which Helen Marijic reflected on what it was like for her to take responsibility herself for important decisions and major cultural events, engaging politicians and other stakeholders. One could state, by saying it will happen, Helen Marijic makes it happen. We hope you will enjoy this episode in English with our first international guest.

**Joyce:** So welcome, Helen Marijic. Thank you so much for being here with us today. From all your projects in different positions that you had in your career so far, is there anything where you would think, because we invited you to come to this podcast today regarding cultural management and innovation, is there any positions or moments where you would think, yeah, they stand out, maybe you would tell us a bit about that?

**Helen:** I think there are several, but I think one of the things that is really clear to me now, but wasn't at the time, is as a woman working in the arts, how happy I was to be a number two to somebody else, usually a man, and how I look round now and I see how many young women work in the arts as, you know, they work, you can almost get the whole organisation stuff by women, but very often a man at the top. So I don't know if that's the same with you and that women are reluctant in a way to step up. And I mean, it's a self centering thing more than anything else, I think, to actually think that their own ideas or their own power is something that they want to exercise in the number one position in an organisation. So I think I'd work for a long time in the arts, particularly in London. And then I suppose I have to make a confession here, which is I get sacked from most of the jobs I've ever done. I don't know why, probably because I push too hard for things that are too difficult or something, or maybe I'm just very annoying anyway. So I've been working a lot in the arts in London, but I was working for Canary Wharf, who were the Canadian Jewish developers of. So Olympia and York were this Orthodox Jewish family who were developing Canary Wharf, which is, for those who don't know, a massive four billion pound development that happened in the 1990s in the East End of London. And I was working for them and then they went bankrupt. It was the biggest corporate bankruptcy of its kind ever. And suddenly I was about to have a baby, my second child, and I was suddenly out of work. And I'd been planning an idyllic maternity leave and all of that stuff. And I just thought, oh, Christ, I've got to find a job. So I applied for a job out of London as the artistic director of a small provincial festival, classical music festival, and got it. I never really expected to get it. And suddenly I found I had to move my whole family. And then I suddenly realised I had to do this job, not as an assistant to or a deputy to or something, but as the person who was making the decisions. So I've never found making the decisions difficult, but I think taking responsibility for the decisions you make is a hard thing. And I think lots of women avoid that. They will always prefer to work to

somebody else. So that, for me, was a massive shift. So I did it in a panic and had the baby moved, got the job, sorted it out and grew this organisation. And in a way, it was great for me to be able to work on something that wasn't so much in the spotlight. London is a very sort of it's a hot house of cultural activity. And I was working 100 miles away in this small, very conservative town. And so I was able to experiment with new ideas and new thinking and to make all of my peer group across the country, but particularly Londoners, suddenly look to this place and go, oh, something interesting is happening here. But it allowed me a bit of freedom to experiment and to find my feet, really. So I think that stepping into your own power is a really important thing. And recognising that you do have it, you have an ability to make things happen and change things.

**Eva:** Yes, that is that is a good point. Or at least I can very much relate to that. It seems that you feel comfortable in this position now because currently you're the director of the arts production company Artichoke. And we always like to ask very simple questions. So the question is, why do you have this position?

**Helen:** So, as I said, I get sacked out of most of the jobs I've ever done and decided after my sixth or seventh removal that the only thing to do was to have my own company so that I couldn't sack myself. I mean, I still could and might. And so I started Artichoke with a friend and colleague, Nicky Webb, in 19 in 2005. But I'd been working already for years to bring the amazing French company Royal Deluxe, who produce these massive puppet based sagas. I've been working to bring them to London. I started the conversation in 1999 and we brought them in 2006. So it was a seven year journey. And in order to facilitate that production, we started the company in 2005 so that we had an economic and financial vehicle through which we could run the thing, run the production. I never really intended it to be something more permanent. I thought we might just do that show and then I would go and find myself a proper job. But somehow it stuck and we have this reputation now for creating these very large scale citywide events. But it started from that impetus, which was to bring Royal Deluxe to London, to an Anglo-Saxon world that finds making the compromises that a city or a town has to make to accommodate work of that scale.

I think we certainly in Britain find those things very, very difficult because I think culture isn't so high on our agenda that we think it's important enough to stop the traffic or close a road or rebuild a wall or all the kind of things you have to do to make the place fit for accommodating that kind of work.

**Eva:** So did this experiment basically, or the idea that you, because I remember listening to your TED talk that you had where you told the story as well of changing the way of thinking in the politicians basically who are in that position to decide about being able to close a road or not. Was that part of the plan in the beginning or is that now part of your ongoing agenda, basically?

**Helen:** I think it's a really good question. I think it's a rationalisation of a process that was instinctive at the time and now is calculated. So if you've listened to the TED talk, you'll know that there was a point in this negotiation to get Royal Deluxe to London. I'd been going to this meeting called the Licence Operation Safety Planning Group, which LOSPG is called. They meet monthly and they discuss all the issues that might be coming up. So that might be the Olympics or it might be state visit of Angela Merkel or it might be the triumphant return of the England Rugby World Cup team or things that impact central London where road closures are required, royal wedding and demonstration, all of these kind of things. So they meet and work out the logistics of how that might all work. I used to go to those meetings with my supplicant position of saying, please, may I do this? Please, may I bring this company? Please, may I? And the answer was always no, because art, a piece of theatre, whatever it was, has no status. There's no reason why a world city should turn itself upside down and inside out for something that isn't deemed to be of political or royal or governmental significance. Why would you inconvenience everybody so

much? So the company was French and the authorities used to say, well, is it celebrating Anglo-French relations? Is there a visit from Macron? Why would we do this was always the question. And I realised that the only answer to that question was why wouldn't you? And actually, when you reframe it in that way, what you're trying to say to people is, you know, we're all so locked in a mindset that says a city is a machine for traffic and shopping, that we think that that getting people to a place on time, whether that's school or shopping or home in the evening, that that mechanical function of a city, of the public spaces of a city can only be legitimately used for these things and can only be interrupted by something of what they would consider to be national significance. And it's very hard to make the case for an artwork being of national significance if it's not about something. That was the other question. What's it for? And you'd say it's because it's great. And they'd say, but is it raising money for something?

Is it a campaign? Is it because people in those positions are trying to legitimise this activity, which is going to be very disruptive and they need to know, you know, what the sort of utilitarian purpose is going to be and simply saying there isn't one isn't really a good answer for them. So that was a massive learning that that that you had to provide an argument that said this is worth doing just because it's worth doing. And even though I'm nobody, which I was and am, you know, I'm not the government and I'm not a department and I'm not the queen. And I'm not I'm not anybody. I'm not the FIFA. I'm not the Olympic organizing committee. I'm just saying we could do this together. Wouldn't that be fantastic? You know, eventually making that argument stick was done by me in a temper sort of, I mean, irritated at the conversation going on for so long. I went to this meeting and said this thing that we've been talking about for so long, it's happening on these dates and I really need you to help me. And this miraculous thing happened in the room, which is that everybody, including me, chose to believe that somebody else must have said yes. So nobody was being asked to give permission. Nobody was taking responsibility, including I have to include myself in this because I realise now that what I wanted them to do was legitimise my decision to do this. I wanted them to say, you may do this. We're happy. And actually, that was me trying to absolve myself of the responsibility.

And that was not a very grown up thing to do. So by saying it's happening, I took responsibility for it happening. And they all said, oh, well, in that case, I can do that. You know, the bus planning manager could plan the buses and the road traffic guy could plan the road closures and the police could do. And everybody could do the little bit that they could do. But nobody was being asked to take responsibility.

**Joyce:** It's a bit like when the Berlin Wall came down then.

**Helen:** Yeah, exactly. And it is about our fear. I remember talking to my mother, who'd always wanted me to get a proper job because she didn't really understand what I did. And I was talking to her about the planning for the Royal Deluxe visit. I was sitting in her kitchen and I went into this long explanation about how wonderful it was and what it was going to be like. And she said, but darling, why would anybody let you do that? And I thought it was such an interesting question because I realized in that moment that there wasn't anybody and there wasn't let you that these places are our places. You know, these places are public places and the control of them sits with people who are making judgments about what is and isn't appropriate. And it's appropriate to host the G7 or it's appropriate for the English cricket team to ride on a bus through the place with everyone clapping because that's a known thing. We know that that's important. But a piece of theatre involving a giant elephant and a little girl, I mean, it made no sense to anybody until we did it.

**Eva:** This is this is really something that impressed us very much when talking about inviting you. And the fact that we are talking about making arts possible, but you literally give the space for arts and that is.

**Helen:** Yeah, so it is really important that we as artists and arts workers claim our place. So when the 20th anniversary of that, you referred to the Berlin Wall. I was in Berlin for the celebrations around the 20th anniversary of the coming down of the wall. And Royale de Luxe were there with Scaffondrier, the giant guy who explores the seabed. And I remember there was a huge row because Jean-Luc, the director, suddenly decided and he's quite whimsical and doesn't really. He always wants to be instinctive. He wanted the little girl Marionette to fly over the Brandenburg Gate. And everybody said, absolutely not. You can't do this. This is too terrifying a prospect. Why would we agree? All of this happened. And I think there was a huge political crisis because he said, then we're going home, we're not doing this show. And, you know, everybody was in town, all the dignitaries and politicians, and it was like a big focus. And he said, if you won't let me do this, then then I'm not going to be here. And I think the mayor of Nantes, the town that he was in conversation with the Berlin authorities and the negotiation was held at a political level. And I'm sure the conversation went. But why are you saying no? And the answer is because we feel we have to or because it's not appropriate or because it's not in the plan. You can imagine all the reasons why the Berlin authorities would be saying, but this isn't what we'd agreed. This isn't expected. This isn't normal. And then, of course, what always happens is that they did agree. And it was a triumphant moment and the photographs went all over the world and the little girl flew crane. There's a huge crane that lifted her up and another crane. And then above the Brandenburg Gate, if you can imagine the manipulator, the guys who looked after her in their red jackets, climbed from one crane to the other and transferred her harness from one to the other. And then she flew down on the other side. It was a transcendent moment and obviously so easy to say no to, to say this is too complicated. This is too dangerous. This is too difficult. It's not in the plan. But actually, why wouldn't you? So these things are interesting.

**Joyce:** It's also interesting for us to listen to your point of views because they're so on the ground. Like it's directly like what is it all about? Like what is art about? What is culture about? Like we could have a whole philosophical conversation about that, but you're just right there and you're just focusing on that. And that's also something that we learned. I don't want to take away that question, Eva, but just a thought because we we learned about audience development. And the term is in English, even in our German studies, we have English term because it is because you don't do it.

Because we learned it from you. No, but actually because it comes from the from Great Britain. And that's what we learned, like that whole view on culture as being an art, being there for the people and not. And and there isn't there's something that can be understood. Like, of course, if you look at the history of Germany, that arts need to be protected nowadays. So that's the view that came from the from all the history that we have from that, from the 40s and 30s and so on. That there is now a law protecting the arts. The joke in itself is that it's not there is no law if I'm not like correct me if I'm wrong, Eva. But I think I think we had this conclusion once that there is no law that protects or that makes sure that the people actually get to consume art or be part of art. There is nothing about that. There is just a law that protects the arts. And it's not it's like there is this whole confusion that can come from this where we're in in Great Britain. You have apparently a different view. And that's what we learn a lot about.

**Helen:** I think that it's changing. So in my time, so I'm obviously I've been working for a long time in the arts and I've always worked at the borderline between artists and audiences. I'm always interested in how you get the great possibilities of an artistic imagination to the broadest possible audience. That's what I that's why I don't like working in buildings, particularly because it seems to me that if you have a dedicated gallery or concert hall or whatever it might be, people have to make a journey to go through that threshold. And for lots of people, that's an intimidating thing, or they don't know what's on the other side. So they don't feel invited or feel comfortable. If you're on the street interrupting their daily lives, they can make an immediate decision about whether they want to stay and watch or they want to carry on shopping or whatever they're doing. But there's no barrier to their access. But I think that when I started way back, that view

was very heretical. We were much more where you might be now or would have been 20 years ago in that the arts were considered virtuous and good for you and particularly middle class and particularly about things being celebrated in dedicated arts buildings. I was out there working on the streets with big performances, big community cast performances. And I remember applying to our British Arts Council for I can't remember, 200 pounds or something, something tiny. And they rejected the application on the grounds. They said, we do not support the work of amateurs. So in that time, my working life, they've moved from we do not support the work of amateurs to we should educate the public. It became a whole education thing that if we can improve people's lives, then they'll be better people. And our organizations will flourish to something called outreach, which was about how one could involve people by going to them and, you know, teaching them how great things were in their own communities to learning and participation, which was the latest thing, which was about how more people could be involved in the arts through being actively recruited to where we are now, which I think is a swing of the pendulum too far in my view, which is about co-creation. So not privileging the position of the artist and not saying that they are extraordinary special, you know, people with a different world view. But saying everyone is an artist and everyone can do this stuff. And I think that that's wrong. I think everyone is creative and has the potential to be creative. I do think artists are peculiar and particular and they bring something that an ordinary person can't bring. Just as an architect is an architect. I mean, you wouldn't want your house built by your neighbors necessarily.

**Eva:** Depends on the neighbors.

**Helen:** But I think that the British, the English obsession with democratization. It's not that I don't think everyone should have access. Clearly, my work demonstrates that I think people should have access, but I don't think that everyone is an artist. And I do think that what they offer is something very special.

**Joyce:** But this was actually the question that I wanted to ask, and you already answered it partly, that it seems that the idea of this audience development and outreach is definitely you can feel it in your work, but it seems that it's more the interest in interrupting the normal life, right? So it's not the wish to have a program that is perfectly doing all the audience development skills, but it's the wish to to interrupt and to surprise, right?

**Helen:** Yes, it's about reaching. It's about how you reach people. So, you know, if I do a performance on a bus and you happen to be on that bus, I think that's a bit oppressive because I absolutely recognize the legitimate right of people not to be interested. I think that's completely fine. I'm not interested in, you know, sport particularly. I don't mind everyone else, you know, racing off to the World Cup in Qatar. Well, I do actually, but because it's Qatar. But I think that the I recognize people have to be allowed to make choices. But I think the problem with work that's inside buildings is that a lot of people don't have enough information to know whether they're interested or not. So here's an example. When I worked on I was running this festival in the west of England, the one I left London for. On the local radio station, I went and talked to the local commercial radio station who played, you know, wall to wall ABBA and Pet Shop Boys and all that stuff. So it's very different from the program of the festival. And I persuaded them to give me some free advertising because I thought it'd be interesting to see if I could persuade their audience, which was not naturally the festival audience, to come to things. And somehow radio, local radio, particularly is like a bush telegraph. It's a kind of way of communicating in people's heads when they don't you know, they're listening, but they're having breakfast or driving the kids to school or something. So they gave me these adverts and I was programming a much more popular program than had been done hitherto, because it had all been classical music and poetry. So I was doing a lot of stuff that might appeal to families. But I ran out of I ran out of popular program effectively. So I had one advertisement left. I was recording them myself. I had

one left, one spot left, but no sort of thing that I could easily aim at a family audience. So I decided to try sitting in this little radio station to try my own experiment. So we were doing a concert of classical music in the cathedral with you know, it was all going to be lit by candles. It was going to be very beautiful. It was Vivaldi and Mozart and stuff.

And I thought, well, this is absolutely not for this audience. But let's see what we can do here. So I wrote a script and recorded it and it said. Oh, I can't even remember it said. What I suddenly realized is that I looked at my festival brochure and it said English Chamber Orchestra, Salisbury Cathedral, 730. And then it said Vivaldi Four Seasons, Mozart, Symphony Blab. And I thought, if you don't know, you know those things.

How would you ever decide to go? Because I suddenly realized that absolutely everybody in the West knows Vivaldi's Four Seasons, because it's been used on every advert. And I mean, everybody knows that music, but they don't know it's called Vivaldi's Four Seasons, nor do they know anything about it. So I thought, well, OK, let's play some. So I did this advert and said, imagine the cathedral bathed in candlelight. Imagine, blah, imagine, blah, imagine this. And then I played a snatch of spring from Vivaldi's Four Seasons. It was absolutely extraordinary. The box office phones just started ringing because people had access to information and they knew they liked that music, but they didn't know that they were invited, because me putting it in the leaflet alongside some literature thing for their kids or whatever it was, those words are meaningless if you don't know what they mean. I don't know how else to express it. So and we knew that this was a new audience because they kept phoning. The festival information line and saying, can I really come? The cathedral is like in Salisbury, it's behind a big wall and it's very grand. And I guess lots of people who live in the town don't feel that it's their natural place. So they were phoning and saying, what should I wear?

And, you know, is there any way to park? Can I really come? All kinds of questions that are sort of obvious if you're familiar with the process of consuming art in a conventional setting, but not at all obvious if you're not. And then I knew they were there, these people, because the convention in a classical music concert is that you don't applaud between the movements, you only applaud at the end. Well, how would you know that if you've never been to a concert before? So they were all clapping all the way through. And I was clapping with them because I was thinking, I'm so fucking pleased you're here.

This is so amazing. And it was a real education for me to recognise the arrogance and the assumptions that we make when we publicise things and the way we publicise them is really important in terms of who you want to be there. Now, it has to be said that my existing classical music audience really were upset by these new people coming because they didn't want people who didn't know what they were doing clapped in the wrong place, you know. So you were dealing with two very different audiences there.

But it was for me really illustrative that how you tell people, how you get the message to them and what you're saying is as important as what you're doing. So the real answer to your question is I'm equally interested in audiences and artists. And I think my job is to create unusual and irresistible platforms for artists to do things that they've never imagined. And my other job is to get audience or participants, depending on what they need, to appreciate and understand and be familiar with that work. So that's that's the job.

**Eva:** Yes, indeed.

**Helen:** Sorry, very long answer to a very good question.

**Eva:** But a very inspiring answer. So our podcast is also about cultural management and we try to. So this term of cultural management is such a broad and general term, and it can be everything or nothing or it can mean a lot of things or nothing. And so with you creating space for arts and artists and also for the audience, actually, do you see yourself as a cultural manager in the general sense?

**Helen:** I think that all these label like the Arts Council transition from amateur education, outreach, learning, participation, co-creation, I think these things are sort of cyclical and we redefine them. So when I started all those years ago, I was called an arts administrator. An arts administration, somehow in the mid 80s or mid 90s, maybe became considered too lowly for people who wanted to have a grander position in the sort of cultural structures. So then they became creative, creative administrators. And then they were producers and then they were creative producers. And now they're cultural managers. And I think none of it matters. I think I'm a producer who delivers work on time and on budget. And that's that's the job is actually thinking as broadly and as intelligently as you can about what you're doing, but always thinking. I mean, there's just two fundamental questions. Why am I doing what I'm doing and who is it for that you can answer those questions? It doesn't really matter what you're called.

**Joyce:** We have another word, another term that we are always trying to differentiate, maybe. Not sure if the word is the right word, but it's innovation. How would you define the term or do you use it?

**Helen:** I suppose I use it. I think I think we're all struggling. I think the answer is not about. It's about impact, so you can do the oldest possible. You know, there was I doing Vivaldi in the cathedral, which is a thousand years old. You know, this, I don't know, five hundred year old piece of music. But it was innovative because of the context in which I was trying to do it. I was trying to do it for an audience for whom that was a new experience largely. So I don't think it's necessarily innovation for the sake of. But I think that we do all as producers in the cultural sphere, try to do things that are new and interesting in order to create impact. So it's about benefit and impact. And I think those two things for me are really fundamental to how I work. So it is back to those questions why I'm doing it and who's it for. And it might be I'm doing it for the artist. It could be that I'm funding something for an artist to go away for a year and work in a studio and do whatever they do. That's perfectly legitimate. Or it might be that I'm trying to entertain a million people with something, in which case it's a different set of values. But it's always the same impetus, which is, do I understand what I'm doing and who will be impacted and where's the benefit? And I think we are all essentially progressive. So innovation in the sense of new meaning progress, meaning moving on from one thing to another, developing an idea that hasn't been seen before. That's very important to what we do. So I don't ever, even if I do things that are classical or quite old fashioned in terms of, or just old in terms of where they stem from, I'm always doing it in a slightly quirky way.

**Eva:** No.

**Helen:** You seem stumped for questions. What I like most doing is talking to people like you and opening up windows in your mind when you suddenly think, oh, I'm seeing the world differently now.

**Joyce:** Yeah, no, it's amazing because first of all, you answer all the questions before we ask them. So we're like, we're like on the side being like, OK, this is OK, this is OK. Done that, done that, done that, done that. That's one. And also, I think at least I am processing what you're saying, which is awesome and inspiring. And I'm happy to be when I'm inspired. So the next question would be. So since innovation or impact, like you said, like much more of that actually is part of your daily business and work and the general, like one of the reasons for you to do these projects and create these projects. Is there something like some untouched potential that you see in the future, maybe concerning how life is right now in whatever way you would see that or like regarding whatever, if it's politics or post pandemic, whatever, just just in the reality that we live right now, is there any untouched potential for innovation with your professionals?

**Helen:** But I think that I think that we're in. So it's a terrible moment in the life of the planet. And we face this existential crisis of climate change and currently a short term, one hopes, economic crisis. The war in Ukraine, all of these things are combining to create a general feeling of malaise and depression and fear, I think. And I suppose what I would say is that I only know my own little bit of the world and it's tempting sometimes to be dispirited and think that there's nothing that you can individually do that changes anything or makes lives better, which is in the end what I want to do. But I think the answer in my bit of the world is about artists and supporting the artistic imagination. Because I do think that artists in a strange way are sort of prophets of the future. And I think they can help us, whether that's writers or painters or sculptors or musicians or whatever, they can help us interpret a world that we find, to some extent, unbearable.

They can help us find a pathway through that. And it may be through technical innovation and questions of virtual life or whatever. Or it may just be creating moments of stillness and a moment where we can contemplate our own existence and think about our own well-being and self-care and all of that kind of stuff. So there's so many ways in which art and artists can influence our daily lives. And it can be about campaigning and it can be all kinds of things. But that's the only thing I know that actually the future isn't with politics. You know, the works of Goethe and Schiller and Shakespeare and Molière and all those people will last hundreds of years longer than any pronouncement by any politician.

**Eva:** We are studying cultural management, as we said before. And we are not doing this in an empty space, but in this world that you described and with a lot of challenges. Yeah, also simultaneously, not one after the other. And maybe you have some method or an advice or a motto that you could share with us for our future in the field of cultural management or whatever we want to call it.

**Helen:** I think that you have to advise. I think that if you're trying to progress change, which, you know, it depends what you end up doing. You know, if you end up being a box office manager in a theatre somewhere, then, you know, your ability to change the world is different than if you're a producer like me or you're running a national institution or something. But in every time you try and mobilise people to make progress, I think the really important thing to recognise is that people only say no to something because they are personally anxious. So the implications for them of the change, it's always interpreted, it seems to me, in terms of the personal. You know, if I say no to this, will I be in trouble? If I say yes to this, sorry, will I be in trouble? Is yes the wrong answer here? So the affirmative is harder to reach. So if you can understand that the person that you're trying to influence is a human with their own anxieties and that part of your job is to take the anxiety away. So when we were doing the elephant, you know, the Sultan's elephant, you know, talking to all those guys who control access to the streets of central London, they were just anxious that saying yes was the wrong answer, that they might personally be held, you know, responsible and culpable. And so that taught me such a big lesson in terms of understanding that the future that you're grappling for, the thing that you're trying to reach is probably not easily defined even in your own mind and certainly not in the minds of people that you're trying to persuade. They don't really, you know, I would say I wanna close the streets of this world city for four days, no traffic for four days in central London. And there's this thing, it's a kind of show and there's a 40 foot high giant elephant and a little girl who's 24 feet high and they just wander about for four days. I mean, why would anybody say yes? There was no, they couldn't imagine what I could imagine which was how amazing it was going to be and how everyone would love it and how a million people would come and watch. They couldn't imagine any of that. They just heard a slightly deranged woman going, give me control of your city. I mean, you know, why would you say yes? So understanding the other person's point of view and thinking about it before you get into the conversation is really important because you can't make progress against a sort of blank wall but the wall isn't actually blank. There are always little chinks and holes in it that you can put your finger in and, you know, pull something out but only if you understand why that wall has



been erected and that is always about self-defense. It's always about being frightened because most of us, our reactions are about protecting ourselves and people around us. So trying to be persuasive and friendly and charming and, you know, trying to make people want the thing you want as much as you do, that's a really important thing that, you know, can you get them to a place where they can imagine what you can imagine rather than just going in in an arrogant way? And now, I mean, it took us seven years to do that, to get the elephant on. And now it takes us about two years to make anything big happen in a place which is much shorter time. And I could make it, oh, I always feel I could make it happen really quickly. I could go and say, look, we've done all of these things before. We want to do this. Isn't it a brilliant idea? Let's do it. But if you're in a new city or a new town, new place with new people, what I've realized is that they also have to go on that journey. They can't just be presented with something and told it's good for them. They have to, so that you have to go through the, why are we doing this? And I don't think this is a good idea. You have to go through a process so that people absorb and assimilate the idea and make it their own idea before you can get anywhere. So while we could do it quicker if we were imposing stuff, it's never a good way of working. It's always about creating a community of interest. That's a very long motto. Mostly it's deliver it on time and on budget because otherwise you're out of a job, as I can prove.

**Joyce:** And become a producer if you get sacked in, I love that part. I think being a producer,

**Helen:** I mean, what's so brilliant about being a producer is that if you decide this is the route you're going to take, it's such an amazingly powerful place. I mean, although you have no power, you have no agency and you have no authority, but you do have an ability to say, well, I think this would be a good idea so I'm going to make that happen. And then you just do because you don't accept that there's a reason for not doing it if it's a really good idea. The thing I would say though is that if you're doing something really ambitious and you have to, like I had to persuade the whole of central London to let us do the elephant, if I had then turned up with a rather pathetic elephant size elephant or if I turned up with something that was less magnificent than the thing I was really talking about, it would have been a disaster. So you have to know which league you play in. You have to decide, the only way I could make the Sultan's elephant happen was to close central London. That was the deal because it was a magnificent spectacle that needed to be in a capital city. But if I, there's no point pushing for the ultimate if the thing you're producing isn't equivalent to the effort that you're putting into it. So you just have to pitch it carefully and know your people. You just have to know how, and you have to be sympathetic to other people's point of view while constantly overriding it in some absolute way. You have to understand that it's causing them pain.

**Eva:** Thank you.

**Joyce:** Thank you so much.

**Helen:** It's a pleasure.