

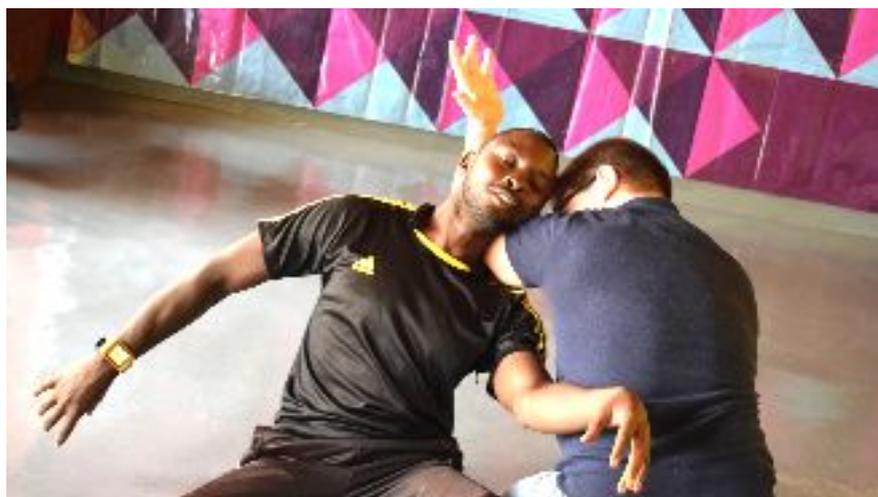
**Feedback Report**  
**Kigali workshops**  
**6th - 8th February 2018**

BOP hosted by British Council Rwanda  
in association with Amizero Dance Company &  
East Africa Nights of Tolerance Dance Festival

**“beauty; we see the diversity within all of us”** - participant

In early February 2018, BOP were supported by the British Council to deliver capacity building workshops in Kigali, Rwanda, as part of the ongoing development work of East Africa Arts; a project working with artists and companies from across East Africa with a focus on cross-artform practice and disability equality. East Africa Arts also promotes new art, shares skills of creatives and ignites partnerships between the UK and East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan).

This evaluation report looks at what BOP did in Kigali and what the outcomes and learning of the workshops was - for the partners, participants and for BOP itself.



**What was the aim of the workshops?**

The aim of the workshop was to equip a group of disabled and non-disabled practitioners with the skills and knowledge required to co-devise work, informed by BOP's own processes of devising/storytelling/movement which have been developed while creating accessible work in the UK.

To this end BOP aimed to improve participant's knowledge and confidence in making work, whether as a non-disabled person collaborating with disabled people or as a disabled artist working solo or in collaboration.

BOP had no previous relationship with the organisations on the ground or the participants so it was also BOP's aim to grow our own networks and knowledge of the artists in Rwanda.

## What happened?

Robert Softley Gale (Artistic Director), Mairi Taylor (Executive Producer) and Rachel Drazek (Freelance Movement Artist) from Birds of Paradise Theatre Company were engaged to provide a three-day workshop. British Council Rwanda were the hosts for the workshop, organised in association with Amizero Dance Company and East Africa Nights of Tolerance Dance Festival. The workshop was planned for 15 – 20 participants, including choreographer Wezley Ruzibiza (Director of Amizero Dance Company).

Throughout the days BOP worked responsively with the group, shifting activity in response to the group's learning needs. To do this we drew on our the knowledge and on the established processes of the company - including artistic practises and knowledge around disability equality and artist development.

Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● BOP shared information about our company and individual practices - Robert and Rachel share individual practice and how they came together to create Purposeless Movements</li> <li>● Group sharing of names and development of sign names and movement</li> <li>● 'Audio Described' sign names – critiqued verbal description to make it succinct/meaningful/emotive</li> <li>● Setting outcomes - what would you like to get out of the workshop?</li> </ul>
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Movement based exercises, including exercise with spaghetti - moved in to paired contact duets</li> <li>● Showed Purposeless Movements extracts to explain process and access elements</li> <li>● Writing exercise - what do we need as artists to work at our best - to demonstrate the variety of access requirements and that we all have needs</li> <li>● Combined these statements with movement - towards group performance</li> </ul>
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Morning check in</li> <li>● Discussed the concept/importance of 'confidence' as disabled artists</li> <li>● Showed flip Artists and BOP Artists films (created opportunity to show that not all Disabled people in UK have physical impairments - this was picked up by group and discussed)</li> <li>● Movement exercises</li> <li>● Ideas session - See document at end of report</li> <li>● Feedback sessions - split in to disabled and non-disabled groups</li> <li>● Close</li> </ul>

At the end of the first day we set some outcomes about what people would like to get out of the workshop. This was important for BOP to understand what stage people were at and what they would like to learn.

- To help me feel less shy when moving and dancing
- To discover tools for creativity - esp working with disabled artists
- Finding ways to get to the art - beyond disability
- Techniques for bringing art of disabled artists
- Starting to understand how the work happens - for example, how does Robert gets on the stage

- Confidence and knowledge to avoid being condescending
- (going beyond tools) gain from the experience to build confidence and feed creativity
- Desire to keep working together, keep pushing
- Discovering what the experience of this group will be and where it might lead
- To be an artists and to show what is possible - be a role model
- Connecting words and movement - growth this leads to. How far can it go? What creative moment comes out of this.
- Find out what the questions are underneath the questions.
- Want to experience creation of work to inform own practice (fashion / costume design) - information and tools to inform work.
- To work with different people.
- Influence everyday work going forward.
- Better understanding of what disabled people can do.
- How do we collaborate with non-disabled people (as disabled people).
- Learn more to be self - to have confidence and ability to be role model outside here.
- Skills to use in work beyond here - next work
- For everyone to feel they have had a chance to explore the questions in their heads - to feel they were able to come to Rachel, Robert or Mairi if anything left unanswered or unexplored.

### Language Barriers

It became clear to BOP half-way through the first day that there were definite language barriers in the room and that we were not being understood. We had been informed that everyone understood English but this was not the case. One of the participants became the unofficial translator as the days went on but this was not ideal as it placed too much pressure and responsibility on an individual who was meant to be immersed and contributing as a participant.

### What were the outcomes?

At the end of the final day we – controversially – split the group into disabled and non-disabled groups to gather feedback. This is not something that the company would normally do or encourage but there were several reasons on this occasion:

- To directly challenge some persisting attitudes held by the non-disabled participants
- To demonstrate to the non-disabled participants that disabled people deserve a space that is theirs
- To provide the disabled participants with an opportunity to feedback and have a voice separate from the whole group

The comments below are a direct transcript of these two discussions. During the discussions we used the outcomes set by the group on day one to prompt discussion.

### Disabled Artists

What has changed for you?

- I also feel **I have achieved to a very good extent with moving away the shyness** when I am moving.

- Also as a fashion show performer, as a model I have also always been feeling shy when I'm in front of a big crowd of people because of this workshop **I think that 80% of my shy and my shame has been away so this has been helpful.**
- I say when we started the workshop I felt it was objectiveless. I couldn't know what we were aiming after but **right now I feel I have achieved more than I expected** and I'd like if it is possible to have...it is necessary that people at this workshop to at least **have a weekly meeting** to continue the process of what we have started.
- Also when we started this workshop I was worried that three days would not help in any sense **but I now I feel we have achieved so much and I am now confident I will have so much to share** with my group that I present here.
- Personally I don't feel the obstacles of being blind when I do as a poet and a singer but **this workshop improves my level of confidence** and I am sure when I will be singing at any exhibitions or wedding ceremonies as I do I will be more confident, **it stabilizes my confidence.** [...] I am strong.
- So the passion for her is higher than anything because even if one is disabled but has that passion for something he or she tries to get it done whether it is in front of an audience or not, she or he tries to get it done but **this workshop has been helpful in raising the confidence** to do so.
- And I have to say we have been here for three days working with people who are not disabled in some sense but one of the amazing things is that there are things that they can do that we can't do but we worked together and **there has been flexibility from both of the groups** so it been great.
- We got a big package, enough for our confidence to prepare to go in the event **so we are not shy or without being shy or too shy as shy as we used to be.** So now this workshop has been really helpful and I am sure if we go to work in other event or participate in other events it will be really much more different.
- I give an example of a person who is a model. Sometimes when you are a model what we do. We are always aware, and sometimes we fear, that if...in the front of the crowd, in front of the audience when I am doing the modelling I am really intensively aware of my articulations because I try not to do much because I am worried that I do something and I fall down and the audience will look at me weirdly **but now I feel this workshop has changed a lot in me.**
- **This workshop has changed my previous way of working** because now when I am working, when I am modelling I will be thinking about what I can do, thinking about my articulation and what I can do and my ability and disability without too much thinking about what others are thinking about me but thinking about what I can do and doing it better so this is what I wanted you to know he said.

"We spoke about wanting to be an artist and showing what is possible and to be a role model. That idea of being a role model - how do you feel about that now?"

- Usually I work much more as a singer. Even when my choir had a performance and I was not there, somewhere in a remote area, I could feel they were calling me saying 'please come, please come' when I was not confident that I could do it and sometimes I was anger against God and sometime I was going to rush back to singing, in the choir, in the church, if God wanted me to his or her singer, he or she could have could have given me a man. Yes so sometimes I had those feelings.
- From this workshop I have to say **I got confidence for me to go out and I am going to try and start using the songs I have sung and kept them in my notebooks and in my mind so I think I am going to start working on them.** Do the audios and videos and put them in DVD so you might see me soon on TV.
- In the sense of being a role model I would be fulfilled because **everyone who has seen me and said I can't be what I was supposed to be because I am disabled now they change their**

**minds because I will be able to show them that even if I am disabled it didn't change my destiny, it change my passion.**

- I lost my sight when I was twelve years old. I start feeling I am useless and I even try to commit suicide to just kill myself cos I didn't believe [...] why you blind cos before I was twelve years old I was normal I could see. But after that depression I changed my mind, **I feel like I should be a role model for persons with disabilities** or without and sometimes I get stuck with people maybe they say you can't manage your dreams, you can't realise your dreams. You don't deserve to reach where you want to be but this workshop as I can say, I don't remember if you saw the question that I asked you? What is the [piety] to be an actor? The aim I had is to know your inspiration so that they can make me stable so I can realise my dreams so with you and the way you do your activities, the way you struggle with your speaking, why it's difficult, stimulates my vision, my dream of becoming a role model for persons with disabilities or not.

How did it feel to be working with non-disabled people and how does it feel now to be separate?

- She says it has been really positive, positive [real] changing [the films] because it was **helping this group to see that the non-disabled artists were welcoming** them with no shyness or shame or whatever with these groups so it was really great seeing them that were coming and being flexible to work with them.
- And **another confidence raised when we could see that what they can do we can do then and sometimes better and that raised our confidence.**
- So for them I am thinking that **if there was anyone of them that was thinking that disabled artists can't do as better as they I think it changed in their minds** because I think they could see that we could do lots.
- Right now the fact that there **I don't mind we are doing our thing here** I don't mind.
- I feel the same but I am wanting to add one simple thing... **the fact that we work together is mutually beneficial to them and to us** ... for I can explain it in the sense that they could think that we can't do something as them as we also can think in the way that they can do something that we can't do so it is really important to have that mutual ...
- This workshop has **helped us to bring our strength together whether we were disabled or non-disabled artists we came together** and that was great and personally I am saying that this workshop what it gave me is for now if there is opportunity that requires non-disabled and disabled people there will not be anything that stops me going to that competition because I know I can. And I am sure if they were here and we were there I am sure that things are the same.

Final comments:

- It is great that you did this because at lunchtime this group came together by themselves and they were thinking and they were talking together about how [...] they are and **they said they could potentially do something on their own and in association with each other or in a group together** [...] one last comment...
- I think there is an image that these people who are not disabled artists get from this workshop... **I am sure the non-disabled artists we have worked with for three days this week they will go and they will be ambassadors in their own community to [ignest] that we disabled people are able to do things that they could not expect us to do.**

### Non-disabled Artists

- I haven't been in a practical workshop like in years, not as many years as [...] so yeah there was definitely was a bit of questions coming in am I going to feel comfortable doing any of this when it is

so far...and now I mean yah and now from day one I feel very ...**doing it made me very comfortable so ...**

- I have discovered a lot like I said in the first meeting. The idea about the way I had worked with them before. There was that idea that there was lots of tools to use bring them into doing something and though the exercise [...] we just did **I learnt and I have taken lots of notes**
- Its interesting the training I have experienced from previous encounters shapes another form of working or working methodology **but this new approach from these past few days has equipped me with essential skills to also work with this diverse group of artists and I think I can say I have achieved that.** I have achieved it personally those tools I have.
- I'm talking about the accessibility because most of the time translating in the language that is not the spoken language I have never included that because usually I know that everyone understand me and I think this part of translating in the right language and make the play accessible to people to blind people **I have never thought about that so the key word for me is the rhythm changes of the play...**
- Also for me to work with the disabled people, it was an experience, **if I can know that they are happy people, and to discover they don't care and like to experience that was amazing** and they told me what they can do so that is impressive for me.

Some of the non-disabled participants had strong preconceptions about what disabled people can and cannot do and how they should be treated. The workshops hopefully challenged this and allowed people to see that everyone is an individual, everyone is different, and dictates what their own limitations are.

- For me it was through the exercise that this happened and like we got stronger from one day and to the other. Like for me the second day I felt like there is the moment of [...] **then you forget about the difference and then on the third day I felt like wow there is beauty in the difference.** In the movement, there are challenges but we are adding this different way of expressing.
- Also **I feel like we have got different ways of expressing ourselves no matter our challenges in our daily lives** or how someone with disability may have. The exercises were mostly were the same and we performed quite well in our capacities without caring is disabled or not disabled. Our capacities were quite [...] like **we don't have to expect low from disabled artists we can all perform in different ways** and create a [...] of **beauty we you see the diversity within all of us.**
- I didn't because the time was [...] I understood that it requires time to get to the arts and I really don't like it and I feel I have to say it loudly and **I don't agree that we are the same but we should not be afraid of that difference we have to accommodate to what those need and another thing you don't ask those questions and I am frustrated also I think I am obliged to say this. Most of the time I am the one I have to need to go to them but sometime also need them to come to me and translate to me their language and I didn't feel that.** I felt that we were being very nice and that's nice (laughter) I feel that...I didn't get anything ...no not anything ...that's a big word. I didn't get something back. I was supposed to be the one, because I am not someone with a disability I am not blind or be helpful or be [...] and not the other way. I hope you understand what I mean I am not mean.

The participant above still seemed to struggle with the core concept that access is not about treating everyone equally, that equality is reached by adapting to the individual. There was a residual attitude that disabled people are very different and a possible accusation that they were not doing enough to explain themselves. This discomfort is not uncommon and important to flag. Interestingly everyone else in the feedback session seemed to feel differently and went on to discuss disabled people as artistic collaborators.

- I didn't go through the whole process with everybody but I was seeing what was happening. Let's just strike me today two minutes before they were giving us answers of stuff sometimes we normally do but we don't know that we are doing that. Especially like the last time when we had this creation there was a disabled artist that wanted us to work with them it was my first time at making a professional show with a disabled artist and sometime I would just try to be, like let them lead, give them a movement and I'd be like how do you do it? How do you do it with your body? How do you do it with your wheelchair and can we try and then I would go to that level on the ground, on the wheelchair and sometimes I would try and sometimes I would fail lamentedly fail but that would be really great and sometimes ask and sometimes let them led. **I have never worked with a visually impaired artists but it was also really good seeing the way Rachel did the first and day Izzy.** You know this quality, actually I am talking artistically not human being, like how we can bring stuff and then it becomes dance, like Simon and Izzy, like film, [...] the way my body comes from you is choreography already like you don't really need to make a lot but with this kind of movement you can develop it with emotion like {...} says like use the emotion in the same word then ask the visually impaired artist do you feel it in your body? How does it go through your body? **So I started seeing new ways of bringing disabled artists on the stage rather than the one you say you come here and you do my movements but I will come with the movement and then create something together and use the emotion and use the touch, all those senses that sometimes we forget as an artist as we are trained how to do one, two, and three and four and we forget sometime that things might come naturally and it becomes beautiful so. I got how you can bring a person, an artist like Robert on stage and he will be performing even better than you.**
- Just to get to art, **I completely agree it takes time and as such a diverse group not just in terms of disability group but also in terms of experience with movement we need a lot of time to get to a professional level of art making but I still feel in the three days there were moments I remember the movement between Simon and Izzy that movement, there was moments of grace for me that I was like 'woah',** there is we are getting to art and maybe it is two or three moments over three days but who cares it is over only three days and then I was **we already have threads we can follow. So for me it was very important that to see that no matter the level of experience for everyone there was those moments that happened because of just the quality of presence and attention that is there.** And then to what you were saying there is also, working, of course we are not the same. **We are not going to say we are the same but yes as an able person and someone with experience in theatre and movement it is my responsibility be extremely cautious and to be attentive to the needs of the person I work with, especially if that person is disabled because I have really no clue of their need. But perhaps it is not just that. It is the level of experience for example when I was working the [weighting] exercise I was of course extremely careful and I was more me careful about her than her careful about me, because I can see, I have a lot of experience with movement and I am extremely fit. When I was lying on her, at first she didn't want to do it and then we tried little by little and I went ...for example if I was doing it with [Geda], a friend of ours who is very small, I would have the same kind of caution. It is a question of how small she is, she's visually impaired and she is not used to moving her body so for me it's not just...and I felt that she gave me a lot because she gave me first her full weight and her full trust with her body so I don't feel that it was a one way process.**
- I think it is also takes time to get to that level where the person trusts you and then you use that [...]. I am just talking about my experience with the last creation I made. The first day we came in to the theatre, whatever you call it, that place the space it was like – 'we have to give, they came to receive'. So it was like that the first week, like of pushing and it was this and this is what we want,

then we get to a level when the trust was built and then they will come and don't just see as disabled artists you also see us as a performer. Dancers like Joseph and Sally who will just do these amazing things and I will be like I cannot do that so you know what I mean it takes time. In two days it is impossible you have to give you have to try, they don't know you, this thing of mind of saying, I am better because I have two feet , two hands, things like that. Most of the time you are right you come of this mind that some of them not all of them. You have confident people like the models. I worked with them one day and inn one day they were just showing these things like they didn't care. [...] Walking around [...], artist will come and in the end perfect and will really take time and say **they cannot do that and you will say yeah you can do that and in the end they're beautiful and they even [...]** and in the end **they're not perfect and they are beautiful**, they even [...] for them. **It's also to you to build their trust and them to build their trust with you so it is really a takes time to have this** one.

- I think it is all in the approach you give to each other and entering the space with open minded, but then because Rachel guided us to [...] that we could approach the space with for example identify body parts connect with each other so such tools can create a level field so in the end it was not can and cannot do but then **you find common ground of creating something positive about it and forgetting the can'ts**. For me I think it was thumbs up.
- Let me just ask a question. **It is not only what disabled people can do it is what able people can do**. And in that scene [Moses] dancing was perfect he really can move he is a designer [...] doing the duet with [Izzy] maybe I am going to put them in my next creation (multiple people talking)
- Our questioning and facilitation is facilitating regardless of their disability or ability or
- I know **it costs time but I think people are people** [...] we all can and can't then for me the question is not there. **The beauty is the way you dance and the way I dance is totally indifferent**. But we are talking about what we have experienced I have the feeling that you have spent 25 years doing this. **You stay in the chair of Robert he was ok...but I will never do that because...you know...uncomfortable...and yes it will come with time. I am still cautious, I feel I am too cautious.**

In the session prior to this feedback Mairi intentionally sat in Robert's wheelchair to try to provoke a mention of it in the feedback session. This was an opportunity to explain that Mairi did that because she knows Robert and that she would not sit in the wheelchair of someone she does not know. There are no set rights and wrongs - again it is about the individual, individual relationships.

- Last year I worked with a of the best hip hop dancers. He grew up in a wheelchair but he managed to come out and he keeps so it becomes something like normal. I'd be in the theatre doing my thing before they come and I'd be sitting in his wheelchair and even if he comes I would just sit there it becomes something instinctive because that's part of our deal in life.
- You know I was telling him Vincent the choreography who was working on the last piece, which was sitting on the wheelchair [...] every day and I didn't even pay attention to that and it was nothing we were talking about (many people talking at the same time)

At the end of the session Mairi drew attention to how the groups had been split and encouraged conversation about this. Igt is important to note that this splitting was done based on how the groups had been presented to BOP and not based on how people self identify.

- **It feels strange to be here, to be separate**, it makes us feels strange, it makes us that we are not the same, it makes us feel the difference it's like why are we not just checking around [...]
- Yeah when I walking in the room this is obviously a conscious choice and maybe the discussion will have **something to do with us being abled and us working with disabled people like I realised it was a choice and I was just waiting to see why.**

- **It feels disgusting, very strange.**
- **It feels very strange, I wonder what they are talking about, I wonder what they are thinking about too.**

Mairi explained that we were asking them exactly the same questions based on the outcomes set at the start of the week. “There is just one thing I would like to say about that there is huge validity and need to allow disabled people to have their own space and to have a space that is there’s to own and to discuss and as a company that is why we exist and when we were under threat with our funding recently, it became a big thing in the press at home. It was a big thing that the only disability led company that put the narratives of disabled people on the stage was going and that is a space that does need protected. **So while this is weird [for you] I think that is important.**”

- Because the reality is that in most of life many people aren’t given the space or the opportunity to speak that we do live in cultures whether it is here or in the UK or anywhere, where able bodies, normative bodies are normative they are the narrative that we see everywhere so sometime yes [...] people to step forward and the confidence to bring an idea to meet you is phenomenally difficult of course it is really so I think a lot of that comes from having a space from seeing or being in a space I don’t know where that is a possibility I don’t know if that’s the right word but there is a lot tied up in that.
- This subject of even like community theatre people of colour like now they are not calling them coloured now, they are black people. And black people owning their own stage, owning they’re own space [...] expressions you know women are on stage too so it is really important that each and everyone have sometime space [...] that they can use most of the time always feel the same you know the discussion about black people on Hollywood or the discussion about women in today’s worlds **it might feel strange but it is important it’s a good thing.**

### **What does BOP suggest going forward?**

In conclusion BOP had a wonderful time with the group in Kigali and were very pleased with the processes we used and the journeys that the individuals went on. We feel that we managed to foster an accessible and creative environment which left everyone with a desire to continue and a passion for the messages we delivered.

A major rationale for the workshop was to create opportunities for more collaboration but also the space for the disabled artists to develop in a disabled-led environment. It was a fantastic outcome of the workshops that the disabled people started to realise that they could do their own thing. In a way the non-disabled artists needed them more than they needed the non-disabled artists. So while in the final session some of the non-disabled participants were maybe still working out how to fit the disabled artists into their world in the other room the artists were thinking about creating their own world.

It would be good to explore training disabled people to deliver training. In the UK the best practice is Disability Equality Training and it would be interesting to look at creating a model that fits with local politics, legislation and attitudes while introducing the core principles of barrier removal and access requirements.

We would also suggest looking at what the disabled artists may need in terms of training and developing technique. For example, many of them spoke with quiet voices and were clearly not familiar with being assertive within a performance environment. Voice coaching and similar classes would be hugely beneficial to the disabled artists in developing their careers.

We would recommend that translators are used in these situations - there were three plus languages in our workshops and it became a layered process communicating and understanding.

### What did BOP learn?

- The power of building workshops and training around our productions
- The power of moving between creative action and theoretical ideas to support each strand
- The ongoing need to educate disabled and non-disabled people about the core principles of disability equality and to support disabled people to recognise and communicate their access requirements.
- To be very mindful on language barriers in international settings



## Ideas for movement exercises generated by the group:

### 1 - To generate movement:

- Choose one body part; explore it's shapes and how it moves through space
- Add a speed; super slow, slow, fast, super fast and or/a level : low, medium, high
- Add an emotion/intention in the movement - concerned with quality of the movement

### 2 - To generate music / movement : in a group

- Make a sound / movement and repeat : give the group time to learn it accurately
- Call and response (considering ways to make sure everyone has access ie. always using both movement and sound so everyone has an avenue for response)
  - learn the set call/response song
  - Add gestures / movement
  - Pass the 'leader' role on around the circle

Could also play with the idea of Call and Response with images/emotions, therefore using less specific technical responses eg. Lion / mouse or wind / rain or Dull / Bright. The Leader chooses one image / emotion to play with and the group responds with the opposite. This makes the exercise more improvisatory in nature which may suit certain groups well.

### 3 - Hypnosis Ex : good for group focus / ensemble work

- Time : If you are the Hypnotist, giving enough time for people to respond, making sure the whole group is with you. Also playing with dynamics
- Everyone responds in their own way : the detail of the hypnotist's intention is what we follow.

### 4 - Theatre:

- Introduce yourself using 3 emotions: give options; crying, eating etc
- Ask people to create:
  - Victim image
  - Perpetrator image
  - Bystander image
    - Ask 'what's in your mind'
  - Describe what you're doing & how you're feeling
  - Freeze the image & invite people to feel and figure out / understand the image

### 5 - Poetry:

- Present yourself by using a symbol eg a Lion: find individual/group expressions of this

### 6 - Movement\*:

- Trying to imagine the movement (everyone without using your eyes) finding ways to communicate the movement.

\* BOP are least clear about number 6 - even though we know it was spoken about it needs more interrogation as an idea to translate into an exercise. But we have left it here as a reminder and as people may remember and be able to expand - especially the person whose contribution it was.