Being a Writer Podcast—The Art of Performance with Jet Moon

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**SPEAKERS**

Jet Moon, Nelima Begum

**Nelima Begum** 00:00

Welcome to the Being a Writer podcast from The Literary Consultancy. In each podcast we go behind the scenes of the writing process with a special guest and get to the heart of what it means to be a writer today. Being a Writer is a unique programme of support for writers that prioritises literary creativity, wellbeing and emotional resilience.

In this episode of the Being a Writer podcast, we're joined by writer, performer, director and producer Jet Moon. Jet produces politically engaging work that includes events and collaborations in a push for change, re-evaluation and empowerment, and speaks to us about the art of performance. Jet recounts their earliest memories of performance, the collaborative approach taken to art overall, and how the idea of performance has changed over time. Jet also pulls back the curtain on the many experiences that have shaped their performances and artistic endeavours, what they're working on now and what budding artists need to know. Welcome to the Being a Writer podcast, Jet, how are you?

**Jet Moon** 01:11

I’m all right, Nelima, I'm really glad to be here. It's taken a while for, you know, things to match up, but I'm quite excited.

**Nelima Begum** 01:19

I'm so glad. I'm so thrilled that… we're here and that we got there in the end. So, today, we're talking about the art of performance, and this is a topic that we felt you could really speak to because you wear so many hats in this area. And we'll get to, you know, your plethora of talents later on, but I really want to just reel it back to the beginning. Tell me about your earliest experiences with performance. At which point in your life did you realise it was something you wanted to do, like, that light bulb moment?

**Jet Moon** 01:50

Yeah, well, I don't think it was something that I wanted to do originally. And I had, you know, begun as an artist working in photography making quite stylized tableau-style things, and so often, I suppose, really directing the people I was working with, you know, having this, kind of, performance relationship and also making self-portraits of myself. But, um, so that was in the late-80s. And, you know, after a few years of this, I also realised that I couldn't afford it, you know? It costs money to do this style of making art. And then, at that time, I also was part of a sort of multi-dimensional collective, which was a lot of artists who would really encourage each other to work across all different kinds of mediums. So, you know, we would all do our poetry, or we'd all do some kind of spontaneous orchestra—I don't play any musical instruments, but, you know, we’d do these things. And so it was this kind of rapid fire through lots and lots of different mediums. And I was seeing other people doing performance. And I thought, Well, this is a style of making where you can just work with your body, you know? You don't need to have any other external, you know, capital. And that was when I began. I n some ways, the feeling of performing the first time was actually quite shocking, because I had made been making all these static artworks, you know, you put it on the wall, then you have it, and it just exists as a piece of time. And the feeling after having performed for the first time was that it was just gone, and it was just [this] completely ephemeral thing, and I was, like, oh, you know? I felt really destabilised by that notion, which can also be a beauty but yeah, that's how I began, was that, you know, I have my body. Let's, try to do something from here.

**Nelima Begum** 04:04

What was that—I mean, you say that you, you directed, [so] what was that transition like, from being directed to now being, like, in front of the camera, so to speak?

**Jet Moon** 04:16

Yeah, I mean, I had worked a lot of self-portraits as well. And I think I was always, you know, involved in some way and trying to tell my own story or bring, you know, do that process of communicating with others. Also, that process of survival; of being able to speak what you see and then bring that into a, kind of, concrete existence and, you know, therefore be freed from what I feel is, you know, this constant bombardment of the world just telling people, you know, like, to have this very monocultural view of life and this is what reality is, you know? So, I had already been doing that but um, I suppose apart from the thing of it being more accessible to me, and that I had that immediacy and that disappearance of the work, I don't feel that it was, like, a massive change. It just meant that I was, like, stepping out of the frame.

**Nelima Begum** 05:20

Okay. Wow, okay. So, can you pull back the curtain on the planning and preparation that goes into your performances, then? From inception to delivery on stage, how do you, kind of, work it all out?

**Jet Moon** 05:34

I think, you know, it really, really depends on what it is, because I've done so many different things, from, you know, some, kind of, like, fine art performance, which is in a stable situation of a gallery or something like that, to things which are part of street demonstrations, or, you know, working with groups where I'm directing people. And I think, I mean if I have time, I will research, you know, and I will think about what I'm writing and who my audience is, because I think this is hugely important—that yeah, you know, I'm not just walking out onto the street and, you know, speaking into, like, this unformed space. Yeah. But I also think that goodwill, you know, and trust, is probably one of the places that I feel is very important to start, particularly because I work with, you know, people who belong to marginalised groups that I'm part of, and I want to, you know, just do something with people and show some kind of vulnerability myself, and that when I have those relationships with other people, I mean, that's really what I want to get out of, you know, being an artist in the first place is to have relationships with people. And so I would think, you know, about… how am I going to reach my audience, like, who, but also… what, how, why, where.

**Nelima Begum** 07:09

I think that’s a really beautiful way of looking at it, too. I think, you know, there's so much emphasis on cultivating relationships with people and with your audience and making them feel like you've really, you know, done the work and you've invested in it emotionally. There's an emotional collaboration there to make sure that it really does [make sure they know] it's for them, and it speaks to them.

**Jet Moon** 07:31

And also because I collaborate so much in, you know, interview processes with people and speaking with people about, you know, does this feel like an accurate representation of that story? Or, like, how are we going to do this? And again there are other times when I just work incredibly fast through the pressure of the situation. And sometimes you make what you make. You're like, okay we've got, like, two weeks, and apparently we're doing a show, so we’ve got to just power through.

**Nelima Begum** 08:07

Brilliant. So, I mean, we've touched on this earlier, but you do wear so many hats in all of the brilliant work that you do. You're a writer, producer, performer, facilitator and an activist, and I'm sure there are more. How much overlap do you find in the work that you do? Do they all inform and inspire one another in some way?

**Jet Moon** 08:30

Yeah, well, I think that, I mean, I don't recommend doing all of those things at once. But I also feel that when you don't have lots of resources, that that's the place that many people are in, you know? That if they don't have a lot of money, you know, you don't have, like, this team working with you, who are doing all those different things [then] you are the writer, director, producer, performer, and so on. And that's how it goes. And there is, like, a lot of overlap there, because, um, again, like, sometimes it is through not having a choice… that you, you know, you are looking for that venue, you are, you know, trying to facilitate other people's access into the work and make sure that they feel that they can be part of that, and how is their performance going to work and stuff like that. But, um, to me it's an integration. It's a flow through those things, you know, because you're saying, you know, like, let's walk through that process, that planning and preparation that goes into performances. But, you know, that is how it goes if you are mostly a sole artist, is that you, you know, you're writing and… then thinking about where it's going and that you know that venue and how's it going to work in that venue? And then if you're a performer you're thinking, Okay, well, how is that writing? You know, is it actually going to work as I perform it? Because that's one of the things that you do when you're, you know, rehearsing something, is that you're refining the writing constantly. And then when you also see how, you know, how is someone else performing a work, if you've written and done an interview with somebody, written something from that and then you make it, what works best for that person to perform it? Because very simply, for example, if there's something that that person continually stumbles over, you change it to something that works for them.

**Nelima Begum** 10:36

That’s really interesting. There are so many little intricate details that feed into it, depending on the situation and, as you say, what needs to change and be made to work for others as well.

**Jet Moon** 10:46

Yeah, and I think it's good to, kind of, like, put some examples in there. You know, like, when I lived in Sydney, I worked a lot for an activist organisation called Reclaim the Streets. So there's sort of, like, a crossover between climate justice activists and anarchist horizontal organising, and it's a very fragmented group. But, um, you know, within that there would be a lot of performance, you know, because they're operating from this situationist idea of, you know, the spectacle. And also that every person can be part of artistic interventions. And a lot of our roadblocks would be very artistic interventions, you know? I can think of, um, you know, sort of waiting for the lights to change so that they’re on red, the cars are on hold, and being dressed as a, you know, bizarre bride, and, like, running out with my shopping trolley into traffic, and starting to give back really loudly. And it gives that pause where the people in the traffic are like, Okay, maybe not quite so annoyed about this disruption. Maybe we'll just, like, be astonished for a moment. And it also gives the other people in your action time to take all the roadblock materials out of your shopping trolley and run into that crossing way and make a roadblock, which, um, obviously Suella, Braverman would have us thrown into a—

**Nelima Begum** 12:18

Oh, my goodness.

**Jet Moon** 12:21

It's the kind of thing we want outlawed, apparently.

**Nelima Begum** 12:24

Yeah. Wow, that sounds thrilling. And you've, you know, a lot of experience in this area. So… do you think the performance space has changed since you first started? And if so, how?

**Jet Moon** 12:42

Yeah. Well I started as an artist during… the mid-80s, and probably doing performance work in, like, the early-90s. And, you know, for one thing, the Internet was not around in the way that it is now. That was… a new communication tool that we were using, and we were not using it in terms of, you know, being able to live stream or being able to, you know, like, do podcasts or have, like, these different audiences in this way. So I think it's changed in that way. I think the thing is, that all of those very traditional forms still exist. You know, you can still go to the West End, and see completely traditional theatre. And at the same time all these new, completely new interventions are happening. I think the pandemic brought some temporary changes in terms of people starting to think about accessibility, like, you know, suddenly we could make things accessible to people who, you know, couldn't travel to performances or couldn't access spaces, or were too poor to, you know, pay for all these different cultural things which shouldn't be luxuries, they should be, you know, everyone should have a right to—

**Nelima Begum** 14:01

Have access to art.

**Jet Moon** 14:03

And enrichment. But, you know, that's been, kind of, backtracked a bit. Because now we want people to just, like, come and sit in theatres or whatever. But, um, I think the most important thing is that for me, what I've always done is I have worked with what I have access to, you know? And that… also can become stylistic, you know? You can make something out of that. And it's like, I mean… for example, like, when I was performing lots of queer cabaret a lot of the time with bar Wotever who still exist in Vauxhall in the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, loads of my costumes would consist of, like, fishnet and underwear, because that's all I had.

**Nelima Begum** 14:55

Right. Very resourceful!

**Jet Moon** 14:58

You had someone, like, designing these beautiful pieces, and I was just like yeah, whatever works.

**Nelima Begum** 15:07

Of course You have to make the best, as you say, the best of what you have and the best of the situation.

**Jet Moon** 15:13

I think one important thing is that what has changed is, you know, not so much the stage, but the conditions of living. Because, um, you know, when I started out it was possible to, you know, have quite a large flat or a studio space and live really, really cheaply. So there was low rent, there was squatting, it was possible, you know, like, to live on the dole or have a part-time job, you know, where you earned, like, an okay amount of money. And if you didn't like it, you could walk out and find another one really quickly, you know? And myself, and many other people of my generation had the experience of not having to work all the time.

**Nelima Begum** 15:58

Oh, God, I am jealous!

**Jet Moon** 16:01

And I think that lots of young people don't know that these things existed, you know? I just remember when I had, like, huge places where I was paying, you know, a pittance in rent. And I had time to create and to mix with other people, and to just have that freedom. And that is something, you know, often people would not even imagine that it would exist to, you know, like, question the idea that we were working all the time or struggling with those basic, you know, survival issues of finances and so on. Yeah.

**Nelima Begum** 16:49

That's so interesting that you say that, because just as you said it, I'm also finding it just very difficult to imagine a time like that. But I, you know, I know it was there. Because, I mean, I'm the youngest of five, and I've got quite large age gaps with my siblings, so they regularly, kind of, reflect on a time when, as you say, it wasn't so intense that you had to work 24/7. People did not live to work, they just, you know, it was a much easier time back then, in terms of just there [not being] so much pressure on people. I'm very jealous that I didn’t get to live in that time.

**Jet Moon** 17:26

I think to some extent there's also an erasure around that memory.

**Nelima Begum** 17:34

Why do you think that is?

**Jet Moon** 17:38

Because we live in an extremely exploitative time with a morally bankrupt and abusive government controlled by corporations who are making an absolute and literal killing out of it.

**Nelima Begum** 17:53

Vulnerability, yeah. Well, let's move on from the depressing, it's depressing, which I'm sure we could talk about for days. I mean… it’s quite a nice segue into the next question: you say your work is a response to situations. Tell us about the people and the groups that you're advocating space for.

**Jet Moon** 18:19

So I’ll maybe just rephrase a little bit. So… it’s is very much a response to situations, you know, and I do, kind of, tend to, like, move across different mediums and just be like okay, well what can I get my hands on, but also like, what is suitable for this situation? And it's this thing about the people and groups that I'm advocating space for. I would say that, you know, the people that I'm advocating space for is me, and I'm not doing something for other people, you know? I collaborate with other people. I'm part of things with other people. But, you know, I’m not, like saving anybody. I'm not in that, kind of, like, that position of like, ah, you know, let me educate you, like this kind of thing? I'm more what I want. And what I try to do is to create these spaces with people who are not having accurate representations of themselves in the outside world. And I actually share community with those people. And so what is created… makes a space of empowerment and nourishment and energising, because often people are struggling every day with external, you know, things, you know, whether it's, you know, transphobia or racism, you know, as you say, like, this whole, kind of, struggle to survive. A I try and make spaces where people see each other and hear each other's stories and the stories are valued. And that, you know, we get something out of that. And I would say, for example… I did a series of interviews in sort of like 2018, 2019, called, it was actually originally called Sick Fucks… [but] the funders wouldn't accept that, so it got renamed to Resilient and Resisting very quickly. But what that project arose from was that I was so chronically ill at the time that I was mostly spending my time in bed, isolated from other people apart from the internet. And yet, through the internet, I could see also that other people were struggling with things that I was struggling with. And I was just really in such a horrible place. I was like oh God, it just can't, can't live like this. I can't handle it. And I think there was that choice between [thinking], Okay, what am I going to kill myself? Or okay, well make something in an attempt to, again, [sic] visible-ise my experience, connect with other people move from that position of it being a very oppressive, personal experience to okay, this is the personal *is* political. How can I show myself that it is… and not just be crushed, by the circumstances that I live in? And so… I started to do interviews with people who had an intersection, you know, like, several intersections of either being disabled, sex workers, survivors, kinky or queer, you know, because that was *my* intersection, you know? And [those were] the things I was like okay, I want to work from what's happening for me, and how I connect with others and be like, now, how are our stories matching and also different? How do they affirm what's happening in our lives, but also expand what we see as an overview, and what connects our stories?

**Nelima Begum** 22:08

Beautiful. No, I think it's such a lovely way of looking at it. And it also, I mean, you kind of touched on the choice and having to build resilience to, kind of, come to that conclusion. Something that has stayed with me throughout this conversation, you mentioned it earlier, is just the way you interview people to basically ask how you can best authentically represent them. And I think that's such a powerful way of going about it.

**Jet Moon** 22:34

Yeah, and I think that it's something that has evolved over time. You know, when I first started, you know, like, making stories from things that people told me, I didn't have any recording devices. And I really purely was, like, sitting down with people and, like, having conversations, and saying oh, you know, I want to create something. And… it also wasn't, like, a verbatim practice, because that wasn't what I was doing. You know, I was doing a creative practice of sometimes, different pieces [and] different people's stories would coalesce into one script and become *a* story. And I would also, though, have that process of, I mean I think trust is key in that because it makes a big difference in terms of what conversations you have with people, you know? And they are conversations where we, kind of, rather than it being an interview, for example, where you, kind of, ask me questions and I, sort of, mostly get to monologue back to you, you know, I'm not really hearing loads and loads of your story, it would be, like, quite a lot of sharing. And I think, in my experience, that also encourages people to tell more detail, because there's a very personal energetic relationship established, you know, where if you have that real feeling about hearing each other's stories, you start to have a, kind of, sense of excitement between you and, you know, that interview process in itself is something, you know? That's an event.

**Nelima Begum** 24:22

Absolutely, because you've created a space for them to feel comfortable, to feel vulnerable, to share, as you've said.

**Jet Moon** 24:31

But also, for me, you know, sometimes those conversations with other people have been complete revelations, you know? Because I feel that, um, you know, as a person, I've often felt isolated or different or, you know, like, been struggling to find my community and, and that I am often not having those reflections in the outside world. You know, like, I mean, I have a bit of a complex migration history. I'm English, but I'm also a 10-pound Pom. So, my parents emigrated when I was a kid, and I grew up in New Zealand then came back here. But when I was growing up in New Zealand, for example, homosexuality was illegal. When I was a teenager, you know, and so that has quite an effect. And so when I listen to other people telling their stories, for me, it's like this massive affirmation of when I'm being told, you know, completely the opposite things about life, you know, like, the very, kind of, like, oh you look at a magazine [and] representation is still quite narrow. This diversity narrative. And it's not very deep. And so when I hear someone really tell a story that encompasses that complexity, that's an astonishing thing for me. You know, yes, *they* get something from that, but I just feel they are giving *me* something incredible.

**Nelima Begum** 26:10

It’s a really powerful and incredible exchange. I mean, more on the work that you've done with others, you've done fantastic work with the Queer Beograd Collective. Could you share more with us about how that came to be?

**Jet Moon** 26:25

So it’s a bit of a funny thing. So I mean, you know, when I was living in Sydney, Australia, and preparing to come in, like, quote marks, “to England”, I also was looking at the map of Europe, and I was aware that, you know, like, in 2004, they'd been an attempt at Pride in Belgrade which had been quite a bloody riot, you know, like, lots of people were hurt. And also I knew that Peoples’ Global Action, which was a horizontal meeting of lots of organisations coming together in different places, were going to meet in Belgrade. And I was like oh, I want to go there. How can I go there? And so I went to an organising meeting in London for this, you know, this Peoples’ Global Action, this organising meeting, and people from Belgrade were there. And then we started talking, I started talking about Reclaim the Streets, and they had, you know, their own stories about [how] they were really into trance music. And, you know, like, this, you know, different kind of electronic, you know, dance party music. And this was, kind of, how we had this initial bonding of like oh, hello, maybe we're, like, friends, you know?

**Nelima Begum** 27:45

very cool.

**Jet Moon** 27:48

I went to Belgrade as part of Peoples’ Global Action. I mean, that was a weird kind of thing because lots of mostly Western activists went into a city, where, you know, it was not that long ago that they had been in a situation of war was several other countries. You know, this whole, kind of thing of, yeah, you know, people not being able to travel and all this different stuff, but they people kind of went there with an expectation that the same activist infrastructures would exist. And of course they didn't. And we just had, like, these, kind of, funny jokes of like, you know, being there with my friends from Belgrade, where they'd have like all these Western people's passports, because people had to register with the police whenever you entered the country, blah, blah, and they were like we should sell them all. European and British passports and just kind of joking, because they're in a situation where they can't travel, you know, with like, a letter of invitation, paying for all [this] different, like, visa stuff, paying to cross through transit countries, all these different things, and just this feeling of this kind of irony of, like, a meeting, but also, like, the real differences, and, you know, the assumptions that people made about coming into this situation.

At that point I also really felt that homophobia of the environment. I made friends with people there. And we, you know, started having this conversation about, you know, what if we started this collective? What if we did something in Belgrade, like, something underground, you know? And again, this ridiculous thing where you want to tell, you know, LGBT people to come to the thing that you're making, but you can't advertise it, because otherwise fascists are gonna come and beat the crap out of you. But, um, I mean, it's so funny because we used the word queer because the fascists didn't know that meant at that point. And I think also the important thing for me in terms of the Queer Beograd, Border Fuckers cabaret was I, you know, I was there I was, you know, like, a Western activist, but I thought I can't just be this person who, you know, somehow is facilitating what other people are doing. I also have to do something that is about me using my skills and doing the thing that I'm most suited to, and that is also about me being energised by the situation. And that's how the idea of the cabaret came across. And it was also such a really useful tool because we were wanting to make a, kind of, political space, but it was a way to talk about political ideas which wasn't boring. Yeah, I mean, I'm a political animal, I don't want to listen to lots of speeches, I just can’t. I mean, it's not that fascinating. And, um, you know, it was like how can we convey, you know, the situation of being in a post-war country that's transitioning to capitalism, where it's completely impossible to be a queer person, where gender roles are just, you know, this kind of polarised… thing. And just to really talk about this in a way that also was, how can I be funny? How can I be entertaining? How can it feel like some kind of moment of freedom? You know, however short. Again, that emotion of being ephemeral. But, you know, when people are together, if you're celebrating and having a good time and watching a show, yeah, it can be a moment of freedom.

**Nelima Begum** 31:56

That's so powerful, and all just, well, I just got lost in your answer. That's such a moving story as well. I mean, you say that you've, it kind of ties into the work that you've done, but you say that you've used creativity as a method of survival; somewhere to channel your anger and to have a voice. Better to fight trying to change this world than to go under because of isolation. And I know you mentioned isolation before as well. So creativity as a method of survival is such a moving and important concept and one that I'm sure not just writers, but you know, a lot of our listeners, might relate to. Who and what helps you feel creative?

**Jet Moon** 32:40

Yeah, I mean, [to] kind of just, like, reiterate that thing about having enough time and resources to make work, not being physically or mentally exhausted. And obviously, I have made work in difficult times, but often it can be being absolutely enraged. Well, that's just such a thing, you know, where I feel that I'm so grateful that that's the thing that I will do from rage. You know, I just remember like, um, oh God, in my activism, at some point, I did spend time, like, visiting women in the Yarl’s Wood immigration detention centre, you know, and I remember, like… going to visit a family there. And, fuck, you know, watching the guard, like, frisk this five-year-old child, you know, and it’s just, like, this very dehumanising environment. And also on the way out I lost the key to the locker where I had put my belongings, because you're not, like, allowed to take things in. And there was, like, Security Officer Carol, and she just had, like, a face like a slapped arse. And I had to approach her and be like oh, excuse me, I'm sorry, I've lost my key for the locker, you know? It was, like, this big performance of her stating her authority, you know, and just, you know, there she is working for, like, Serco or Sodexo or any of these other organisations, you know, like, profiting from imprisoning people. I mean, I was extremely angry. There's not a great deal that I can do within the space, you know? It's very, very limited. I can advocate. I can try to find solicitors. I can, you know, provide information. I can, you know, provide some emotional support. But you know, it's small.

From that I wrote a performance called GSL Roses, which is a kind of striptease performance and about the getting off on power of people *in* power, but performing it to mostly queer audiences that did come into the Queer Belgrade Cabaret, also got included in that. You know, like, telling this story, but doing it in a way where it's not, like, a straight relating of events. It's something where there's a strip going on, there's this sexuality being brought into the mix. And humour, and how to hold an audience with that narration and make it into something else—you know, make it into a bit of a queer explosion of desire, and, you know, and it’d be pulling apart, you know, what are these power constructions that we might play with in our kinky lives in a consensual manner, but how, you know, talking about the non-consensual power relationships out there in the world? And, yeah, so I think that thing of, um, using rage, but using humour, using sexuality, you know, like, really making something out of those experiences.

**Nelima Begum** 36:18

Again… it kind of relates to what you said earlier about working with what you have. So, working with emotions and what you feel and creating from that as a starting point as well. I mean, your work undoubtedly makes statements and has an impact on people. Is there a particular exhibition or piece that you've worked on, that has stayed or resonated with you throughout your life?

**Jet Moon** 36:41

I mean, I think that there's, like, so many of them. Yeah, I mean, but I think that I'm one that just like, felt great at the time. And yeah, and was just, like, a beautiful was. So there used to be a transgender festival of the arts in London, which was like, a few days of, like, performances and workshops in the space where, like, you know, trans people could see each other in the safe environment. And this was like, I think it was like, maybe 2000 and 789. Yeah, so trans fabulous. And I got to perform there a couple of times, I performed in a show called the gender queer play house. And so it's just it's not a huge audience. It's probably like, 200 people. But I think it's that feedback loop, where people are hearing and seeing themselves, and you're part of that community, and people are like, cheering you on. And you get that incredible, you know, loop where people are being excited and showing you that they, like, what you're doing. And so you what you're doing is energised by that feedback. And I just felt, like, I could never take space off of the energy and authority No, like, you know, being able to tell some things of my story of, you know, being a gender queer femme die can just feeling that your time being in the space being seen in the space, that's not often the caring for me in the world, because I just often feel, you know, like, the cross, either invisible or endangered, or both. And just that thing, where I suppose that feeling of being loved, yeah, loved and sane, and just and really, like, just a physical sense that I could, you know, like, float on the energy that was coming from that audience.

**Nelima Begum** 38:49

I mean, it just sounds exhilarating, really. And it sounds like one of those moments that you kind of want to put in a bottle so that you can have it forever. What kind of creativity and expression do you hope or think the, kind of, the arts world will see in years to come?

**Jet Moon** 39:10

Well I hope we have some, kind of, like, surge of making, you know? Like, something anarchic, you know, truly an uprising. But I'm—really I just hope that there’ll also be something left of the arts. Just that it won't be reduced to, like, this further sort of homogenised sludge where there's only like, upper middle-class white people with financial security who can make anything. I mean, the thing is that people are making things outside of the mainstream arts but they don't get the same visibility. It's not, you know, it's not that people are not having culture. Everyone's having it. It's just what gets seen as that. I guess I would really, really hope for alive communities that affirm people and, you know, give people a way to survive and get through, you know, and something more than that, you know?

**Nelima Begum** 40:12

Absolutely. I couldn't agree more honestly. I do think—well, I hope it's a voice and visibility and platform that is achieved in the years to come. Are you working on anything at the moment? I feel like this is a really important question.

**Jet Moon** 40:27

Well I'm only doing a few things. Yeah, I'm wrestling with a book, like, a novel, which is based on my time in Sydney, you know, when I was working in an activist collective, and doing a lot of stuff around, like, you know, going to these detention camps, so being part of that post protest action, but also trying to create something that's, like, a time capsule of what it was like to live in a very big queer city. Because I think that's a feeling that many people have, you know? And anyway, I'm really, really in a wrestling match with that. But anyway, so some of them are straightforward, so Resilient and Resisting, the interview and live readings and archive project that I did through the pandemic, that got put into an artist book, designed as a book, and that's ready to go to print. So just trying to raise some money to print that, and then it can, you know, there can be another set of, like, these reading tours, also where people from communities read stories, you know, that they that might have a strong, you know, resonance with. And I'm also looking at doing the next iteration of my survivors writing programmes, so like, these workshops that I did during the pandemic, with people who relate to different notions of survivorship, you know? They could be survivors of sexual trauma, they could be, you know, survivors of transphobia or racism, they could have had a traumatic event in their life, you know, of whatever kind and, like, bring together those people, sharing space. And also, you know, encouraging people and finding ways that people can write about their experiences, and, you know, create literature, but also have a space of processing. Because that's been really important for me, you know? And I think that's really how did it, you know, it wasn't an abstract idea. I'm a survivor writing, and writing, for me, has been, like, a massive process of, you know, affirming my own truth. You know, being able to see it, and then actually being able to bring it to other people and have a relationship, you know, with the rest of the world. Yeah.

**Nelima Begum** 42:56

That's incredible to know. And, you know, these all sound like really exciting things that I'm sure we'll all be sure to keep an eye out for. What would you tell the Jet Moon that was just starting out in this world of performance and creativity?

**Jet Moon** 43:11

I don't really believe in these time machine questions.

**Nelima Begum** 43:15

Really?

**Jet Moon** 43:17

I mean, I know there's always like, I could have been like, oh, you know, like,

**Nelima Begum** 43:20

Yeah, I mean, it's not to… induce like, regret of any kind. It's just a kind of—it's more of a reflective sort of thing.

**Jet Moon** 43:31

Yeah, absolutely. You know, and I just think, you know, kind of, like, you know, I did what I did, there's no do-over and that is only being able to reflect, you know? And I think that in that context, I probably say to myself, choose one thing. And, you know, rather than, like, work across, like, several different countries, you know, all these different mediums or whatever. But the that thing is that I would never do that because I'm also a neurodivergent artist and I feel that, you know, it's very common for people who are neurodivergent to, kind of, have this expanse across different topics and mediums, which other people might not easily understand, but which do coalesce together. And the other thing I'd say was, you know, like, don't work for people who are arseholes, you know? Like, demand respect.

**Nelima Begum** 44:21

That is really important. Yeah, that's key. What kind of advice would you—I mean, we've kind of touched on it just now, but what kind of advice would you give to budding artists?

**Jet Moon** 44:32

Oh, go for it. I think with the stage or performance space, that is your space that you can completely control. It's a refuge. It's a platform. You know, you and you may not have that in the rest of the world, but *that* you can control and you can say whatever you like there however you want to say it, and so make the most of your time on it. And also, there are a lot of tailored mentoring programmes out there, you know, in specialised venues. So, you know, not very far from me, there's, like, Graeae and they specialise in working with disabled artists. I think there's, you know, there's, gosh, what are they called? Clean Break, for example, run a programme for women who have experience of the prison system and are wanting to start learn to write material. You know, if you can't find what you need, make it. Yeah.

**Nelima Begum** 45:35

Fantastic. I think that's really solid advice to close with, because there are practical suggestions in there. But also just, you know, this really powerful message to just go for it which I think will resonate with a lot of different kinds of artists as well. So that concludes the more formal structured part of the podcast. But what I love to do with our guests is round off with some quickfire questions which… don't think, just say the first thing that comes to your head. Are you ready? What has inspired you lately?

**Jet Moon** 46:10

Our strikers. You know, that continue solidarity and protest actions. Yeah.

**Nelima Begum** 46:18

Fantastic. What performance or exhibition would you recommend everyone go and see?

**Jet Moon** 46:23

Two amazing things. So for example, first thing, the Dan Daw Show. So he's a gay disabled dancer, who's an SM submissive, and has made this incredible show unlike anything that I have ever seen before. And it so perfectly talks about this conversation between consent and access; power and, you know, being interconnected. Because it's this performance between himself and another dancer, and he, you know, he is a submissive in that, and the other person is the top. But it's also this beautiful thing where the other person is completely his access assistance through this. And it's also, you know, about Dan’s power. And, I mean, I have seen that show twice. And I’d go and see it, again. It is just amazing, amazing, amazing. But I'd also go and see the Nan Goldin film. You know, this, you know, she had also this incredible relationship with her communities who has subjects and herself as a subject. And it's the films All the Beauty and the Bloodshed, but it's also her, you know, fight against the Sackler family and the opioid epidemic in America. And it's a great story, but it's incredibly well made. And it brings together that intersection of her, very, very personal and how that is not separated, you know, from big world politics. Yeah, is really worthwhile.

**Nelima Begum** 48:08

Thank you for those suggestions, they’re noted. If you could perform with any one past or present, who would it be?

**Jet Moon** 48:17

I mean–

**Nelima Begum** 48:19

This is a tough one, I'm sure there are many.

**Jet Moon** 48:21

I really, really found it hard. I mean, I think I would like to perform again with someone who I performed in a duo [with] for like, many years, a woman called [sic] Josephine Craig. We're not even friends anymore. You know, like, things happen between people. But, um, that probably was the most dynamic onstage chemistry that I've ever had with someone, you know? And I really loved performing with her.

**Nelima Begum** 48:49

Incredible. What are you reading at the moment?

**Jet Moon** 48.52

I'm one of those ad people who reads half of things and has lots of piles of books around the place.

**Nelima Begum** 48:59

Oh, I do that too. I think that's most of publishing and most of our readers as well. I mean, everyone's got to be read pile. It only gets bigger. But does anyone actually finish a book on their to be read pile? No. You just buy more books.

**Jet Moon** 49:13

Okay, so the thing I did finish really recently and was reading aloud to myself, was, um, Derek Jarman's *Chroma*, you know, and he wrote this as he was dying from HIV-related illness and also going blind and he wrote this book about colour. Really, it's really, really beautiful. And, yeah, but the thing I'm currently working my way through is this… bit of light reading called *Taking Sides: Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism*. And it's, um, it's a collection of different essays that the person started to put together when the Black Lives Matter movement was, you know, kind of, becoming, you know, into that public visibility. And when lots of protests were happening. And it's looking at, you know, like, what's allyship, you know, and really critiquing that and encouraging people towards the idea of, I mean, this, kind of, came up in our conversation of like, you know, it's like, well who are you making work for? Who hoping to help etc… And it's like well, okay, let's move away from this idea of allyship and look at the idea of, like, being accomplices, or, you know, active participants. And it's, yeah, so I'm getting through that.

**Nelima Begum** 50:34

Wow. You know, you said you were working on a novel, and this is the Being a Writer platform, so I am going to round off with this question: what does being a writer mean to you?

**Jet Moon** 50:47

Yeah, I mean, I think it's at the core of my relationships with people, you know? I'm not really, like, a small-talky person you may have gathered. For me, it's really the way that I want to bond with other people and have, like, a meaningful sense of doing something together and to feel part of.

**Nelima Begum** 51:10

That's beautiful. I think that's such a lovely way of looking at it—that writing helps us forge relationships and bonds and build on them. So, thank you for sharing. I mean, what better way to conclude the podcast. Thank you so much for joining us, Jet, it's been an absolute pleasure speaking to you.

**Jet Moon** 51:29

Well, thank you. I have enjoyed my time on the stage.