

Transcript: The beat of our hearts – staging new histories of LGBTQIA+ loneliness – Dr Charlotte Jones

1

00:00:12,880 --> 00:00:18,640

(Sound of birds chirping and construction work)

2

00:00:21,559 --> 00:00:25,120

(General chatter and sound of chairs moving)

3

00:00:27,239 --> 00:00:28,600

I'm Charlotte Jones.

4

00:00:28,600 --> 00:00:31,160

I'm the academic lead on The Beat of Our Hearts.

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00:00:31,160 --> 00:00:35,600

I'm a white woman with long orange hair and a short fringe,

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00:00:35,600 --> 00:00:38,119

and I'm wearing a green fluffy jumper.

7

00:00:38,119 --> 00:00:40,079

My pronouns are she/her.

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00:00:40,079 --> 00:00:45,320

I work on various projects,
focussing on gender, sexuality, disability and health.

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00:00:45,320 --> 00:00:47,719

And particularly the intersections of these areas.

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00:00:47,719 --> 00:00:50,159
I'm Scott Hurren. I'm 31 years old.

11
00:00:50,159 --> 00:00:53,000
I'm a theatre director at Exeter Northcott.

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00:00:53,000 --> 00:00:56,960
I have medium brown length hair and a brown beard.

13
00:00:56,960 --> 00:00:59,200
My pronouns are he/him.

14
00:00:59,200 --> 00:01:02,600
I'm a theatre director that specialises in new writing.

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00:01:02,600 --> 00:01:05,920
So often that means I'm working with the writer
to develop their work

16
00:01:05,920 --> 00:01:09,519
from the beginnings of an idea
right up to the production.

17
00:01:09,519 --> 00:01:11,719
... To feel the scope of the project.

18
00:01:12,120 --> 00:01:16,239
The first night of The Beat of Our Hearts
will be in about three weeks time.

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00:01:16,799 --> 00:01:19,799
... which is amazing, is a really great thing.

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00:01:19,799 --> 00:01:25,280

Today we're in the second week of rehearsals and this was a really lovely moment.

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00:01:25,280 --> 00:01:28,120

The project team came together with the cast

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00:01:28,120 --> 00:01:31,680

and some members of the creative and the production team as well.

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00:01:35,920 --> 00:01:39,879

Peter Butler, our set designer, has done an amazing job at creating the space,

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00:01:39,879 --> 00:01:43,480

and without giving away too many spoilers, the set moves around a lot

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00:01:43,480 --> 00:01:45,920

and it's a very versatile space.

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00:01:45,920 --> 00:01:49,439

And that means that in the rehearsal room we're exploring all those elements.

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00:01:49,439 --> 00:01:53,159

We have as much right to be here as anyone else.

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00:01:54,079 --> 00:01:55,920

To have our lives celebrated.

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00:01:55,920 --> 00:01:57,719

I'm Natalie McGrath.

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00:01:57,719 --> 00:01:58,920

I'm a playwright.

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00:01:58,920 --> 00:02:01,120

My pronouns are she/her.

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00:02:01,120 --> 00:02:03,000

I'm in my late 40s.

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00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:07,560

I'm a white female
and I have sandy, mousy hair.

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00:02:07,560 --> 00:02:12,080

In the beginning,
I was one of a handful of artists who did a pilot project

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00:02:12,080 --> 00:02:15,840

with the Welcome Centre Exeter University
and Exeter Northcott

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00:02:15,840 --> 00:02:21,759

to explore and create ideas around themes
of loneliness and isolation

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00:02:21,759 --> 00:02:25,639

and belonging
on young LGBTQIA people.

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00:02:26,759 --> 00:02:31,159
(Group talking)

39
00:02:32,719 --> 00:02:33,840
Hi, I'm Andy Hunt.

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00:02:33,840 --> 00:02:35,879
I'm the CEO of the Intercom Trust.

41
00:02:35,879 --> 00:02:37,400
I'm a white male.

42
00:02:37,400 --> 00:02:39,360
I am five foot seven tall.

43
00:02:39,360 --> 00:02:41,919
I've got dark hair and I wear glasses.

44
00:02:41,919 --> 00:02:44,159
My pronouns are he/him.

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00:02:44,439 --> 00:02:48,960
The intercom Trust is the regional
lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans plus charity,

46
00:02:48,960 --> 00:02:52,800
and we provide support to anybody
that's affected by the issues.

47
00:02:52,800 --> 00:02:56,319
... a kind of small regional organisation,

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00:02:56,319 --> 00:02:58,520
but we punch above our weight I think.

49
00:02:58,520 --> 00:03:00,479
We did some research earlier on.

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00:03:00,479 --> 00:03:03,639
We worked with Stonewall
and Manchester LGBT Foundation

51
00:03:03,639 --> 00:03:05,879
and put a survey out across the Southwest,

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00:03:05,879 --> 00:03:10,159
and they did the same in Manchester
and in London as well.

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00:03:10,159 --> 00:03:15,280
Just to find out about how the pandemic
has affected our communities.

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00:03:15,280 --> 00:03:18,960
I was really fascinated by the way that
loneliness is often understood

55
00:03:18,960 --> 00:03:24,479
to be a individual problem
or something that we feel and experience,

56
00:03:24,479 --> 00:03:28,919
and perhaps we're often asked to
take responsibility for

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00:03:28,919 --> 00:03:30,719

or asked to be resilient to.

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00:03:31,120 --> 00:03:34,520

Think about the legacy of something like the AIDS crisis.

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00:03:34,520 --> 00:03:36,599

The Section 28

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00:03:36,599 --> 00:03:38,840

and the shame and the stigmas around there

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00:03:38,840 --> 00:03:41,719

and the rhetoric and the language that was used

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00:03:41,719 --> 00:03:46,400

that some of that has resurfaced now and is impacting

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00:03:46,400 --> 00:03:48,680

young queer, trans and non-binary people.

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00:03:48,680 --> 00:03:50,879

And it's scary and it's shocking.

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00:03:50,879 --> 00:03:55,000

Natalie and the whole extended team of this project worked with many

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00:03:55,000 --> 00:03:59,280

different organisations and groups across the Southwest to generate material.

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00:03:59,439 --> 00:04:02,639

For me, it was a real listening in process

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00:04:02,639 --> 00:04:07,159

in terms of just trying to tune in
to the range of voices.

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00:04:07,159 --> 00:04:11,599

The diversity that was in
that Zoom room if you like.

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00:04:11,599 --> 00:04:15,479

That was then all collated
and Natalie went away and developed that into the play

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00:04:15,479 --> 00:04:17,639

which is where I landed with the project.

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00:04:17,639 --> 00:04:21,959

... The other thing I want you to talk about here is

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00:04:21,959 --> 00:04:23,600

something that you love about this project

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00:04:23,600 --> 00:04:25,920

or this play or the themes that are that are in it.

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00:04:25,920 --> 00:04:29,240

OK, let's just move around
and then I'll say go.

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00:04:31,279 --> 00:04:33,639
Swop over if you haven't already.

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00:04:33,639 --> 00:04:37,040
So projects often take time to evolve

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00:04:37,040 --> 00:04:41,639
and then suddenly
as my role kicked in as writer

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00:04:41,639 --> 00:04:45,079
and not just one of the sort of
the partners of the Project.

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00:04:45,079 --> 00:04:48,560
Bang I'm in,
and I'm suddenly having to write a play

81
00:04:48,560 --> 00:04:50,879
in quite a short space of time.

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00:04:50,879 --> 00:04:54,480
Watching Natalie Mcgrath as she's written this play,

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00:04:54,480 --> 00:04:56,920
Seeing the series of draughts that she's gone through,

84
00:04:56,920 --> 00:05:00,319
seeing the things that have inspired her,
that have excited her

85
00:05:00,319 --> 00:05:03,279
has been a really exciting part of this work for me.

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00:05:05,199 --> 00:05:08,720

So we did a lot of restructuring and shuffling around of scenes to see what that did,

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00:05:08,720 --> 00:05:11,720

and then we landed in a different place to where we sort of began.

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00:05:11,879 --> 00:05:13,399

That's all that's Left.

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00:05:14,160 --> 00:05:15,920

It's what the police didn't take.

90

00:05:16,680 --> 00:05:19,519

Seeing those words come to life off the paper.

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00:05:20,639 --> 00:05:22,959

It's been quite moving, actually.

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00:05:22,959 --> 00:05:25,040

Hello, my name is Keiron Jecchinis.

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00:05:25,040 --> 00:05:28,120

I'm a white male in my early 60s.

94

00:05:28,120 --> 00:05:32,399

I have a close cropped hair cut, grey goatee, slightly unshaven.

95

00:05:32,639 --> 00:05:34,680

And my pronouns are he/him.

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00:05:34,680 --> 00:05:37,079

My role in the play is Dove.

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00:05:37,079 --> 00:05:40,360

He is the oldest character in the play.

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00:05:40,560 --> 00:05:43,959

I wondered then what would happen to me
when I was 21.

99

00:05:44,319 --> 00:05:48,120

Legally allowed to look at another man,
touch another man.

100

00:05:48,480 --> 00:05:50,160

When I was in my 20s,

101

00:05:50,920 --> 00:05:53,759

A group of gay friends and I went to
an all male production of

102

00:05:53,759 --> 00:05:55,000

The Importance of Being Earnest.

103

00:05:56,199 --> 00:05:59,680

It was like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis.

104

00:06:00,920 --> 00:06:02,360

Unfolding before us.

105

00:06:03,439 --> 00:06:07,000

I think that essentially is what he's trying to do

106

00:06:07,000 --> 00:06:09,600

by sharing his life story with these characters

107

00:06:09,600 --> 00:06:12,879

to sort of buoy them up,

reassure them,

108

00:06:12,879 --> 00:06:15,000

but also to say, you know listen,

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00:06:15,439 --> 00:06:20,439

Don't remain narrowed or

blinkered into terror.

110

00:06:21,120 --> 00:06:24,639

..... was also the beginning of me

knowing I had to speak up.

111

00:06:25,959 --> 00:06:28,120

To be bolder, more visible,

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00:06:28,120 --> 00:06:29,439

to do something.

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00:06:29,439 --> 00:06:31,879

The youngest character I would say is probably

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00:06:33,279 --> 00:06:35,240

the most lonely amongst us.

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00:06:35,240 --> 00:06:37,000

... there was a sense of innocence.

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00:06:37,000 --> 00:06:38,399

Hi, my name is Frewyn.

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00:06:38,399 --> 00:06:40,839

I'm an actor in The Beat of Our Hearts.

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00:06:40,839 --> 00:06:43,240

I'm a white person in my early 20s.

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00:06:43,240 --> 00:06:45,199

I have short brown hair and brown eyes.

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00:06:45,199 --> 00:06:46,800

My pronouns are they/them.

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00:06:47,360 --> 00:06:49,040

So I've only been a part of this project

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00:06:49,040 --> 00:06:51,199

For the past couple of weeks for rehearsals.

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00:06:51,199 --> 00:06:53,480

I'm playing a character called Luca,

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00:06:53,480 --> 00:06:56,519

and they feel incredibly isolated and alone

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00:06:56,519 --> 00:07:00,920

because there aren't other visible
non-binary people in their town.

126

00:07:01,240 --> 00:07:04,519
... knowing that my father exploded
if I dared ask any questions.

127

00:07:04,519 --> 00:07:10,240
The Beat of Our Hearts is a lyrical

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00:07:10,240 --> 00:07:15,480
telling of an incident and its repercussions.

129

00:07:15,600 --> 00:07:17,839
It's how that group recover from that,

130

00:07:17,839 --> 00:07:19,720
and it's how they care for one another.

131

00:07:19,720 --> 00:07:21,839
It's how they listen to one another.

132

00:07:21,839 --> 00:07:25,759
I think the play is about creating a queer archive.

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00:07:25,759 --> 00:07:28,680
And establishing that in rural locations

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00:07:28,680 --> 00:07:30,519
there are groups of queer people who

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00:07:30,519 --> 00:07:32,319

have been there for a very long time.

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00:07:32,319 --> 00:07:34,879

To my knowledge, this is a one off.

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00:07:34,879 --> 00:07:39,759

This experience of working,
and then ending up with a play

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00:07:39,759 --> 00:07:41,759

and that play is then going to be filmed

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00:07:41,759 --> 00:07:43,360

and that's going to go out to schools.

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00:07:43,360 --> 00:07:46,240

It's going to go on to various

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00:07:46,240 --> 00:07:48,360

organisations that we already work with.

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00:07:48,639 --> 00:07:53,079

To start conversations around sexuality,
around gender identity

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00:07:53,079 --> 00:07:57,040

and around the kind of harms,
isolations, exclusions

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00:07:57,040 --> 00:08:00,920

that could potentially come for some people

145

00:08:00,920 --> 00:08:03,240
and the ways that we can prevent that.

146

00:08:03,240 --> 00:08:06,519
Although the play has originated from the Southwest,

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00:08:06,519 --> 00:08:10,879
I hope that whoever anyone is that reads it,
that sees the production.

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00:08:10,879 --> 00:08:14,120
I hope people can see themselves reflected in it.

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00:08:14,639 --> 00:08:16,120
... This isn't usual.

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00:08:16,120 --> 00:08:18,839
And I hope that the participants
that we've worked with

151

00:08:18,839 --> 00:08:20,680
and the creatives that are part of the project,

152

00:08:20,680 --> 00:08:24,199
that we can generate
an energy of feeling of pride

153

00:08:24,199 --> 00:08:26,920
But also a feeling of care and love

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00:08:26,920 --> 00:08:30,120
because the play is about
caring for one another.

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00:08:30,120 --> 00:08:34,399

This isn't a fad.

This isn't kind of a small group of people.

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00:08:34,399 --> 00:08:36,799

This is so many people around me.

157

00:08:36,799 --> 00:08:38,960

and so many people who have come before me,

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00:08:38,960 --> 00:08:42,440

and nobody is taking away a space.

159

00:08:42,440 --> 00:08:46,320

They're just occupying a space
that they haven't been given before.

160

00:08:47,360 --> 00:08:50,120

(Laughter)