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Access as Kindness

With Opened Mouths: Community Voices
February 2023

SPEAKERS

Qanita Lilla and Yousef Kadoura

KEYWORDS

With Opened Mouths, performance, dramaturgy, access, disability, advocacy, care

TRANSCRIPT

[Music]

Qanita Lilla: Welcome back to a new season of *With Opened Mouths: The Podcast*, where we sit down with artists, curators, poets and performers to learn from their creative journeys. I am your host, Qanita Lilla, Associate Curator, Arts of Africa, at Agnes Etherington Art Centre.

Yousef Kadoura is a Lebanese Canadian actor, writer, producer, as well as a right leg below the knee amputee. Since graduating from the National Theatre School of Canada, he has worked in various roles spanning both performance and curatorial work. He is also a producer, creator, and host of the podcast series *Crip Times*. In this Season I'm using the change at Agnes both physical and metaphysical to think about creative journeys of movement and personal creative change.

[Music]

Qanita Lilla: So, thank you so much Yousef for joining me today.

Yousef Kadoura: Thank you for having me. I'm really excited to be here.

Qanita Lilla: Yeah, I'm so excited to have you. I'd like to start off by talking about what led you on your journey to the theatre.

Yousef Kadoura: Oh, we're starting off already! [Laughs] A very simple question, but a question that an actor will always go out of their way to complicate -- that's just me being self-deprecating. How did I get into theatre was it?

Qanita Lilla: Yeah.

Yousef Kadoura: So, I was never the really artsy kid growing up. My parents were always really into the theatre, and we embraced culture around us and things like that. I grew up in Ottawa, so for the most part, we had the National Arts Centre and all these great shows that would come by, but it was

never really my big interest. But I have a grandfather, one of my grandfathers who lives just outside of Detroit was a cop there and he used to tell these really fantastic stories -- I know, I know. [Laughs] He used to tell stories about his time as a police officer or about his time as a kid just outside of Detroit, and all these things that he ended up going through in his lifetime and getting past the complications and the major problems around policing. Little baby me was like I want to be a cop just like that because the stories were so good. And then it was years later, in high school, I went to the Stratford Festival in Ontario, and I saw a version of *Othello* and it drew me in in a way that TV, video games, theatre never had before, and I started reconsidering, and I was like, "Why do I want to do this cop thing? Well, my grandfather tells really good stories about it. And I don't think being that is what I wanted to do." I was like, "Well, it should probably be storytelling, it's the thing that draws me in, I should try being a storyteller." So, that was my intro to theatre, and I was like, "How can I go about telling these things." And I was in my last year of high school, so I applied to the one city I could afford to live in, Montreal at the time. And I applied to Concordia University, and I applied with the National Theatre School of Canada (NTS) and Concordia rejected me outright and then NTS said yeah come on by.

Qanita Lilla: How did your parents respond to you wanting to go into the theatre?

Yousef Kadoura: Oh, with shock! Absolute shock. When a kid comes up with a big life changing thing, especially in the arts you see it a lot, your kids might say, "I'm going to be an actor." And you're like, "Great, how are you going to feed yourself?"

Qanita Lilla: Yeah.

Yousef Kadoura: Right, that was kind of my parent's response but after seeing me really dive in and get into it, after a while they were like, "Okay, this makes sense."

Qanita Lilla: That is so amazing. My parent's kind of took me into the theatre on and off, but I think at 14 I was actually in a stage production for the first time, and it was a proper stage production. Because at the time, during Apartheid, we had different theatres for people of colour in South Africa. So, it was kind of on the Cape Flats, and there was a lot of political unrest happening at the time, but my mother took me which was amazing. And when I stood on the stage and I heard the audience in front of me, and I was 14, I just thought that this was incredible. There's no feeling like this, and it was amazing, but it was never an option. It was never an option for a girl coming from Wynberg, a suburb in Cape Town, to do or to go onto the stage full-time.

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah, totally. I notice that also in the Muslim community that I grew up in, that's so immigrant heavy. And so, your parents make all these sacrifices for you, and the arts are not really what's expected in return. I also think it's a stereotype put on us by North America, because historically, thinking about my heritage coming from the Middle East and all of that, poetry is such a huge and important part of the culture. And yet, we sometimes end up in these situations where because you're new immigrants to a place like North America, the response is "Well, you can't. You can't do that. You have to be a doctor." Right?

Qanita Lilla: Yeah, and I think --

Yousef Kadoura: It's an interesting parallel.

Qanita Lilla: Yeah, it is, but I think it's amazing that your parents did support you, once they realized that it was your thing. That was very cool. What did you find particularly compelling about performing?

Yousef Kadoura: Just the storytelling. If someone tells a good story, you can entertain me ad nauseum and I will listen and I will continue to listen. I also think that in my experience, again this is a very North American lens, but I feel like a lot of people get their education -- especially a historical context and things like that -- from movies. How many people get their context of World War Two now from like *Saving Private Ryan*, or whatever other countless films have been made about it. So, I was like, "OK, people really pay attention to storytelling, and they'll believe what you have to say." It's a great thing for advocacy. It's one thing to be able to tell stories, and to tell them truthfully or to tell a story and put in a lie in a way that serves some purpose. Not like a lie to manipulate people, but a lie like how Iago might lie or something like that in *Othello*. And I also just love the entertainment of it. It brings me joy, it's something new every day, and I really think storytelling is one key thing that people across cultures can understand across places and class especially.

Qanita Lilla: Yeah, and I think museum exhibitions are also about storytelling and there's a strong parallel between exhibitions and performance, especially with engaging an audience. But I feel that often, we have to be other people to exist in those spaces, we have to let go of our daily lives. And I notice that you're also a curator.

Yousef Kadoura: Yes.

Qanita Lilla: What are some of the ways that your work has brought your own lived experience into those spaces?

Yousef Kadoura: Oh, well to start off, a little context about my curation. It's something that I kind of fell into. I ended up curating because I found out about Tangled Art + Disability, this amazing gallery and organization in Toronto. I was brought on to kind of do a residency with them in the vein of curation, because to me, I saw that connection between producing like you might have in theatre and this gallery space and learning some of those technical skills. Long story short, a whole bunch of things happened. The curator working on the big project had to leave, and I was left at this point at the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 curating an exhibition. So, a big thing for me, and the practice around it, is finding artists who want to collaborate together. Finding artists who complement each other, especially if you're finding those connections between politics and any kind of beliefs that they might hold or people that might challenge each other. And I looked to the expertise of the other folks around. Sorry, could I get clarification on that question one more time?

Qanita Lilla: Well first, what is Tangled Art?

Yousef Kadoura: Oh, so they're Canada's largest and I believe only fully disability led arts organization. They have a gallery space at 401 Richmond, which is amazing, and I highly recommend

anyone going through Toronto to check it out. They often have an exhibition up and they also collaborate and do work with other organizations across the city. If there's a company that wants to bring access into a show and they have no idea how to go about it, they have no idea what ASL interpretation is, or they have no idea what a live audio description is, something like Tangled is an organization who can direct you to the people who can do those things.

Qanita Lilla: That's very cool and very important, wow.

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah, it was amazing. When I first left theatre school I didn't know where I was going to go. I was about to stay in Montreal, and then I heard about Tangled, I was like "oh let me go to Toronto for a little bit." And honestly that organization and their presence in the city, not working with them necessarily, because I'm not working for them at the moment. Their presence in the city is something that makes a welcoming space for people like me, and the people who I love and want to hang out with.

Qanita Lilla: So, basically the space kind of facilitated bringing who you are, as you are, into it. I think that's so exciting.

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah, how many times do you have to try and fit yourself into somewhere right?

Qanita Lilla: Always. Especially in art spaces, you just feel as if you don't fit in for whatever reason.

Yousef Kadoura: You always have to prove to people why you're the right person for this role or this job.

Qanita Lilla: Or even to be there - to kind of exist in a space. So, that's amazing. That's really cool. What was your work as a teacher at Tangled Performance Lab? Is that the same thing as the Centre or is that a different thing?

Yousef Kadoura: So, the performance lab was something very fun. This was right at the very start of the pandemic. So, the Tangled Performance Lab was a concept created by myself and a very good friend and company member of mine, Harri Thomas, who's a director I met while in theatre school. We run a theatre company together, as well as with a few other collaborators called the Other HeARTS, and I was lamenting the severe lack of professional training for disabled performers. Because I for one, I really enjoy my time in professional institutions, and learning and doing like Shakespeare and mask and all this stuff. But you're pulling 10- to 12-hour days, six days a week, and it was something that I was just barely was able to do. There are some disabilities, and there are also nondisabled people who can't do that. It's such a big-time commitment and it's so draining, and it takes so many spoons that it's really difficult for disabled people to get this training on that level. We wanted to create something that was accessible, that was welcoming, and to bring in a small cohort of people to the 401 Richmond building, and we would do some professional training. We would do some text work. We would do voice. We would do some movement. We were planning on doing a little bit of mask and clown work as well. These things that you can do at a hobby training sort of place or institution or take some private classes and stuff like that. But being able to work with a cohort is a very different experience and we wanted to give that to our community in a way

that was accessible. We brought five artists and performers in, some who had had professional experience at different points in their life, and some who had graduated from professional institutions but because of their disability had certain parts of their training barred from them. And some who are just really great performers but were unable to access those institutions and we brought them in, and we started doing it and it was beautiful. We were all in the room. We did some movement. We did some voice. Everyone was really getting it and then the day before our next class, the country shut down.

Qanita Lilla: Oh, with COVID.

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah, with COVID. So, we pivoted to doing it online and from there we sort of had to pivot the training a little bit more, so we focused on dramaturgy and allowing people to write their work and things like that. And unfortunately, since then the Tangled Performance Lab hasn't really had a chance to begin again but I've been lucky enough to continue my teaching. I occasionally assist with teaching the "Intro to Actors Process Class" at The National Theatre School and things like that. So, here's hoping in the future once we have some of those spaces a little more readily available to us that it's something we can pick up, but that was the idea behind it. The people who were involved - and it was lovely because the one thing that they all said was: "We wish we could have had more of those in-person classes like the first one." I think we found something, and we proved a beautiful concept in something that is valuable, and the need to protect people around us prevented us from doing it.

Qanita Lilla: There's just something about in-person, not the training, but just the engagement, that is so vital that we're kind of slowly bringing it back again. We just really missed it. I wonder if *Crip Times* was born at a time like this when the Performance Lab was kind of closing.

Yousef Kadoura: *Crip Times*, yeah it came about when the Performance Lab closed. So, I had actually already done a very short disability podcast at that time. I had this idea in my last year of theatre school, and I brought on a few friends, and we created a three-part podcast called *Walking the Space*.

Qanita Lilla: Yes, yes. I listened to it. It's great.

Yousef Kadoura: Oh amazing, yeah.

Qanita Lilla: It's really great.

Yousef Kadoura: That was my first dive into it, and then years later I was always like, "I'll do another podcast one day" and the pandemic came along, then the Performance Lab was basically shut down. And so, I spoke to Kayla Besse and Kristina McMullin who work at Tangled, both very good friends of mine. And brought them on and was like "Let's do it." I wrote a brief treatment of what we wanted to do. What we really wanted to do was recreate these sort of artist talks that would happen at Tangled. We'd usually have a couple of months before the pandemic. And it was such a beautiful thing because you got all these people from the community, it was such a crip space and was kind of indescribable. We wanted to bring that back a little bit and kind of give something to our

community. So, that's what made the first season of *Crip Times* happen. We did that in a little over a year. We managed to get the first season out, and about a year ago (from today actually) we came out with the idea of the second season, which we are nearly wrapped on. We might have a few special episodes coming out over the next year, but we've created a good catalogue for people, a wide range of subjects.

Qanita Lilla: I must say *Crip Times*, what it gives is this alternative space where things run on their own time frame. It's just a different kind of space, and I think it's really lovely and beautiful. As you were talking I kind of wrote down a couple of things, and the term "disabled" - what does that mean? What does "disabled" mean versus like "abled?" I've always wanted to ask that because it's almost as if people assume certain things and I just don't feel a lot of people get it. I don't get it.

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah, that's totally fair. I love that question because the one that I usually get is something along the lines of "Why do you call yourself disabled and not differently abled or something like that." That's often what I get, people get focused on the alternative terms for it. I like "disabled" and I also like "crip." For me the term "disabled" is pretty much what it means. It's somebody with a disability whether it's a cognitive disability, whether it's a physical disability, whether you're blind, low vision, hard of hearing or deaf -- granted you know the deaf community likes to be referred to as the deaf community. The blind and low vision community likes to be referred to as the blind community sometimes. So, there are subsections within it but to me "disabled" is, all of these different things and the thing that ties them all together is different from the norm. And the other big thing about it is that society is not built for disabled people. The best way I can explain it would be talking about the social versus the medical model of disability. So, the medical model is "You have no leg, therefore, we're going to treat everything we can. We're going to give you this medicine and we're going to do this and this, this one's going to help you. We're going to use medicine and science to make you as able bodied as we can." It's saying the medical model is saying, "There's something wrong with you, we're going to fix it." The social model is, you're in a wheelchair and you go to a bar and there's a step-up to get in the bar. It's not your disability preventing you from getting in the bar, it's the step-up. So, the social model is that "I am disabled because the world is designed in a way to prevent me from accessing it." That's also why I like the term "crip" because to me it's like how queer people like LGBTQ folks reclaimed the word "queer." I don't like being called a cripple, but I love when my friends and I refer to ourselves as crip.

Qanita Lilla: Generally speaking, when I first met you and all your work and the way that you speak about it, who you are, it doesn't detract at all from you as a person. The fact that you are disabled is just one of those things. Generally, you are just a very vibrant person.

Yousef Kadoura: Thank you. I really appreciate that.

Qanita Lilla: Yeah. No seriously, and when I listen to *Crip Times* I kind of got that sense strongly, that it's people living lives but it just made me have to think about my own relationship to disability and I think that's really important.

Yousef Kadoura: And you know, it makes me think of - so we were talking about storytelling earlier and all the great things around that, why do I love seeing disabled performers? I love seeing disabled performers the same reason that I love seeing a black woman taking on the role of Ariel. We each -- based on our lives and our lived experiences -- have a different view on the world. A disabled person has a different view on the world than a non-disabled person. A black person has a different view from a white person, all of this. And the more perspectives we can bring, especially in performance, the more perspective we can bring to a performance. The more multifaceted and interesting that character is going to be, or that performance or that story is going to be, because it's not something that we've been seeing that much of historically.

Qanita Lilla: But I think also, like what you were speaking about before how society has this idea of what is normal and acceptable. And how we all know that that's completely untrue -- it's complete fiction.

Yousef Kadoura: One hundred percent.

Qanita Lilla: You know, and we need more voices, just to make spaces more vital and like closer to reality, closer to the way the world is. Yeah. So, I also wanted to ask you how important your networks of people are to you, to sustain you and to keep you functioning as a creative individual.

Yousef Kadoura: I don't think I'd be able to be a creative individual without my community and the people around me. I mean especially the other artists who I work with. But the community that I've built up in Toronto, the communities that I've built up in other cities, when I go to Montreal, art can't be made in a vacuum, and I wholly reject the idea of the brilliant artist alone. And if you put someone alone and make them work, they might be brilliant and they might create some beautiful things, but I don't think it's sustainable. I've tried doing the wholly alone thing and --

Qanita Lilla: I can't imagine you doing it by yourself, no.

Yousef Kadoura: It's so uncomfortable, right? Because you only have you to share ideas with or to distract yourself with, and you need all those things. Yeah, I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't have my friends, my art family and then the community that I found here. It wouldn't be possible. I would have given this up a long time ago and started making lattes again for a living.

Qanita Lilla: [Laughs] So, you did that at one time?

Yousef Kadoura: Oh yes, the only "normal job" I've ever had has been making coffee. "Normal job" I say with air quotes.

Qanita Lilla: I think it is really important, the people you surround yourself with. In the museum world, people's vocations are very specialized, so there is that sense that if you're good at something, you're good at one thing and you're good at one specialty, but it's completely impossible to do anything without the people that support you and that you support. Especially in these spaces. And we're hopefully moving towards seeing that (museums) are all community spaces. We spoke briefly about Other HeARTS, and I saw a photograph of you hanging suspended in the air. And that

whole series of photographs looked so fantastic. It was outside, there were kind of these hectic ropes and big steel frames holding up everybody.

Yousef Kadoura: Yes. So, that would be a silk rig brought by the fantastic Erin Ball who's a double leg amputee and an amazing circus artist, wonderful person. And that show was called *The Intangible Adorations Caravan* which we just closed [last night] at Brickworks.

Qanita Lilla: Oh wow, congratulations.

Yousef Kadoura: Thank you.

Qanita Lilla: How was that? How was the run and how did the audience respond?

Yousef Kadoura: So, I haven't done too many outdoor shows. The first thing I'll say is rain is the greatest thing of any outdoor theatre. If it's threatening to rain, your stage manager with good cause will not put out speakers. He will not set up the tech group. There's no show when that happens, and we were only performing every Wednesday. In terms of the actual show, it was wonderful. It was great being able to work with my company to bring in other folks to do it. It was this really strange circus performance arts kind of show that we were popping up in different neighbourhoods throughout the city all summer. So, every Wednesday we would drive to a different neighbourhood and put up the show and then pack-up and disappear into the night. So, we would have kids and stuff walking by with their parents, like, "Daddy, mommy let's go see! What are they doing? That's weird." And it was really wonderful. I realize this was my first show back after the first big shut down. It's like all the audience is such an important thing to have. This is why I don't only do film and TV stuff, right. I love an audience and being able to bring in these, to just find people on the street and give them a little bit of magic with the silk stuff that Erin choreographed and the really weird script that Harri and I wrote. It was amazing. I will say the one caveat is that we ran into trouble during the creation process of it, because it was an outdoor show, and it was the beginning of the summer, and we didn't have that much time, and some extenuating things with producers that I won't get into. Basically, some of our cast members got very ill. Some of them got COVID. Some of them got injured all within the same week. So, we tried to postpone the opening of the show, but due to things that I can't get into, that was the fault of no one directly on the team, we had to open the show when we had originally planned. It reminded me as well of how important it is even if you are someone who has worked with access your entire life or your entire artistic career, or someone who hasn't worked with access, but you're like, "I know how to work without it," which is kind of how I went into it. I've been in accessible spaces before, we can do this team. After the pandemic, there has to be some really big changes across the board for all facets of performing live. We need to be willing to postpone shows when things like that happen. And we need to be willing to make those sacrifices and those calls and I'll say with this show, in particular, I loved it, it was wonderful. It's a prime example of a piece that I would not have been able to feel good about or complete in the same way without that art family, without the Other HeARTS and our company surrounding us with that.

Qanita Lilla: Access. What do you mean by access? And accessibility issues.

Yousef Kadoura: So, the concept of “crip time.” We used to joke about in my family of “Arab time.” We say we’ll be there at 7 p.m., we’ll really be there at 10 p.m.

Qanita Lilla: It’s like “African time.”

Yousef Kadoura: Exactly. “Crip time” is a similar thing. It’s disabled people that need extra time sometimes or if we’re trying to be flexible to be able to make it to something. At the same time, a disabled person might need to leave at a very exact time to be able to catch the Wheel-Trans (TTC) or something, or to get somewhere safely. When I talk about access in relation to this show I mean having half of your company fall ill or injured and then not postponing the opening. Postponing the opening would be access because it would give people time to recover and finish the rehearsal, versus not doing that means having to run longer days. Having to make the tech people do more work or the tech people feeling like they have to do more work to meet deadlines on time, things like that which again was not anything brought on by anyone directly in the performance or the creation of the show. It’s an accentuating thing that happened because of the, I guess, higher element of money and producer-ship and those sorts of things. But that’s access, right? Postponing something, giving something time is access. Telling someone, “No, you might be over your illness, but you are clearly exhausted and still need time to rest is access.” Just as putting in a ramp for someone in a wheelchair. Access is also kindness.

Qanita Lilla: Access as kindness. I think that’s everything that you spoke about. And it seems as if it's counterintuitive to consider kindness as a critical part of artistic practice.

Yousef Kadoura: But it's such a huge part of it. What's it like when you're doing a project and whoever is in charge is just an ass the whole time.

Qanita Lilla: That's awful.

Yousef Kadoura: It's terrible. You feel like you can't work, you're paralyzed, you can't sleep. That's an inaccessible space and it's not because there isn't a ramp, it's because you're being a jerk. It happens a lot in this industry but it's something that we are seeing changing too, which is lovely.

Qanita Lilla: I noticed when I saw the images of you swinging in the air, somebody wrote about the idea of “robust accessibility.” And you know, looking at those structures, I thought, okay well that's robust. But talking to you now makes me feel as if it's something else. It's something deeper.

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah. Here's the thing, a lot of times when you bring a disabled person on to do something, sometimes people will make the assumption of “Oh, they're going to tell me everything they need. That disabled person is going to tell me everything they need to make this successful for them and I'll do that.” And that's fine, right? As long as you give them what they need and have that conversation, it's fine. But I think robust access is trying to be prepared in advance. To me, that is what robust access is. It's reaching out to the people who might need access and even people who are seemingly able-bodied because you don't know, and even able-bodied people have needs and can benefit from this stuff. It's about having those conversations with your team and the people you are working with early on. And trying to create an infrastructure around whatever you're doing that

can be fluid and can shift for different needs when they arise as opposed to the usual thing which is “We’ll deal with it when it happens.”

Qanita Lilla: Yeah, that’s just awful and I think it happens across the board. Just in the creative environment, it kind of feels as if you’re running out of time and things need to look a certain way. I think this kind of conversation is making me think about how things look. How things look in a creative space and how we need to just change and challenge those kinds of surfaces and those appearances.

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah, yeah. Because we get told that “access” is a lot of different things. And we get told a lot about what we should do. We should have power doors. We should have ramps. We should have these things but the real experts on access are going to be the people who need it. So, we should be talking to them first and foremost.

Qanita Lilla: What do you say to people who use the argument that there are not enough disabled folk around to consult in museums or that haven’t graduated yet?

Yousef Kadoura: Look harder.

Qanita Lilla: Yeah.

Yousef Kadoura: Look harder and reconsider why you’re doing that, right. Reconsider maybe the piece you’re doing. I remember when I was in theatre school they did the *Terry Fox Musical*, and they passed a dude with two legs and put a prosthetic puppet on his knee. And the thing that they said was “Well, we couldn’t find an amputee.” And, I was like, “Hello.”

Qanita Lilla: I know, yeah.

Yousef Kadoura: And the choreographer on that, a wonderful individual, was a double leg amputee. Yet the company still put up their show and they have their reasons and all of that, but I refuse to believe that it would not be 1000 times better if they had put in that extra effort. If they had, and oftentimes with these things theatre companies or galleries or individuals will just put out a call and expect that if there’s a disabled person out there who fits this, they’ll see it. That’s not necessarily the case. You have to put in the leg work -- pardon my pun -- and really, you have to find the people. You have to seek them out. You can’t just go, “Are there any disabled people in the room who would like this job. No, okay, we’ll give it to Joe Schmo over here.”

Qanita Lilla: Yeah, but also, the networks are different. Often people are not going to respond to ads like that because it’s kind of word of mouth and building up a reputation and “Who is this. Who are these people, and where did they come from? Are they going to respect me for who I am?” It’s all of those kinds of things that you need to know and takes work.

Yousef Kadoura: It’s an interesting conundrum. And especially when we talk about making a space accessible or trying to change a space or bring in a certain community. Let’s say this company that’s in the neighbourhood with a high African population or something, and they’re like, “We’re going to

do a food festival and bring these people in.” They do the food festival, and nobody shows up. Well, you have to keep doing it. They’re not going to show up immediately, you have to put in sustained effort if you want to bring in a new community to your space.

Qanita Lilla: Yousef like seriously, a food festival for Africa? Who's going to go and eat African food if you're living in an African neighborhood?

Yousef Kadoura: You know there's effort that has to be put in and that's a fictional example, but you know [laughter].

Qanita Lilla: I mean completely, that is exactly what happens. It's very lazy and thoughtless basically, about communities and what they need and the kinds of things that they would not only benefit from but also enjoy.

Yousef Kadoura: I remember a few years ago all these theatres were putting in ramps and power doors and things and they were like, “Isn't this great? Our space is finally accessible; this heritage building is accessible now.” And I'm like, “What about the stage? There is still a staircase that you have to take from the green room to get down to the stage and the actor's entrance, the back door entrance is a staircase.”

Qanita Lilla: But that's because they assume the actors are not --

Yousef Kadoura: They think “audience only.”

Qanita Lilla: Yeah, exactly, wow. That is huge. You know, just that kind of insight. Even in museums, it's kind of okay to think of the physical space, the space around objects. The kind of eye level. What about actual curators?

Yousef Kadoura: Yeah. What about the space for the people working in the back office. Why are you giving them metal chairs that hurt to sit on for hours on end. Buy an ergonomic chair and shades for the windows. Put in an AC unit or something. There are things you can do to make an environment comfortable for people and make them enjoy coming in to create, as opposed to showing up because they love the work but dread the environment in which they do it.

Qanita Lilla: Wow. That's amazing. Yeah. Well, Agnes, where I work, is going through a rebuild.

Yousef Kadoura: Oh amazing.

Qanita Lilla: I hope we take these kinds of messages on. They are very important to think about. Do you have any new projects? I'm sure you have tons now that you finished or are you taking a pause? I can't imagine that though.

Yousef Kadoura: Shockingly, I know, I know, I'm taking a slight pause until November 1st.

Qanita Lilla: Well, that's okay.

Yousef Kadoura: I'll have a little bit of time off. Yeah, it's nice, especially the past few years I was kind of overstretching myself a little bit. Coming up in the end of February into mid- to late-March I will be performing in *Rebel*, a new play by Suvendrini Lena, which is a beautiful story. It's about this Palestinian family in Gaza living in Toronto. I highly recommend checking it out. I'm doing a little bit of teaching back at the National Theatre School doing the "Intro to the Actors Process" course. From there, I'll just be continually always doing my work with the Other HeARTS, my wonderful art family. We have a few applications in for different projects and things like that so if you check out our website at <https://otherhearts.ca> or check us out on Facebook or Instagram, we'll have information on where you can find our next weird performance art or new play.

Qanita Lilla: Oh gosh. I've got to see you on stage, absolutely. It sounds fantastic and your work sounds amazing. It's been such a pleasure talking to you.

Yousef Kadoura: I really loved this. Thank you so much for having me.

Qanita Lilla: Thank you for making the time, Yousef, thank you. Cool. Thank you and goodbye.

[Music]

The podcast is hosted by myself, Dr. Qanita Lilla, and produced by Agnes Etherington Art Centre in partnership with Queen's University's campus radio station, CFRC 101.9 FM. Thanks to our team behind the scenes: Chancelor Maracle, Dinah Jansen, Danuta Sierhuis and Evan Wainio Woldanski. The music is composed by Jameel3DN and is produced by Elroy "EC3" Cox III. Episodes of *With Opened Mouths* are released monthly and you can find them on Digital Agnes, CFRC's website and on your favourite podcasting platforms. Subscribe now so that you don't miss our next episode. We'll see you next time.

[Music]