AATE + Westtown School
Theater Anywhere: A Cookbook of Activities

Alex Ates interviewing Kameron Neal

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>> Alex Ates: Hi, everyone! My name is Alex Ates. I'm the director of theater at the Westtown School in West Chester, Pennsylvania, ancestral land of the Lenape. And today, I'm speaking with Kameron Neal. Kameron, thank you so much for being here. I'm so excited to learn more about your recipe. So, what is your recipe for devising online?

>> Kameron Neal: Yeah, I've been thinking a lot about how to kind of make work in this moment. My background is I'm a visual artist and a designer, and I also work in performance. And, I work in video often, so it's interesting to see this shift. Or, to see the theater world try to figure out how to interact with video and how to make things virtually. So, I've been thinking a lot about how we can use the tools that we have in ways that feel exciting and in ways that aren't limiting. I've been thinking a lot about Zoom and Zoom theater and ways to engage with these ideas virtually, and started thinking about these virtual backgrounds, and was wondering if there's a way to create a kind of exquisite corpse as an exercise in the classroom.

>> Alex: (giggling excitedly)Uh-huh!

>> Kameron: So, I guess the general idea is that maybe students could be paired up, or in small groups, maybe no more than five people could work together. Maybe they could have some type of prompt that is, like, "recall a childhood memory," or to,

"recall a dream in some way." And the parameters or limitations on how they'd be able to do it is inside of Zoom. So, the idea is that you would screen record yourself for 10 seconds doing something. You would pass it on to the next person, and they would make that their virtual background, and record themselves, and then save it, and then so on. So, if you had five people in a frame, how might you go about telling a story with five bodies. Or, if you were recalling a dream, how might you create a puppet show that you're collaborating with fellow students, but you don't necessarily need to be in the same space and it's also a way to break the boxes of Zoom that we're so used to seeing.

>> Alex: I love that. Kameron, do you have any advice for folx who maybe don't have an operating system that can immediately accommodate the virtual background and want to create a green screen with any materials that they might have around the house?

>> Kameron: Yeah, yeah! So I totally understand that, especially with Zoom and doing the virtual background, there are some systems that can handle it and some systems that can't. And I think there are ways to accommodate for that. I think one, you could potentially, if you had something green, you could make a makeshift green screen. But I think there are also ways, if someone doesn't want to do that, maybe if someone is interested in scenic design, they can draw. Maybe someone could draw an image of a cafe and the next person could place themselves inside of that cafe. Maybe if you don't have the virtual capability on your device, maybe you could be first in the line. Or, maybe your just, you could record a video of yourself sitting in your room and the next person could walk into that room. So, I think for students that don't necessarily have that capability, I think there are ways to still get involved in that process.

>> Alex: That's fantastic. Kameron, thank you so much for your recipe! I love that and I think the possibilities are really wide. So, thank you for sharing your creativity and your

experience with us—it's so appreciated. And, I wish you well in these times.

>> Kameron: Yeah, thank you, likewise!