

# Fringe of Colour Films 2023 Opening Night Discussion

23/06/23

With Jess Brough, Tomiwa Folorunso and Carmen Thompson, chaired by Arusa Qureshi

**Arusa Qureshi:** Hi, everyone. How's it going? Thank you so much for being here. And thank you so much to Jess, Carmen, and Tomiwa and, the Fringe of Colour Films team for putting on this festival. I'm so glad that it exists. It's such an important and phenomenal festival. And as you saw from the trailers, there's so many good things happening. So we're going to have a bit of a discussion, and I'm very honoured that you guys asked me to chair this, because I'm kind of at all of all of you and just the rest of the programme. You're going to tell us all about what's going on in terms of the themes. The other bits are involved. So, before we start, why don't you, Jess, tell us a little bit about what Fringe of Colour is and how it started and when then why it started.

**Jess Brough:** Yeah, sure. I mean, I think, at risk of repeating myself, for the people who already know, for the people who don't know, um, Fringe of Colour started in 2018. It began as a very, very simple concept of just a publicly available spreadsheet on Google Sheets listing all of the shows at the Fringe that year, where 50% or more of the people on stage were people of colour or performers of colour. And the reason I was doing that was because for anybody who's been to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, you will have noticed that it is a very, very white festival. There's something like three and a half thousand shows, and only about 5% of those shows are shows that are eligible under that criteria that I was using. Which means it's difficult to find those shows, right? Like, you're walking through the meadows, you're seeing all the posters you're getting flyer'd at. The majority of stuff that you're seeing in front of you are not shows by Black artists, by artists of colour. So I just thought, I have some time. I think I was unemployed.

**Arusa Qureshi:** This is how these things happen, right? You have to be unemployed or lost your job, then you do a project.

**Jess Brough:** Very unemployed energy. So put together a massive spreadsheet for free. But, it was great because I met a lot of people through that. I met a lot of artists, some of whom are in the room, and got to speaking with them about what the sort of wider structural issues are with the Fringe and other arts festivals in Scotland. And it's so much more than, like a visibility and a representation thing. It's, like, financial and accessibility. It's the culture of it. It's accommodation in a city. It's the sense of being unwelcome in those spaces. So, yeah, it was a really great starting place to start to actually connect with people, um, artists who were here and what they were dealing with. And so, by the following year that turned into a free ticket scheme, where we were connecting people of colour with shows by performers of colour for free involved a lot of negotiating with venues to give us those free tickets.

**Carmen Thompson:** Oh, my God, I went to so many shows that year.

**Jess Brough:** So good, because these shows, they can be, like, £25 for one ticket, right? And it's really difficult for artists who are coming up here and looking at their audience every day for three weeks, and they're all white. It's just mentally very exhausting. And so that went really well. We were planning on doing it again the next I say we I was planning on doing it again the next year with the help of a friend called Hannah McGurk, but COVID happened. And so no Fringe means no Fringe free ticket scheme. And we'd got a little bit of funding. I won a prize for the Edinburgh Comedy Awards in 2019, which was a cash prize, surprisingly. And so I had this, like, a bit of money. We had a fundraiser. We were planning on doing this whole thing. And I felt a responsibility to do something with that money. And so that's where the idea for the festival came from. This idea that we knew all these artists who didn't have any work, who were not being approached to commission new stuff for, like, the digital virtual world that was expanding from Lockdown. And, yeah, it just kind of went from there. And that was very much open door thing. Like, anybody who sent me a film was in that festival. We had, like, 54 films over a four week period.

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** That was a lot.

**Jess Brough:** It was a lot. But, yeah, that's where it began.

**Arusa Qureshi:** And I guess from the very start, from it being a database to now, it's kind of always been a bit of a safe haven. I feel like people always use that phrase when they're talking about Fringe of Colour which is really nice. When you first started out, what kind of reaction did you get from the wider Fringe community? And were there any surprises, like good or bad?

**Jess Brough:** From the wider well, I mean, from from the artists of colour that it was for it was very positive. I made some really great connections as well, with a couple of comedy production companies who agreed to put some money behind commissioning new sketches those went in the festival that was amazing. I don't know, though, in terms of the wider Fringe community, sort of like the venues and places like that, I think by that point, I was already trying to distance myself from it. So I wasn't reaching out to make those relationships, to continue that relationship with certain venues and with the Fringe Society. I was very much like, well, if I could just do it, then do I need to do all of it? Do I need to beg you for free tickets and money every year if we can just do our own thing. But in terms of the artists, we got a lot of support from the artists who either participated, either made new work with us through the commissions that we did that year, or just, like, spread the word. And we're really nice about it.

**Arusa Qureshi:** Like I said, people are always so positive about it just in terms of it being a safe haven, being welcoming, just being a really important part of August in Edinburgh generally. And now June, July, Edinburgh.

**Carmen Thompson:** Who knows?

**Jess Brough:** What is it? Where are we?

**Arusa Qureshi:** Tomiwa and Carmen, from the very start, what were your impressions of Fringe of Colour and what made you want to get involved? And, what were the things that sets it apart from other arts programmes that you've maybe been involved in?

**Carmen Thompson:** You go first.

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** Me?

**Carmen Thompson:** Okay. I know you've got lots of say...

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** I've got so much. What made me, I think, right when you started why am I shouting into this mic? Right when you started the spreadsheet? Yeah. I was so happy, I think because I think growing up in this city and visiting the fringe and all these festivals every single year, but also very aware that there is something missing. And, yeah. Being raised in the city and getting older in the city and becoming more in touch with or aware of my identity and wanting to see that reflected in art, that's what the spreadsheet gave me, gave us. So thank you. And then I think that and then, obviously, being a writer, working as sub editor with Paula, which was incredible, because I learned so much from her as a writer and an editor. So I was just very happy to be involved at that point. I was just very committed to the mission ideas behind it, the team behind it, and just said, like, yeah, I'm in. And then coming back this year as editorial director has just been an absolute joy. Yeah. To work with both Carmen and Jess so closely and the rest of our incredible team. I'm really commit to having a physical presence in this city. I think it's really special and, um yeah. Without kind of, like, gassing ourselves up too much, I feel like we should be really proud of ourselves, because I couldn't have imagined growing up being part of something like this in this context. And also having this kind of the beauty of being online and, uh, not being geoblocked means that you just have this global outlook. It's so special to send Scottish work out into the world, and it's also really special to receive work in Edinburgh. I love all our filmmakers, but we have a filmmaker Ofem who's from Nigeria, and I'm Nigerian, and it's so special to bring that here.

**Carmen Thompson:** I should have gone first. Yeah. I mean, generally, I cannot believe I'm sitting up on this stage because I have just been a fan girl, as I keep saying, of Fringe of Colour for so long. And it was such a meaningful thing for me moving to Scotland. I didn't even know how long ago, because the pandemic years flow into it, I think maybe five years ago. Um, yeah, I found it quite a shock. I'd come from Bristol, which is like, slightly I mean, all the art scenes in any of the major cities are incredibly white, but I think Edinburgh is a particular brand of it, especially around the Fringe. It was very overwhelming. And so, like, the spaces that Jess created and Fringe of Colour created during August, but just like, online, just having that presence and meeting those people, um, it was such a special thing. And then when I mean, I'm from a film background, I work a lot in film festivals and film events. So when Fringe of Colour made that shift during the pandemic, to think about how artists from all disciplines could think about how they could use film we're all at home. And how they could use it to kind of connect with those audiences still was, like, such a special thing to see an organisation doing, um, when there was all these artists who had been preparing for Fringe for so long, who had nowhere to go. Um, and that watching that and being an audience member in that festival was like a really special thing for me. And yeah, just to echo for me, I think, to this year to be bringing it to Edinburgh and to be thinking about how something can work, like truly hybrid and something that started online, that we're

moving in person. It's been a really interesting transition, and it's really exciting to do it that way because I think often online is now an afterthought for so many organisations that still claim to be hybrid. And for us, it started with online and that and we're moving into in person. Um, and yeah, we're kind of thinking about how that works. So it's been wonderful. It's been challenging. And, um, it's like, I've worked in all these kind of institutions to just answer your question about other organisations I've worked for, there's a lot of these things, and you can't help but be sort of institutionalized and think about festivals in a very particular format. And I've been really challenged and it's been really exciting to be challenged and pushed to think about. Yes, certain organisations have done things a certain way for so long, but it doesn't mean that that's the right way to do it. And it's actually very exclusionary and, um, it's not audience centered. So yeah, it's just been really wonderful experience.

**Arusa Qureshi:** Absolutely. I agree with you there with institutions. And to me, what you said about growing up in Edinburgh and not imagining something like this existing yes, same. It's really cool that it's here. I'm just going to go back to something you said, Carmen, about talking, um, about the hybrid approach. And I think it's very cool that you guys have focused so much on this. Do you think you could tell me a bit more about the decision making behind this and why you think it is so important for festivals and other programs to kind of keep online events that's for anyone?

**Carmen Thompson:** Do you want to go, Jess?

**Jess Brough:** Yeah. Online was wonderful because it meant that we could really go to every continent. I kept checking the Vimeo data. Like, they show you the points of the map where people are viewing from and just, like, extra little tabs would pop up, like, here and there, like, around the around the globe. And that was really special because one of the reasons why a lot of artists struggle to take advantage of the international element of the Edinburgh festivals is just, like, not being able to afford to come. Plane tickets are expensive, but then accommodation and visas and all of this stuff. So I will always advocate for online elements of festivals. And having started from online and going to in person has been, like, just a really it's been the right direction because we've built this relationship with all of these people, people in all of these countries. And then to one day just be like, okay, you're on your own now. We're going to focus on just putting something together. In person just feels not right. Uh, but in person scared me. Event planning, health and safety insurance. It was a minefield, so I couldn't conceive of doing something like that until I was speaking to Carmen and I saw Carmen. Like, I've known Carmen for a long time, but I, like, saw Carmen. If anybody is going to be able to bring Fringe of Colour Films into the in person space, it's going to be this person who's been working in film festivals and film for ten years or so and knows about health and safety and, like, DCP, what's a projector. I don't know. There was a lot of safety for me in the online world because I know that space and I know, I know how to, I know, like, the programming element of that. But it was a scary idea to think about how to do that, uh, in a physical space. But it's also really necessary, I think. Two years, I'm not sure I could have done just online for another year because especially working from home as well, the process of putting it together is very isolating because you're on your own, you're working quite long hours. And then the festival starts with like a click of a button, essentially. And there's no rigmarole around that. It's Twitter. I'm holding onto Twitter, like, looking at people's reactions on Twitter and Instagram to feed me for validation. Whereas here, I can hug a person. It's really special. And also, people need that coming back in together as well.

A lot of people don't feel comfortable in event spaces still, but a lot of people are really aching for that. And to just visibly see each other in this room is really important. Um, hybrid.

**Carmen Thompson:** Yeah. And as I think I was saying, I have had a lot of experience, but I've never, ever worked for any organisations that's this kind of committed to accessibility. So this is a forewarning. We're in new territory. It's going to be really exciting to see what happens because we've had all these different versions available online, which makes sense. You can just have them as separate film files for people to watch and they can engage whichever film they want to watch. When it becomes in person, it's like a whole different thing. So we're going to be doing it. You can watch any version of any film simultaneously in different rooms in Summer Hall. So, yeah, it's going to be interesting. So I'm glad you said the nice stuff about me in the beginning. I wonder if it'll still be the same at the end. But no, I think it's really exciting. It's really exciting to have that and to kind of, again, in talking about afterthoughts in terms of audiences online afterthought, but also people, disabled audiences, people that use BSL and audio description. Like, I've never actually been in any major space to an audio described screening, let alone like an entire week of them. So, yeah, it's really special to be bringing all of that together and to kind of be experienced that together. And I would recommend that even if you're not a user of audio description, to just go to one of the screenings. So they are so special and it's like a whole different piece of work and it's an art form. And it's been really exciting to experience all the different films in those ways as well.

**Jess Brough:** For me, yeah, the audio descriptions are like poetry. I mean, all the poets in the room. I really recommend particularly the dance film audio descriptions because when there's no dialogue, you have a lot of space to fill with description of the movement and the lighting and the feeling. And it's like, it's very beautiful.

**Arusa Qureshi:** Yeah. I mean, even just like the trailer and watching the audio description of that was really, really cool. I was thinking, I really want to go and sit in on a film and watch it properly. And yeah, what you were saying about just online events and in person events. Like I said at the start, I'm really grateful that you are doing some in person events because it's just nice for all of us to get together, isn't it? And just, like, see each other and chat and hug and all those things that we couldn't do before. Ao thank you guys so much for all the work you put into making it hybrid and making it happen. Obviously, we saw the trailers and incredible looking films. Do you want to tell us all a bit more about the programme more generally, and whether you had a kind of mission statement going into programming that's for anyone?

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** Tell you about the programme and did we have a mission statement going into programming? Vibes. Vibes. Good times. So we work on a submissions basis. So we ask people, artists, filmmakers, to submit their films. And then from that process, the three of us, alongside Natasha Thembisio Ruwona, who's our assistant producer, kind of shortlist those films down and down and down until we had 20 films this year. No, that's not true. 19, 19 submissions films. And, um, we kind of just sat on zoom and spoke about them several times. Not just one time, several times. Sat on zoom and spoke about the films. And we're just kind of talking about them deeply, but also trying to draw themes from them, connect them. What spoke to us and what seemed to be happening in a lot of the language we were using to describe the program was the films at that point, I suppose, was kind of a lot to do with nature. Yeah, and being outside, I suppose, and just kind of from there, I can't

remember who suggested it, we said, okay, what about the life cycle of a plant? Let's take everyone on a journey, I suppose. Yeah, the life cycle of a plant made sense. And so that is the theme of our programme, the lifecycle of a plant. We kind of have five film strands, and then we have one commission strand, and then we have our fruits, which are all our events. So, yeah, that's how we got there. Kind of chaotically.

**Arusa Qureshi:** I love it that's how all good things happen, right? Yeah.

**Jess Brough:** I mean, the first two years were not curated at all, right? Like, 2020, I just accepted everybody, and then 2021, there was a little bit more. I think it was like 50% of the films that came in, maybe 70% of the films that came in. It was like a little bit of curation. But this year, we actually were trying to tell a story, which was a really interesting process, um, like, really thinking about the audience experience of the festival and that day to day movement through yeah. The life cycle of a plant, but, like, our own life cycle and our own relationship to nature and our bodies. Talking about plants makes you feel good.

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** Also, just to add, like, even before we got to that point, when we go through the submission process, we were just looking at good film, and I think that's something. And good film, good stories. And, that can be for a whole, like, a very broad range of reasons, but we weren't going in with, we have these themes that we need to fill, or we need to do it like this, or it needs to be like this. We were like, let's just get all the work, watch all the work, and then we'll figure it out. And I think that's a really nice way to curate because it's very, you know, it's from the artists and what they are giving you and the work they're making and submitting in this moment.

**Arusa Qureshi:** And I think theme of a life cycle of a plant. I really like it. And I think it's a really beautiful, lovely theme to focus the program on. And the way it kind of works in the programme is lovely, too. Do you think you could talk a bit more about the theme in terms of the context of the actual films and how they kind of link to the theme, um, in terms of what the films are about?

**Carmen Thompson:** Oh Wow. As Tomiwa says, we've got five film strands that came out of our submissions. So we start tomorrow with nourish. That was a really nice, visceral words. It's really of the strands. But I think, yeah, it's self explanatory. I guess to an extent, it's about nourishment in terms of food, of creativity. I feel like I'm just repeating what I said yesterday on the radio. But it's fine to me. Produced a film in the program called Maud, which is very rooted in Scotland. It's about Maud Salter, but it's also about what she's meant for so many artists here in Scotland and how she nourishes them, I guess creatively. Then we have symbiosis. Is that right? Am I going in my order? So, yeah, again, it's about symbiotic relationships, like relationships between nature and us, but also different various symbiotic relationships we have with various forces. I forget them in order. Soil. So, yeah, again, it's like Earth and Grounding. There's a lot of films which are dealing with grief and death, but also, you described this really well yesterday, kind of regeneration and thinking about things as a cycle. And I think that's, um, a really hopeful way to kind of watch and experience work that is dealing with those kind of themes. Then we have rooted, seeds.

**Jess Brough:** So many it's hard to keep going.

**Carmen Thompson:** So, yeah, that's about kind of planting seeds, the start of things. Yeah, seeds are kind of all formation. And then we've got rooted, which is, like you described,

rooted very well yesterday, kind of around Grounding, but not just in terms of the themes, but also in the kind of creation of the work. And kind of being quite rooted in what you want to do and kind of unapologetic in the kind of work that you're making. Yeah. So those are our film strands. Does anyone want to talk about pollination?

**Jess Brough:** Rooted is also an interesting one because it's the only one out of the five strands where the genre is similar between the films. So both of those films, one is like a very choreographed, choreographed dance film by Mele Brooms, who is an incredible artist based in Glasgow. And also a film called Soft Bwoi. Soft Bwoi by a filmmaker called Danny Bailey. And that final shot of the trailer, the final shot of the trip, there's work to be done it's like music sound system. Music and movement and bodies together. And incredible costume. Both of those films have phenomenal costume. And then in the other strand, it's a really lovely mix of different genres. We've got documentary short, more traditional narrative style films, romcom, poetry films. It's a really eclectic mix. Which I didn't really realise other festivals, filmy festivals, because we're not a film festival, we're arts festival focused on film. But film festivals don't really necessarily have that mix. It's usually like, this is a documentary festival, or this is the classic blockbuster type, Hollywood sort of festival. And actually, I think you can learn a lot by experiencing different experiencing maybe a similar narrative or a similar theme through different genres of film.

**Carmen Thompson:** And I think even when festivals do have a slightly more kind of eclectic programme, I think it's particularly special to have it filmed by Black artists and people of colour in only speaking to each other across genres. Because I don't think you would have that even when even in a program which is bringing different types of work, you were able to make those connections. And I think, yes, I guess going back to the curation, it really was really amazing to start seeing the threads and the ways in which these films were talking to each other across genres, across disciplines, um, across lengths. It was really beautiful. And I think as an audience, I hope it's going to be exciting for you to watch, like, within the strand, you will literally go from watching, like, a narrative film, to an experimental film, to a dance film, to whatever it is within the same experience. And it's been really nice to bring those together and kind of yeah, I don't experience that as an audience member at other festivals.

**Arusa Qureshi:** No, it's a really beautiful thing, just like you said, having this theme. But then I'm struck by the variety that exists all throughout the programme and how many different things you can experience and get to know, which is the whole point of a festival where you're supposed to learn. It's a great part of it. You mentioned Maud, which I am very excited about. In keeping with that theme, you've previously commissioned Scotland based work and you've kind of continued that tradition in this festival. Could you talk a bit more about some of the Scotland based people that are involved and works that are involved?

**Jess Brough:** Yeah, I mean, other than Tomiwa, um, it's also not just me. I like that you also tamiwa has been writing because all the films are kind of like associated with maybe it's the director or the writer of the film. And then to me, it always puts Natasha's name rather than like Natasha into me work. Very humble. Yeah, there's quite a lot of Scottish rep in the programme. And we've got a filmmaker called Murad Kobaj who made a film called Una moiete unnaiento a Death and a Birth. And this is probably one of the most fantastic uses of collage that I've seen, like, ever of collage. It was, I think, a graduate project that they were told they had to make a film using still images. And you can hear all about this in Murad's, episode of Bbefore the Applause, which is our audio programme podcast. But essentially, he

decided he was going to tell the story of his family who were fleeing the Argentinian dictatorship of the want to say with images that he had of his family. And so putting them together as collage and moving them and creating motion and removing people from the pictures to show the lives that were lost and the stories who weren't. It was just such a beautiful film. And, he's going to be joining us for a Q and A at that screening. Mele Brooms, I already mentioned, is just a phenomenal dancer. And I think the film came from that inability to show Grin, which was originally a performance piece live. And so she put this incredible team together, made this beautiful, beautiful film. I'm going to just totally miss people. Well, of course, we've got Ashanti Harris, who is just one of my favourite artists. There's like a theme here. Like people I really like are involved. She's just an amazing person. And every year for the festival, we have commissioned new work. So the first year, we actually commissioned eight new films.

**Carmen Thompson:** Wait, what did I know that? Eight films.

**Jess Brough:** Eight films. Eight new films. I made one of those films with a friend. One of those films was in conversation with Nish Kumar and a bunch of phenomenal comedians. And me and my friend Diva were just at home. Like, how do you make producing it anyway? You can hear that backstory. But we made eight films that year. And then most of those films were with queer artists. Most of those films were black queer artists. And then the second year I decided that I wanted us to put the money that we had for the commission to specifically Black queer Scotland based artists. Because being Black queer, Scotland based, well, I'm not anymore. But at the time, it was just so palpable how little stuff there is for us. And I just wanted to celebrate that with these commissions. And that's continued for this year. And you may have noticed the trend of things getting a little smaller as years go on in terms of numbers. But obviously this festival is a lot bigger in a big sense than the other years. Maybe with less content using that word, but content in like the dictionary sense, like social media content. But everything around it is bigger, right? We have the podcast episodes for the audio programme, we have the responses, which we've been doing for three years, but really led by Tomiwa this year. Subbed by Katie go. It's just been like a really magical thing to do with more writers, bringing more writers involved. Every film has had several eyes looking at it and thinking about it and taking from it what they can, and then sharing that with you. So you're not just watching a film in the festival, you're understanding it through several different people's eyes, through the eyes of the filmmaker themselves as they talk about it on the podcast series. And we're creating an archive, really, for these films and we're showing these artists that you make a film, it doesn't end there. It doesn't have to be lost in the ether of the world of distribution and competition. This is everything. You can take this with you sort of after the festival is gone, which I really like.

**Arusa Qureshi:** I'm glad you mentioned the responses in the podcast because that was my next question. I'll ask you Tomiwa as you're the editorial director, the responses are your responsibility. And they're online now.

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** Yes, they're online. They're online. They made it there.

**Arusa Qureshi:** I started reading them and they're great. Like genuinely so, so good. But the responses on the podcast, they're very important parts of the whole program. Why did you guys decide to have these extra elements? Like, what does it mean to you to have these be able to delve into the program a bit more?



**Tomiwa Folorunso:** I think for me, what I love about the responses platform and what I really hope you can see in it this year is that it's giving, I mean, what it does is it challenges that very traditional way we expect art journalism and critique and reviews. And it kind of says, yeah, we're not going to do that and we're not going to do this star system. And we don't have to call things good and bad. Like, things can just be and um, we can kind of find what we love in it. And maybe there's things we don't like, but also we don't need to say that we can just appreciate the art for the parts about it we love. That's what I like about responses, and I think this year, we've had about 18 writers, all coming from kind of various different writing backgrounds or like disciplines or day jobs or whatever. And I think what is really nice is to see the very different styles of writing and very different ways of writing a response, or what they imagine a response to be, or what it is to them, and be in dialogue with the filmmaker, the person who's made that work. And so some may be verge on more traditional of kind of like, telling you what's happened in the film, but others may take you on a totally different journey and, um, bring in other themes and ideas. And that's what I really love about it. It makes me really happy because we made a film and it's in the programme, and to read the response to that film, to that film, and to see it through that writer's mind was really, really special. And so I know as well, firsthand, as, like, a filmmaker or maker of film, how much the filmmakers will appreciate this. And I think as well, that's really important. It's about the writers. It's about the readers, but it's also about the filmmakers having someone appreciate their work.

**Arusa Qureshi:** Yeah, I was going to say, actually, I'm sure from previous years of responses, I'm sure you've had great people come coming and saying filmmakers in particular, saying how much they appreciated having writers just engage so deeply, because it's rare to be able to engage that deeply with something.

**Jess Brough:** Yeah, I mean, for a lot of the artists who show work at the festival, it's the first time anybody has ever written about something that they've done. And I remember when I was talking to Paul Akvan, who was the editorial director in 2022, 2020, and 2021, about what I wanted to do with responses, about what I wanted us to do with responses. And it was like, I had been back when I was a student, I was doing a lot of music journalism, and I was writing about new music and new albums. And I remember having to catch myself because I kept accidentally bringing myself into it a bit too much. Like, I would go on a tangent. Like, I remember when I listened to this song, when I was at this thing, and like, a live story and blah, blah, blah. And they wanted just like, the neat and tidy, the descriptions of this electro funk, whatever the genres and the buzzwords. And we're really encouraging the writers to actually bring themselves into the writing and be subjective. And that's okay. And we want to hear about you as much as we want to hear about the film, um, rather than this sort of cookie, uh, cutter way that reviews usually go because it's not interesting, it's boring to read, and it's just so quantitative.

**Carmen Thompson:** Yeah, I was just going to add, because I worked in film for a long time, and I work in film distribution mainly of Black films and films from the African continent. And it's impossible to get people to review them. Like, nobody wants to talk about this work. It's just lazy. They're uninterested. And when they do, it's just ignorant often. And yeah, this kind of just quick, get it out. There's no deeper engagement. They don't understand often any of the cultural references. And, they often, sometimes do speak subjectively in a really sort of, I don't know, unhelpful. And we've got these people, Peter Bradshaw in the UK, who can make or break a film in the release, depending on what they say or how they review it, how

many stars they give it. And they have a very limited, I believe, understanding or appreciation for what film can be. It's just so exciting for me as someone that works in films and who works with filmmakers. I just know that kind of what it means to have somebody who engaged deeply with your work in that way...

**Jess Brough:** ...and to have an editor who wants you to do that and helps you along with that process in the brilliant way that you do.

**Arusa Qureshi:** But I mean just echoing what you were saying about reading the response and able to see the film through somebody else's eyes, just like reading the couple that I read earlier today. I just loved how personal they were and just, it made me really emotional. I think it was actually Eilidh. So she's here for yeah.

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** Like I didn't want to say, but Eilidh made me cry. It was just really Tuesday night.

**Arusa Qureshi:** I love it. It's just such a unique thing to read. It's not a traditional read, but reread that and just feel that connected without having actually seen the film. That's so special. So you want to talk about the podcast a little bit at all?

**Jess Brough:** Yeah, I mean, the podcast was to me, it was on a bit. Podcasting. Podcasting is a whole bag. It's a whole thing. It takes a lot of time. And we decided that we were going to do one, but we actually started this in 2021. The intention then was to have an episode for every film in the programme. We wanted to kind of replicate or mirror what is done in theatre for, blind and vision impaired audiences who aren't going to get what sighted audiences get from the playbook, from the visual programme. Telling them a bit more about what they're going to expect on stage, like describing the environment and giving some backstory about the actors or the story. And I think that's a really interesting thing for a live audience to have. And so when we're thinking about access, and we were thinking about what more we could do beyond the audio descriptions and beyond the BSL, that was a really big inspiration. And I'm fortunate to know the best podcast producer in the game, Halina Rifai, who is just eternally busy because that's how good she is. And yeah, Tomiwa and Halina have worked together on a podcast called the Sheku Bayoh Inquiry. Yes. Which you should all listen to. It's very important. And so we talked about the potential of doing that in 2021. It didn't quite work out. We didn't really have the funding we needed for it. We did a few episodes with the artists we'd commissioned the year before, and those episodes are really lovely. It's wonderful to reflect back on those. But we wanted to do it a bit differently this year. So I interviewed all of the filmmakers, and when they weren't the filmmakers, they may be the people who performed in the films. We chatted for about half an hour, and then Halina edited these episodes down to, like, ten minute segment, so you're just hearing from them. You hear from me at the beginning in the intro in my ASMR, which my mum will know I recorded when we were on holiday in a very hot room with dogs barking outside.

**Carmen Thompson:** Just say Jamaica. You were in Jamaica?

**Jess Brough:** Yeah, I was in Jamaica. And they're just wonderful, wonderful things to listen to. I mean, the generosity that the artists were willing to give to the project. And we start every episode with a description of what people can expect from the beginning when you start the film. So my question was always, like, what are the first things that we're seeing and hearing and feeling in the film? And so that sets us off at the beginning. It's kind of like an

audio description of the state. And then we go into a bit more of details and decisions and inspirations and that kind of thing. But again, it's that sense that many of these filmmakers haven't been asked these questions before. And it's like, you shouldn't have to wait till you're Martin Scorsese before someone is asking you about your work in a really meaningful way. Like, everybody who is making art deserves to be asked about it and to be treated with the respect that they're putting into the film or the work that they're making. So it was just really nice. It was just also great for me to just meet everybody and get to know everybody. It was just a very wonderful period of time, and it went so quickly, and I can't believe it's over, but at least we have the podcast and you can listen to it wherever you get your podcasts on Spotify, Apple, the other ones. It's online. Every response and podcast episode is on the page of the film. So if you're going to watch more online, you'll also see all of that information there. And I think, uh, we've got some QR codes as well, around the building.

**Carmen Thompson:** Yeah, like risk assessments. Another fun thing that comes with in person is just QR codes for everything. Making sure that the QR code that you've put on the sign actually go to the place that you said it was going to go to.

**Arusa Qureshi:** So we talked about the films, we talked about the responses and the podcast. But there are some other parts of the programme, some other events. Do you want to tell everyone about what else people can check out as part of the festival?

**Carmen Thompson:** No, I can do this. I can do this. Yesm we've got our strands, so they'll be screening here in person. We've um, got loads of other wonderful stuff. Tomorrow we are going on a walk around Arthur seat. A very gentle walk, a guided walk, which will be a really lovely way to kind of start the day tomorrow. We also have Sunday lunch on Sunday, surprisingly.

**Jess Brough:** And besides, that's free.

**Carmen Thompson:** It's free lunch. If you've got a pass, it's a free lunch. I mean, it pays for itself for a pass at this point because we've partnered with my favourite place in Edinburgh Night's Kitchen who were taking over the downstairs the whole weekend. They've been there today as well. So you can go and get their food at any point during the weekend. But we will be all be sitting down and eating together. I say this, I'm probably going to take mouth with a runoff, but, um, yeah, come and sit down and chat and be together and eat some food. And also across the weekend, we've got two discussions. So tomorrow we're going to be talking about art and environmental sustainability, climate, justice, kind of how those things intersect with some really brilliant speakers. We've got a panel on Sunday about kind of what we were talking about, about who makes decisions like what, whose critique matters, whose opinions matters in terms of critiquing, and talking about the response to writers. Again, some great speakers on there. What else have we got? We've got a poetry night on, uh, Poetry Propagation on Tuesday night with some of our again, lots of our pal stroke, incredible artists and writers who live in the city. We're partnering with Lighthouse on their social on Wednesday. Yes, we've got a huge party on Thursday with like two insanely good DJs. So please come and dance, um, with us then. And then also just generally in Summerhall, we've got on Sunday morning, we've got a kids, um, event. So if you know anybody with kids, come along. And we'll also have a crash that whole day as well for anybody who wants to kind of hang around and stay that day. Have I missed anything?

**Jess Brough:** Yeah, I guess. Also, like, for the people who maybe can't come to everything in person, we've an online book event on Tuesday with Akugo Majulu, who wrote *Fugitive Feminism*, which is a short but essential piece of work that really gets you to question it gets you to question the definition of humanity, essentially, and who gets to be human. And [inaudible] is just one of my favorite people in the world, but is in Scotland.

Carmen Just because you said online. All of everything I've said is online as well. So this discussion is going to go online tomorrow for our online audience. So if you can't make it, then you can engage with it often. Yeah, the day afterwards. But something like our party is streaming live on EHFM that night. So you'll be able to kind of dance with us wherever you are. So, yeah, literally everything apart from the meal, you can make your own food. Yeah everything can be experienced online.

**Arusa Qureshi:** Such a full and nourishing program, it really is. Just hearing you guys talk about it especially is really special. I know we're running out of time, so I'm going to ask you one last question and then I will open up in case anyone else wants to ask anything. What are you hoping that new and returning audiences take away from Fringe of Colour Films this year?

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** I hope for those joining us in person, they feel this sense of community and connection in this physical space. I think for those online, I hope they realise that we've still got them. We still care about you equally as much, and you are absolutely still part we're all part of this festival. And yeah, I think I hope people enjoy the work. Like, all of it. I just enjoy it or don't enjoy it, but just come and experience it, I think, um, and feel it out. It is different in so many ways. It is so nontraditional, but just give it a go.

**Jess Brough:** Yeah. I also want people to take away that it's possible to do things out with the traditional standard structures that we already have existing here. And see what's yeah, literally see what's possible when you put your time or your resources or your energy into something else that is more centred around community and your communities. Yeah. My hope is that there are many more different kinds of things that look like Fringe of Colour Films. The thing about the Fringe is, like, people feel they have to come here because there's so much riding on that ability to say that you came, that you did your time, that you slogged away at it, and then you're meeting certain people, especially for the comedians. If you want a job in comedy, if you want a career in comedy, there's that sense that you have to come here. Maybe people don't want to come here. So I'd love for in the future, there to be loads more options and for that just like all of those things to be disseminated across spaces. So there's not just like a monopoly on art that is just very expensive and very inaccessible and can be very racist and all of these other things that people are kind of forced to just be involved in because it's the dumb thing. Yeah. I mean, not saying that we're the blueprint, maybe we are. But just saying, like what can be done with the resources that we have? That's what I hope people learn.

**Carmen Thompson:** I guess, just to add or maybe repeat what both of you said, yeah, I think for me, again, just to go back to what I was saying, I'm on this stage now, and for me, a long time, I was just part of the Fringe of Colour community. So, again, just reiterate, this is like, for us, it feels weird to be on a stage because I think a lot of festival film festivals can be quite, like, exclusionary and there can be this divide and they repeatedly make people feel like it isn't a space for them. The door is open. We want everyone to be involved in this and

help us grow and help us learn and be part of shaping it. Because it's just this moving I don't want to be is not a nice word, but I don't know. It's this very fluent thing. And yeah, because it's the exciting thing about this festival is so many of our audience are also artists and creatives themselves. So we're all just part of making this happen. Um, and yeah, I think it's just kind of that feeling of like, it's an us that's doing this. It's a global us and it's people we can't see that are there. I felt for a long time I was kind of in a space I don't know what I was about to say that thoughts rail trailed off. It was going to get, I think, conceptual.

**Arusa Qureshi:** All three of you said it really well, you put it perfectly. And, we appreciate you we appreciate you putting on all this work. Because I'm terrible at time management. We're running out of time. You need to probably have time for, like, one question. If anyone wants to ask anything really important and special, it's okay if you don't. I just thought I wanted to give the option. Anything else?

**Jess Brough:** We really wanted to get into school. We really wanted to our original kind of before Summerhall, which is obviously an incredible venue to be in. We were kind of thinking of doing the fringe thing of being in different venues, and we were thinking about going to schools and streaming the films at schools. Um, I think for that to be possible, we really need to have and we will start working on this course. We need to make it clearer that we want people to MIT films that are for children. So we have a lot of stuff that is not child friendly, like Cruising in Havana, stuff that's, like, fantastic, but, yeah, not for kids. So in the future, it would be wonderful to have a really strong, educational, exciting what's the word when you are not taking kids seriously? Not that, like seeing the child as like, a being that, you know, can enjoy art? That would be fantastic because yeah, there's there's a lot of there's a lot of communities here of kids of colour, especially, like, outside the central Edinburgh zone, who probably have never been to an arts festival for people of colour. And that would be a magical thing, I think, for a lot of them to see.

**Arusa Qureshi:** Yeah, I love that. That was a great question, because it really looks at the future and what you're kind of thinking head. So yeah. Thank you for that. I think that is all for time. Can everyone please join me in thanking Jess, Carmen, and Tomiwa for the festival and everything?