



**CRIPtic**  
2021

## CRIPtic Arts Podcast, Episode Seven Bibi June

Hello everybody, and welcome, once again, to another one of our fantastic CRIPtic Arts podcasts, where you get to meet the artists that are working with us here at CRIPtic Arts 2021. Today, I'd like to introduce you to the wonderful Bibi June! Hello, Bibi June! How are you?

Hello.

[Mik Scarlet] Cool. So, what I've got everyone to do is introduce themselves, do their own, kind of, pocket bio. So could you tell our wonderful CRIPtic audience a little bit about yourself and your creative practice?

Yes I can. (Mik laughs) My name is Bibi June. My pronouns are they/them, I am a queer disabled artist. I'm an immigrant, I'm originally from Holland. You might be able to tell from my accent. I am poet. I am a theatre maker. I am a game designer. I do podcasts, not like this one, like horror, narrative, fictional podcasts.

[Mik] There are some people that have watched it so far, might say that this has been quite horrific. (laughing)

But it's not fiction,

[Mik] No, That's true.

It's just bad.

[Mik] It's real.

Not bad! (Mik laughing loudly)

Thanks, pal. (laughing)

I haven't listened to them yet so I can't make any judgments. (laughing) I think that all I have to say, really. That's me, pretty much.

So, what was it that attracted you to CRIPtic Arts? What made you want to apply, and want to work with CRIPtic Arts?

So I work both as a producer and an artist, and I have for, pretty much, all of my career. I started out doing performance poetry, originally, and just as a fun thing to do, and then, rolled into that quite luckily, I guess, and really enjoyed it. And then, pretty much started self producing my work, and then, became a producer because you're not gonna earn any money as a poet. So, (laughing) for most of my career, I've kind of straddled both. Especially, in the past couple of years, that's leaned towards producing very heavily.

[Mik] Ah.

Very, very heavily. I love producing. I love helping other people get opportunities, but at some point I was like, maybe I should do my own work again? Maybe I should make some art? It can be quite hard, I think, to switch between the two, because, especially, when you work in disability arts, as a producer, your job is so much about protecting artists from the quite awful industry that they work in. I felt quite hesitant to go back to making my own art and exposing myself to that. So, when CRIPtic came up, that seemed like the perfect opportunity to both, go back to making my own art, and do that in a safe environment. So that was

[Mik] Yeah. really my key reason to apply to CRIPtic.

Talking of which, you know, I know that you've got a theatre company called, "In The Works." What's that? Tell us something about that.

In The Works is the collective name for myself and two other Scottish poets called Ross McFarland and Ellen Renton. Also, my good friends. We make shows together, that's what we've done in the past. We've made a couple of shows and then we're like, maybe we should collectivise this into a name? Which, became In The Works. Since then, In The Works has become much bigger than that. Now, we produce other people's work, as well as our own work. It's kind

of a collective name for all the stuff that we do together, which, includes a podcast called Folxlore, which, I talked about a bit earlier. It includes Ellen's solo show, "Within Sight" which, I produce, and some upcoming things that we've got going on around like, the climate crisis and other things. It originally started as a spoken word theatre company, making theatrical shows that were also poetic, but now we kind of just do things. It's all still poetic in nature, but we've really branched out. Like I said, I really like games, so, that's something we're really working towards now, is making poetry based games. It's kind of any art form that you can make a poetry based something out of. We kind of capitalise on and use for our own liking.

That's interesting. My wife, who actually designed the CRIPtic website, begun her design career in games, making worlds. So, it's definitely, it's a fun industry, but it's definitely changed since the original (Bibi laughing) you know, kind of, wow! I mean, unless you're making something where people get shot a lot, there's not much money in it, so, which is annoying.

[Bibi] Not my forte, no.

No, no no. So tell us, how is the piece that you're writing for us at CRIPtic going? Tell us about it. Tell us what it is.

So, my piece is called, "Homage: Can You Help Me Find Bibi June?" It is a drag horror piece, poetic in nature, where I play the poet. Unnamed male poet onstage, it's me in drag, who is searching for Bibi June, and they're doing so through their poetry set. So, the setup of the show is that they are, they've been invited to do a headline show, headline set at a poetry event. Instead of doing their own work, they, weirdly, decide to do Bibi June's work. They decided to introduce the audience to Bibi June's poetry. With that throughout the show, comes a, sort of, plea for the audience to help them find, help him find Bibi June because he's been looking. That takes the weird turn in the piece. I won't spoil it, obviously. It takes a weird turn, there's a lot that happens, obviously. (laughing) Things need to happen in art, unfortunately. (laughing) Narrative and all that, ugh! (Mik laughing) Yeah.

It's a lot about parasocial relationships and consent, specifically around artists. There's a lot about, like, being online as an artist and how weird that can be, especially, as a marginalised artist, and how hard that can be. That expectation to be someone online, have an identity online that people can follow, or that people can see themselves in, or, in some way connect to, when, all you, maybe, really want to do, is just make weird art. There's also a lot in there about how I feel about theatre and how I still struggle with whether theatre is for me, with how inaccessible that is as an art form. So, part of it, is also me going, "How much of myself do I want to put in my work? How much of myself do I want to continue putting into theatre?" When, as on a whole, it so badly doesn't really want me there. That's kind of where the idea came from, of me having disappeared, and being gone.

It's funny, 'cause I normally ask the question about barriers and that kind of thing, a bit later, but I think now is the perfect time to because it is a very inaccessible industry. I mean, most industries are, but there's something strange about the performing arts theatre. What barriers have you faced?

That's really hard question to answer.

Hurry up, Bibi! We've only got 15 minutes. (laughing)

That's where I'll start. I think I find that really difficult to answer, specifically because so many of my identities intersect in that question.

[Mik] Yeah. So, I am an immigrant, I am mixed race. I am trans. I am also disabled. All of those things are things that are still a struggle within theatre. They're not a struggle in life. They're great in life. I love being all those things. You know, coming into that world as a working class immigrant is already, basically, impossible. I don't know how it really happened. I kind of rolled into it. I still don't feel like I'm actually part of it, really. I just do my own little projects and that's great, but, I've always quite intentionally stayed away from working with big organisations, and aligning myself with anyone because you always encounter so many issues. People are always either racist, or ableist, or in another way, terrible. That's maybe a really pessimistic way of looking at it, but that has been my experience, so far, in that, there are so many times when I've had to say no to things that I've already started working on because it just turned out that our values completely didn't align.

[Mik] Yeah.

So, that's been a major, major part of it. And then, on the other side, there is just the, sort of, purely physical or mental inaccessibility

[Mik] Yep. of theater, the performing arts in general, where I am neurodivergent, that's something that I came to later in life. I think, figuring that out about yourself as an adult can be quite confronting, and especially, in the pandemic, just, kind of, losing all ability to hide that. I don't

necessarily want to hide it, but I think you do learn, as someone who is neurodivergent. Then, looking at yourself, going, "I have no idea who I am anymore." For me, I found that out, I think, when I was 24, 25. I'm now 28. So, it's not even been that long.

[Mik] Yeah.

I really had to relearn a lot about myself, or a lot of things that I thought I knew about myself. Doing that, and then, being consistently told that, or not even told, but shown that, that is not what people want from you within the industry that you work in.

[Mik] Yeah.

Yeah. Just,

[Mik] Yep. I don't even know if I want to participate in that anymore. (laughing)

Yeah. Do you know what? Like, it's funny, because everyone, I think, that I've talked to, so far, has kind of said this thing of there's this pressure from outside that you aren't right, and that you shouldn't be here, but starts way before you decide or even enter into the arts. That's school. That's your friend group. That's not for you, that's not the future for you. Then, you go into it and then, you find, again, that the platform isn't right. The idea isn't right. The space isn't accessible to whatever your access needs are. And I kind of, I mean, I hope that CRIPtic is part of a process of changing that. I think that, you know, stuff like you're doing, and I think that all the artists are trying to be that change, but it is incredibly tiring to always have to be the one that's trying to make things better, pushing against something that doesn't seem to want to move. (laughing)

[Bibi] Yeah.

Anyway, let's move on to something more cheerful. So, how do you start? What inspires your work? What makes you think, "That's it! That's the piece I've gotta do!"

It's largely about what I'm interested in, in the moment. Having ADHD, I get very fixated on certain topics, very quickly, for a very short amount of time, and then, move on from them, but sometimes something grabs my attention in a way that I feel like, there is something to uncover there. I'm really interested in art as a way of communicating things that might not always be captured in words, which, is ironic, 'cause I largely work in words, (Mik laughing) but I think there's something about creating an experience for someone. In my case, love that is verbal, but not all of it, that can help them feel something or understand something that can't just be conveyed in a conversation, or traditional prose, or something like that. So, that's my main interest. A lot of that has been around social justice things, around identity, but that's definitely something I've been moving away from more, the more art I make, and the more I get those things kind of out of my system, and start focusing on other things. So, parasocial relationships, for me, was one that I just got this, sort of, intense interest in as a concept. Parasocial relationships are when someone builds up an emotional relationship with another party, when that party isn't aware of their existence. So, that describes, in large part, celebrity culture,

[Mik] Yeah. the way people get invested in celebrities. That was just something I got really, sort of, caught on. Then, that connected a lot to my own experience of being an artist, and the expectations of that. I kind of went from there, and that's what happens with most of my art. A lot of it comes from play and playfulness, I find that really important. I love games, like I said, and that has always been a part of my poetry, as well. There's a lot of, sort of, audience interaction in my poetry. I think, specifically, play and the idea that even as an adult, you're still allowed to have fun, like, just unnecessary fun. Like, it is necessary, obviously, but like, this idea of, it's not for anything, we're not making anything, we're not doing, we're just having fun.

[Mik] Yeah. That's really important to me. So, that's a big, big part of how and why I make art.

It's funny, isn't it? 'Cause it's one of the things about art, I think, that people don't truly value, is, you know, we've seen the huge hoo ha over sport, recently. You know, to be good at sport, you've got to be good at sport. You know, no one says, "And now, here's a medal for being rubbish at a sport." (laughing) But at art, it's about enjoyment, and it's about a bliss, and you don't have to be the best artist. You just have to be the best artist you can be. Ironically, in this world we live in now, talking about parasocial and, sort of, people being able to get into you without you knowing that they're into you. It is actually the perfect time to be an artist 'cause you can access everybody from, you know, your front room as we are, you know, I'm in my spare room, normally. So, it's a completely different world, now. So, hopefully, a lot of the barriers that we talked about earlier, we can smash open from our own homes, (Bibi laughing) or from anywhere else we like.

[Bibi] Yeah.

So, what Let's be honest, how far are you along with your CRIPtic piece? How's it going?

Well, um. (laughing)

I've done, I've, uh. (laughing)

You're doing this on purpose just to make me scared, aren't you? (laughing)

Yeah. So, we had our mid mid program sharing, which, I did a lot of work for and was really proud of, and then, had a lot of ideas to change it up a lot. So, I've kind of done that. I've kind of made some major changes to the thing, but that does mean I'm kind of back at where I started a little bit, with a lot more knowledge, but I still have a lot of work to do. We actually have a deadline coming up in three days, not from when anyone will hear this, but from when we're talking. So, I am working very hard right now on writing a script and getting that ready for our wonderful BSL interpreters. Yeah. (laughing)

Good. Everybody I've spoken to, so far, has gone, "Doing really well Mik, but could really do without having this half an hour that I've had to waste talking to you, Thanks."

I mean, I didn't want to say it but, (laughing)

[Mik] Well, luckily, we're at the end now. So, basically, what I'm gonna ask you to you now is, how would you sell your show? How would you say to someone, "You must come and see it!" "This is it!" It's like a tagline on the poster. So, how would you get them? Lure, the audience in.

Bibi June has gone missing, and if you come see the show, you can help find them. Homage is a poetic horror drag show, which, I think, just that for me, I mean, I think that sells it. But Homage (laughing) is a poetic horror drag show about parasocial relationships and consent, and specifically relating to disability and queerness, and how, we in our communities reproduce certain pararelationships that are present in society, and how we should not do that, probably. Maybe.

Brilliant! That's excellent! (Bibi laughing) You got me hooked. And there is going to be a voice alteration piece of tech. I know, because I've just arranged it. (laughing loudly) So, it's gonna be really good, as well. It's gonna be really spooky. This will be great! Anyway, thank you so much Bibi June, that was fantastic. There you go. Don't forget, keep up with the CRIPtic Arts artists on the next podcast, but for now, I will say goodbye. I'm Mik Scarlet, and goodbye to the wonderful Bibi June!

Goodbye!