



PRODUCER FARM 2018 PARTICIPANT Q&A – ANASTASIA WITTS



Anastasia Witts (Sussex) is the founder of the music charity OperaCoast, she has produced multiple educational and performing projects between 2011 and 2017. In 2016 she founded Artist Digital Ltd, a digital PR agency that specialises in producing and promoting classical music projects as well as helping performing companies and individual artists to reach their full creative potential and wider audiences. The company's ethos is based on the belief that classical music must be better integrated into the modern world using the benefits of new media and technology to become more visible and accessible.

1. What challenges do you encounter within your area of producing?

The challenges I encounter in my work as a producer and promoter can be split into two kinds. There are, of course, the problems of funding, audience engagement, artistic quality and so on, that every producer knows a lot about. But as someone who is involved with classical music, I also endeavour to overcome the specific features of this field that are often revealed in certain conservatism exercised by both performers and, even more so, by the audience.



A healthy dose of tradition and retention never hurts, but we also must be acutely aware that the arts have a purpose in society to help us process and engage with the reality in which we live. Art that does not take risks, does not offer new views and ignores the changes brought by the current life soon falls out of date and loses its power, its relevance, and with it – its future.

2. Why did you apply for Producer Farm and what do you hope to get out of it?

I like the idea of a free and fair exchange between people who are ultimately doing a very lonely job. As a producer in the arts, you take on all those things that no one else wants to do. The creative fun is usually the prerogative of the creatives, while the producer has to take care of the funding, accounts, administration, scheduling, emailing, transportation and logistics, setting things up and taking them down. Even in the middle of the most interesting performance that wouldn't have happened without you, you still have no space to stop and enjoy. You are much more likely to find yourself dealing with some technical issue or other.

I think the creative drive of the main facilitator, their ability to calculate and eliminate risks, to think ahead, and most importantly – their artistic and entrepreneurial vision that allows for an art project to grow from absolute zero up to an impactful and meaningful happening, is so often overlooked. But I feel such affinity with these people, I am fascinated by their multiskilled abilities and their vision. I cannot wait to learn from them and to share my own views.

3. Can you tell us about an event you have been to which has made you think differently?

The recent performance at Sussex University of the Candoco Dance Company who work with both disabled and able-bodied dancers. We all appreciate the importance, and put a lot of effort into, the diversification of our audience and performers. Enabling people to do what they couldn't or were not confident to do before, is at the core of my beliefs and my work, but I have never before experienced the directness and unapologetic boldness with which the Candoco approached the subject of diversity.

They brilliantly showed what I always thought was the best approach to the subject – the idea of diversity becomes void when true equality is applied. In other words, we should not invite diversity in art for the sake of diversity itself – this defeats the point. We should pursue the genuine artistic purposes with diversity embedded in our minds and therefore offer new standards of perception and artistic exploration. This performance gave me a few ideas and I am very grateful to this company for the experience.

