**Debbie Hannan** ([00:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=8.1)): Welcome to the Traverse Podcast with me, Debbie Hannan. So, theatre has changed. COVID-19 has sent us into a reflective pause. It has inspired art, activism, the examination of power and demanded a new normal as we all invent what comes next. This series is inspired by Arundhati Roy’s statement, ‘The pandemic is a portal’, and these podcasts are a selection of interviews with the people who are shaping that future, inside and outside of theatre. They are intimate, candid, conversations about lived experience, where people speak their truth to power. It's important to say here that our interviewees speak freely on a range of topics. Whilst you might not share all their points of view, they are here to be heard. Each one is a provocation, which looks to examine theatre making and storytelling, how we do it and its place in our new world.

Today's conversation is with actor, writer and performer, Bea Webster. Multitalented Bea trained at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and recently acted with the RSC in *The Winter's Tale,* and was nominated for a Stage Debut Award for their performance and Red Ladder Theatres, *Mother Courage and Her Children.* They are a consultant on shows like Outlander and most recently have written for National Theatre of Scotland, and for the Traverse and Wonderfools’ very own *Positive Stories for Negative Times*. Bea is deaf and uses British sign language. So we had two interpreters join us for the podcast today. I was very excited to speak to Bea, as you're about to hear, because they are an explosive and revolutionary voice in Scottish theatre, as well as being deeply funny, and definitely someone who I think will be running a theatre in the near future. A quick content warning; by nature of discussing elements of Bea's identity. We ended up talking about discrimination and particularly Bea's frustration with ableism and also the Westminster government, just in case you're not in the headspace to hear that today.

I am so, so thrilled that Bea has agreed to be on this podcast today. They're one of the most exciting theatre artists around right now in my personal opinion, and I am genuinely a huge fan of their funny and brilliant work. Bea uses BSL, and we have two interpreters whose voices you'll also be hearing alongside Bea’s. So first we have Claire:

Claire, Interpreter (CI): Hello!

Debbie Hannan (DH): and Sophie.

Sophie, Interpreter (SI): Hello!

DH: Hello and welcome Bea!

Bea Webster (BW): Hello! I’m so excited, and thank you very much for your very kind words.

DH: Oh, well-deserved words.

BW: That is me blushing. [laughter]

DH: First off. Can you explain to us what you do, especially as I know your work covers so many disciplines, cause you've got too many talents and maybe by giving us an example of a piece of work that you've done?

BW ([03:00](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=180.1)): I’m mostly an actor, but I also write and I make theatre. The most recent work is the play *Squeezy Yoghurt*, and *Is This a Fairytale?* And,I can't say the name of the company, I always sound like I say ‘Little Cocks’!

DH ([03:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=197.28)): Little, Little Cog?

BW ([03:21](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=201.03)): That’s it!

DH: Let’s talk about squeezy yogurt first. So that was made by National Theatre of Scotland for *Scenes for Survival*, if I'm correct. Incredibly funny, starred a nonbinary actor. I think I'm right in saying their name is Brooklyn Melvin, who I thought was brilliant. You've obviously got a flair for comedy. How was it making that remotely?

BW ([03:43](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=223.65)): It was very weird, because it’s the first time I’ve ever written anything really.

DH ([03:51](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=231.64)): How, it’s so good?!

BW ([03:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=235.44)): It's just because like I’ve written a lot of stuff, but this is like the first time it’s been broadcast. So I was fairly lucky that NTS took a risk with me, but in terms of working remotely, it was very difficult because like I had to work with their, how to Claire?

BW ([04:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=259.65)): So I had to work with there, like within their rules, I had to follow their rules and I had to follow, like there was a particular time limit. It was, I couldn't go over in time. We were aiming in from 56- uh, five to six minutes! God, I’d be there for days If I was writing 56 minutes! But also it was the first time that I had to work from home, because normally I'm out and about because I love meeting people face to face and lots of different people, uh, you know, and I love face-to-face meeting and on zoom, it's just not the same. So I had to do everything myself. It was entirely my responsibility and that was like, you know, really scary. And then to have it shown online was just like, Oh, what if people don't like it? Oh my God! So, you know, that was kind of the experience of it.

DH ([05:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=315.75)): And how was the audience response to it?

BW ([05:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=319.86)):

It was lovely. It was lovely seeing the response to a deaf actor as well, a deaf writer also, and the disabled director. So it was just really lovely. And also I've got lots of private messages from deaf people who were saying, you know, they've actually been through exactly the same sort of thing in life, you know, like the train thing. And some deaf people were saying, you know, they just felt stupid. It being such a small problem, but it isn’t, it's a massive problem. And do you know that links to, to deaf people and, and that's the reason why, you know, we've got that sort of program online because that's, that's great because you know, it's, you're suffering from mental health problems because of that. So it isn't a little problem. It's a big problem.

DH ([06:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=377.98)): Another piece of work and partnership with the Traverse was the piece with Wonderfool's part of *Positive Stories for Negative Times*. How would you describe that project to people listening to the podcast?

BW ([06:31](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=391.63)):

So I knew both of them through my drama school. Robbie came to me and said he wanted to commission five writers to create 15 to 30 minutes, and it was really up to us what we wrote about, but it was ages 8 to 25.

So when we finished, we sent it out and it meant people could apply. Like they could do it in a Theatre or school, but it was aiming for young people and they could apply, but they didn't have to pay to use our, it didn't have to pay to use our script. So I think, I don't know how many signed up, but there were a lot. It meant that schools and theatres can perform these shows online so that the shows will be online. So that's really exciting.

DH: Your piece twisted the fairytale. So you're someone who twists their expectations a lot, I think, in your work. Is that something that drives you? What's at the heart of why you make?

BW ([07:43](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=463.81)): Yes, Yes! I guess it's kind of political social justice, if that makes sense, because I'm queer, I'm disabled deaf, I'm a woman, I'm mixed race. So, you know, I've, I've been discriminated against a lot of the time. When growing up, I didn't realize I was different, and that I was getting treated differently until I was older, and you realize that it's wrong to be treated that way. And also growing up, you'd see people get together, that'd be white, they'd be thin, straight, boring! You know, you know, Disney? you know, like that Disney stuff, I grew up watching Disney. I love Disney! But where are the Queer people? Where are they? So, you know, that's the reason why, and it's the same with pantomime and that's why I want to create something for young people like over 8. Uh, so my script is for people over eight, which means that they know from a young age that it's fine to be queer, and it's fine to be, you know, all these different categories in society. It's all fine!

DH ([09:09](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=549.38)): Do you think that theatre has been changed by this pandemic?

BW ([09:16](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=556.1)): I sat and thought about this for a while. I feel like some parts have made it better, but there's been a lot that I feel has gotten worse. Because I see a lot of, I see a lot of casting announcements and all of the actors are just white, middle class, and I just feel like why? You know, and I'm seeing more and more of that and it's getting a bit frustrating and also I've seen less and less people who are deaf and disabled. And I've also noted that there are less accessible stuff around because it's like, Oh, I want to go to the theatre, but then there's no captions or anything. So it's not accessible. And I feel like accessibility is, is definitely suffering One festival, they've used interpreters and captions for the last 20 years. And then this year they did absolutely nothing in that regard. And, you know, I was really shocked about that.

DH ([10:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=627.38)): I think I keep having discussions with powerful theatre people, let’s say, high up, who are able-bodied and hearing, who are having their first realizations about access, now, when artists like yourself and so many other artists have been advocating for it and articulating it perfectly for so long. And I just wonder, like, I've heard you speak before on how, particularly Scottish theatre, is a bit behind on that front. Where do you think we are in that journey and where, where do we have to go? Big question.

BW ([10:59](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=659.12)): Yes. I've been thinking about that a lot. And part of me realizes that in England, deaf people have been campaigning for so long.

And you know Paula Garfield from Deafinitely Theatre or Jennie Sealy from Graeae Theatre? They have been fighting for so long. And, and I think that's part of the reason why, you know, there's been quite a lot established. So I think maybe that's what's missing. We've never had someone fighting in such a way in the same way in Scotland, but at the same time, I was a bit shocked. Because, RCS, you know, they've, they've had, uh, you know, deaf actors for the first time. We've got 10 deaf actors as well, which is great. But then after that it was nothing. And so I would say like 99% of auditions are now in England. So it means, you know, spending all that money on travel and you know, all that sort of stuff. And also most of my colleagues from my course, I'll say none of them have really worked in mainstream productions in Scotland. And I think that needs to be changed because one thing I felt and, you know, I hate to say, it's, what's better, what's worse. But I think that Scotland's deaf audience, because sometimes you go to the theatre, there'll be like 50, 60 deaf people in the audience. But in England it doesn't seem the same because, you know, they have deaf actors in England, but they don't seem to have such a large reach in their audience. There doesn't seem to be as many deaf audience participants there. So that's one thing that England could learn from Scotland. But, you know, I could go on and on for hours and hours about this.

DH ([13:05](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=785.25)): That is fascinating to hear the difference between the Scottish and English industries. If you could say something to the heads of the Scottish theatres to move our industry on, what would you say?

BW ([13:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=800.25)): I think the biggest barriers that exist out there is attitudinal barriers. Um, really, you know, if, if we could change people's attitudes, then they would become naturally more open to, you know, for change. Because for example, at the moment, you know, working with the Royal Shakespeare company and the RSC, when I entered the room there, I just felt, you know, I felt warm and welcome straight away. I felt that the director welcomed me in. And because of that, I feel that, you know, I could offer my best work, um, because of the attitude, they're not, you know, careful, like ‘Oh gosh, a deaf person’ they're really, you know, like, you know, is this offensive or not? Can we do this? And I can, you know, that openness of that, you know, it's not about me teaching them anything, but I would rather, they ask me and then I can respond and say, this is how I want to do it. This is how I want to be treated, you know? And in auditions in Scotland, I've been told you're not deaf enough Bea, or, you're too deaf. So I've never really had the experience in England an audition. So, um, I just think also as well, you know, for those heads of those theatres to not be scared because I think, well, because I know that I'm aware that fear can really prevent people from taking risks.

DH ([14:43](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=883.41)): Yeah, I, I, I've been doing some workshops recently for young directors, a lot on access and like access for audiences, but also like when you have performance of different needs in your room and I always name at the start, ‘the squidge’ and it's that movement of like- let’s spell it, the strange awkwardness, you know, and if you can just name ‘the squidge’ and then talk about why you're ‘squidgy’, we'll get through it and then we'll all be okay.

BW ([15:14](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=914.44)): Yeah, exactly. And that's why as well, but, um, you know, I do email artistic directors, um, and try and open up that dialogue. Um, with them, it can be difficult though, because, you know, through Covid, my energy has really dropped. Um, and I need to focus on paid work rather than campaigning because, you know, that's, my campaigning has suffered from that lack of energy that I've experienced because of COVID.

DH: And it's like, your, your existence itself has made you an activist. Do you know what I mean? You've done so much work. You're an actor. I know that you've worked with the RSC, as you mentioned, you've done some work with Outlander. How do you shift role from each of those different forms?

BW: Well, to be honest with you, if I can be honest, I don't really shift roles well, I don't, I don't really do it that well. I think because of that, um, my mental health has suffered because of the many different roles I've done and it's suffered really badly. It's been getting better recently because, you know, in new situations before where I felt, you know, I couldn't really integrate with, but I've started. Um, like for example, I saw on Twitter, there was a really good tweet talking about juggling, you know, many different balls in your life. And it made me realize, okay, when you're trying to juggle so much, you know, it's like, you know, which, which balls are made of glass, you know, it's like, are we trying to juggle balls of glass? Some of them are really important, but some of them are plastic.

And if I drop some of the plastic balls, I can pick it up later at a later day, you know, but if I was to drop a glass ball, uh, it would be, you know, you know, it'd be difficult. So I've been through that process of accepting that, of like working out, which are my glass balls and which are my plastic balls. Can’t believe I'm talking about balls and this way, but-

DH: It’s just a perfect analogy [laughter]

BW: But, I mean recently, um, I've been learning to say, no, and I said no to my first job, ever. And I felt really good about it, but I just felt that, you know, for now it's really important that I focus on paid work and I did have to work out which days I could focus on, you know, different areas that I’m, you know, committed to. But for the next two months, I'll be working with the RSC. That's the commitment. Um, and I'm actually doing a performance In-person- a performance in-person! Recently I did a, an outdoor performance with the RSC. Um, and it was just absolutely wonderful. Oh, it was so great to do that.

DH ([18:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1082.72)): Uh, that gives me hope. I've been indoors a lot, Bea.

BW ([18:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1088.03)): Same, you know, just staying inside all the time, closed doors. No, thanks.

DH ([18:12](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1092.38)): Everyone I've spoken to so far has referenced the financial reality of the pandemic. And you've linked that in already to mental health and the cost of that in its own way. How are you coping? Like what's keeping you going through this.

BW ([18:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1108.49)): It has been hard, and that is one of the reasons why I wrote, um, *Squeezy Yogurt* because, um, you know, trying to find a counsellor to match my needs, has been very difficult. I do need a counsellor that is either a signer who, you know, it doesn't matter if they're deaf or hearing, It's the fact that if they could sign or I could go to counselling with an interpreter, but who would pay for the interpreter? You know, most counselling is from charities that wouldn't be able to afford that. And I did find one company, one charity, um, that offered counselling, but the application form was so difficult and I've been waiting for three months for counselling now for that to be sorted out. And I think, you know, if I, if I was to get counselling, I think I would feel a lot better. But you know, just being, just being on the waiting list, it’s so long, you know, just even thinking about that, like why is the waiting miss so long? Why, why are so many people in need of counselling? Everybody is going to go through mental health difficulties because of COVID and everyone's going to need counselling. And that's such a hard thing. Um, but I've got a new cat, so that's been one way that I have coped, I love my cat. Um, so that has been a massive help. My wife has been a massive help. She's wonderful. Um, she, yeah, she's so helpful. Um, and you know, I think it's just about finding wee things to help you through the day.

DH ([19:49](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1189.49)): You're someone who sees so many intersections of identity, and it's always really strange to talk about them as separate entities. Isn't it, like, you're, you're a whole, you know. But sort of linked to that, how’ve the different elements of who you are, your whole personhood have influenced your art both as an actor and a maker and a writer. What influences have been in your life? Are there, are there storytelling forms? Are there musicians, are there writers that you can see had a big effect on you?

BW ([20:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1219.7)): That's hard to say really, because I think one of the reasons I want to do this is because you rarely see intersectional- intersectionality, because for example, if, you know, usually you just, if you're focused on disability, usually everybody is white. Or if you focus on race, usually, you know, no one's disabled. So usually they're focused in on one area, which means I feel sometimes disassociated from it even more because you're not just the one part of that.

So for example, if you’re talking about race, but there's no interpreter or anything, or do you know what I mean? So that can be difficult, and also there's this one thing that I've realized recently about, uh, interpreters. And I realize, I prefer to use interpreters who are more similar to myself who are female, or people of colour, or who are, queer, you know, female or trans, uh, because, you know, I understand their language. And so that's an influence as well for me. And the reason I, I talk about, uh, interpreters, because I talk about their voices, you know, you know, voice meaning spoken and sign language, Because usually I only see a voice talking about one specific area and I don't like that. And that's why *Squeezy Yogurt* had both deaf and queer issues within it. And that the fairy tale, you know, it was also got a mix of things in as well. It's talking about toxic masculinity, it's talking about gender, it's talking about what is expected of a CIS male or CIS woman and all those sorts of aspects. And I think that all influences me within my writing because there's lots of different things within it and not just focusing on one particular area.

DH: Yeah. I mean, that makes sense how you're sort of a pioneer of work that can resonate back to you because you've had to be right. And I think that's why your work is unique and bold and like full of a cynical humour. Like it's because of all of those things, you've just articulated. If there was a young D Deaf maker, or let's say someone who's thinking about doing that course at the conservatoire, what would you tell them? And of course we're mid COVID, so theatre doesn't look the same, but what would you say to them now in terms of getting involved in industry or becoming a creative in theatre?

BW ([23:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1390.38)): I think we need to ignore the government. You know, they're talking about how art isn't valid, it's bullshit, I mean, it's just absolutely bullshit. Because of COVID we need art even more.

So if People are saying no to arts. You know, we're gonna lose so many industry people from the industry, we're going to lose so many actors. I don't want the quality of our art to suffer,

But at The same time, I realized that Obviously not everyone will be able to afford to sustain in the industry, which is why we need a better support system, particularly for working class people, disabled, deaf, non-binary, or the different intersectionality’s, but really, you know, fuck the government.

DH ([24:04](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1444.24)): Earlier, you mentioned Disney- this is relevant. How did you learn to tell stories? Because I know Disney was a big influence on me. I was a Disney watching kid. Where did you learn about stories?

BW ([24:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1458.1)): Well, Disney, I I've watched Disney as well, but really I watched cartoons growing up, because at that time there was a real lack of subtitles and it was very rare that something had subtitles. So you had to watch something that was very visual. And other influences were *Sailor Moon*. Yes. Japanese, a Japanese cartoon. And I understood fuck all about what was going on, but just visually it was so amazing. And also other influences is there were two things, there was *The Matrix*, and really *The Matrix* influenced a lot of my writing, just that kind of dystopian theme, because they just, you know, would just like said, fuck you to authority. And also *Charlie's Angels.* Yeah, Because I've watched it recently, and some of the stuff in there was so awful and creepy and misogynistic, but at the same time growing up, I saw these three powerful women that could do anything they could fight, they could be really clever, they could do everything. And because my family were mostly made up of women, my mum and my grandma taught me to be strong because they were strong women and not to be scared to talk. And that's why I got in trouble a lot with authority at school, at drama school. You know, I challenged things and I'd get in trouble a lot because I wasn't scared to back off.

DH: I just love that you've referenced Sailor Moon.

BW: So I'm getting a *Sailor Moon* tattoo soon. Can't wait. Cause Sailor Moon at that time, it was in the nineties, There were a lot of people treating women really badly. And that's why when I see *Sailor Moon* *Charlie's Angels*, that is a massive influence on me. And I think also growing up, I realized that's why I'm queer!

DH ([26:44](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1604.49)): You're actually our first Scottish guest on this podcast. How does Scottishness show up in your work and does it at all?

BW ([26:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1614.36)): I'm not sure to be honest. But you, so you're just saying I'm the first Scottish person here? Part of that is funny because I worked with so many English people, I would say 80% of them, you know, work with national theatre of Scotland, Dundee Rep theatre and Citizens Theatre, because they have worked in Scotland, but I haven't worked with them. So, you know, I haven't worked with these big theatre companies, but talking about Scottishness about two or three of my plays have been influenced by my Scottishness, like the kind of Scottish mythology. I just love that. I love Scottish fairytales, you know, the, the actual stories, because, you know, Shakespeare's based some of his stories on Scottish Fairytales. So I just love talking about them, but I also love Scottish language. And also some people don't realize, but the way I sign is really Scottish, really Scottish, you know, just like people do not understand- there's many times. So for example, one time I went to the window and I said, Oh, I've made an appointment. The word is appointment at the Doctor. And everyone was really laughing. Cause I signed, I wanted an appointment with the doctor and they all thought I was saying, I wanted to fuck my doctor for two weeks because I needed an appointment in two weeks. But I don't think people realize, you know, same with like English and Scottish. You know, we, we have these variances, you know, it's, it's that same sort of crossover thing. And if I'm honest, I don't really think about Scottishness in my work that often, but the language, the dialect, you know, that that's, that's a part of it. But sometimes that might be something I could think about more! I think it's because of, you know, I'm so like disassociated with Scotland at the moment, because I've been in England for so long.

DH ([29:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1758.41)): Yeah. Same. I've been in London for seven years and you sort of get more Scottish and less Scottish at the same time?

BW: Yeah. It's like, when I'm in, when I'm mingling, then I come back to Scotland, but yes, I'm in Scotland. And then when I'm in Scotland, everyone's like, Oh, you're a Scottish accent.

DH: I love the idea of a project about Scottish dialect of BSL. That's so exciting,

BW: You know, with *Squeezy Yogurt*, for example, that I did, I found it difficult, um, you know, to match the person signing to what I’d written because, you know, just because, you know, half of the issue, it's not really an issue, but the challenge rather than the issue, half the challenge is when somebody signing, um, you know, I'm like, okay, that's right. That's how you would sign, but that's not how I've written it in the script. So how can I change, you know, how it's written in the script, which is quite Scots, to match, that person's way of signing, to match the way that they would use their dialect for signing. So, yeah, that was a challenge.

DH ([30:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1817.46)): Yeah. I think, um, something for people who are listening that don't use sign, that's interesting to know, is that active interpretation as layered?

BW ([30:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1828.44)): I have so many, um, issues when I first started with the RSC, because I was working with new interpreters that I'd never worked with before. And it took me about, I think one week before we got used to each other, uh, you know, quite a lot of words in English, look, you know, like cunt for example, you know, I thought I was like saying, cunt, cunt, cunt, and they were just like, what? And then it was like, no, okay. That's not. So I think, you know, it can be quite a funny thing at times when people don't get it.

DH ([31:03](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1863.03)): Yeah. I love that. I feel like I've seen so much of your work over lockdown. I've seen you like write, I've seen you produce a filmed piece, I've seen you play Hamlet at one point. So to my eyes, you've been one of the busiest artists and I’d just love to know what's ahead. And particularly, what is your hopes for theatre in the future?

BW ([31:24](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1884.54)): I'm lucky because a lot of work that I've had has been through lockdown, but my wife Emma said, you know, it's not luck, you know, before lockdown, you networked with a lot of people, as many people as possible. Um, you know, people think, you know, if you've got an agent, you can just sit back and rely on them to do the work for you, but it's not true. You have to be very active. Um, and you know, unfortunately a lot of that kind of networky stuff is unpaid, but you know, it's about, I think hoping for, um, to be on the main stage in Scotland, you know, cause I've done, I've done that and I want to be on the main stage. That would be my hopes for the future, but I've got two exciting projects coming up next year. I can't really talk about them, but it's kind of like watch this space. I'm writing a play as well. Um, and I'm really excited about that.

Um, what do I hope for the future? I just want to see more diversity in theatre, simple. That's the number one thing, more diversity in theatre and you know, talking about theatre, you know, I'm not talking about just, um, you know, one kind of diversity I'm talking about disabled people, non binary people, trans people, people of colour. And I know, um, that those people are out there, but it's, you know, they're often forgotten about, you know, it's not, you know, a deaf nonbinary trans person, you know, I want to make sure that, you know, for example, *Squeezy Yogurt* was going to be formed by a nonbinary person. I want to see more of that. And what I would love to see happening in the real world is making sure that, um, we have a universal income. That is my big hope and dream for the future, a universal income. So artists can produce their art and we can carry on doing that work and we can carry on having space and energy to campaign if we had a universal income.

DH ([33:14](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1994.68)): Yeah, I so agree. I feel like the pandemic has thrown open what the relationship of art and money and freelancers, especially, within that. And we can't go back, we have to make it better and UBI is the way isn't it.

BW ([33:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2007.94)): And also I think like for example, I am, I am lucky that I have worked in the last two years that, um, something that did, um, where the government, um, it's the SESS grant, I think it was called that was it. Um, it was a grant. So I applied to that, which meant that because I'd worked in the last two years, I was able to get a grant, but my wife, Emma, didn't qualify for that grant because she's an opera singer and she had no support during this pandemic from the government. So I think people who, um, couldn't, who can't get work at the moment and have no access to any funds or support are really stuck. And it doesn't make any sense that people that didn't have any work or any support before, still also are not qualified to receive support. It should be the other way around. And like that links into your earlier question as well. That, you know how, how the coronavirus has affected, that's how it's affected them.

DH ([34:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2059.3)): Thank you so much. What brilliant note to finish on, about restructuring all the economy of arts to make it better and wider and more diverse. I can't imagine a more exciting manifesto put out into the world, which is exactly what I wanted to speak to you. As Bea said, watch this space. They are such an exciting artist and they hold all the values that I couldn’t agree with more. And it has been truly a pleasure to speak to you today. So thank you so much.

BW ([34:44](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2084.2)): Yeah, same to you. It's been such a pleasure to be in, It's been really fun, cheers.

DH ([34:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/T0C7hnFaQUm9UprIeoiegfQWVwCqRDcmDZHopxY-baSMlJ0dXz_KFXWxxHbR__Vngsz0tIIQpQ0D4m47ACoaBoCxsdc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2088.13)): Thank you for listening to my conversation with Bea Webster, and big thanks to the interpreters, Sophie Ellen and Claire Edwards too. You can find *Squeezy Yoghurt* and other works by Bea on YouTube as well as in the recently published *Positive Stories for Negative Times*, please tune in to our next episode where I speak to poet and theatre maker, Harry Josephine Giles about co-operative theatre companies, the pandemic, and when the police visit due to how explosive your art is.

The music for this podcast was composed by Patricia Panther with sound design by Richard Bell, and I've been your host. Debbie Hannan, please do check out traverse.co.uk to see our upcoming work in Trav Three, our online venue. The Traverse is funded by creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh council with additional support from the Scottish government and performing arts venue relief fund. Traverse Theatre Scotland limited is a registered charity, Number SC 002368.