

Sam Morreale // Making The Revolution Irresistible Transcript

Sam Morreale:

I think our inability to fail is creating a stagnancy in the field in many ways. I was sold New York City that was much riskier and much wilder than I am currently experiencing.

Nicky Maggio:

Yep.

Sam Morreale:

And it's so strange to have a nostalgia for a thing you've never experienced, but I do really think very critically about what is it that I can do to help us find that bravery again.

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Nicky Maggio:

Welcome to the second season of What's Off?, the podcast where A.R.T./New York shines the spotlight on Off-Broadway Innovation. Each episode features interviews with trailblazing artists, administrators, service providers, and other theater workers in the Off and Off-Off-Broadway community. I'm your host, Nicky Maggio. My co-host Ashley J. Hicks is under the weather and, unfortunately, won't be joining me today in the studio. We hope you're resting, Ashley, and can't wait to have you back for our second episode.

The clip at the top of the episode is from our first guest for season two, Sam Morreale. Sam is currently the associate producer at Soho Rep. With facilitation at the core of their practice, they've had a blossoming career as a creative producer working with many companies, including Baltimore Center Stage, Long Wharf Theater, New York Stage and Film/Powerhouse and Theater Communication Groups to name a few. In addition, Sam has

developed a portfolio of consulting work and strategic planning, institutional alignment, and cultural change within arts organizations.

They nurture their artistic practice and rehearsal rooms as a dramaturg director and cultural shaper, constantly seeking to break down dissonance between artists and institutions. I had the honor to interview Sam and to hear more about how they are truly an innovator as a theater administrator, practitioner, facilitator, and, and, and. So let's tune in and shine the spotlight on Sam Morreale. And listeners, don't forget to rate and review What's Off? wherever you get your podcasts. Enjoy.

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Nicky Maggio
Hi, Sam.

Sam Morreale:
Hi.

Nicky Maggio:
Thank you so much for being here.

Sam Morreale:
Of course.

Nicky Maggio:
I am so honored to have you here. I would love for you to tell our listeners your full name, your pronouns, a brief visual description, and who are you.

Sam Morreale:
Yeah.

Nicky Maggio:
Not that people shouldn't know you already because hey, A.R.T./New York members, you should know Sam.

Sam Morreale:

That's very, very sweet. I'm so honored to be here. Thank you for asking me. My name is Sam Morreale. I use they/them pronouns. Just a quick description of self. I am a femme-identified body-having person in the world. I am Brown-skinned. I'm quite bald, currently wearing some hoops and this flowy dress that is also a nice brown color over a top and some pants, some boots.

Nicky Maggio:

Very envious of the dress and the nails.

Sam Morreale:

Thank you!

Nicky Maggio:

The nails are fabulous.

Sam Morreale:

I wanted to come for you all today. I wanted to arrive. I'm wearing some maroon press-ons.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

Some rings. It's great. If only you could see me.

Nicky Maggio:

If only. That's the tease of these podcasts, right. It's like you hear someone's voice, and you're like, "Oh, I wonder. I have to imagine." And then you're like, "Ugh, yes, [inaudible 00:03:07] voice.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah, please let me know if, after you look me up, I look like how you thought I would. I'd love to know.

Nicky Maggio:

So Sam, how do you identify as a theater artist, a theater practitioner, an administrator in the roles in the field that you hold?

Sam Morreale:

Yeah, I do far too many things, certainly like many of us do. So, unsurprisingly, I identify as a multi-hyphenate.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

I would say that the core of my practice itself is facilitation and the ways that I show up in the field are through facilitated practices. So full-time, I'm the associate producer at Soho Rep, which is such a joy. I love being in a new workspace. I love being in a company that really aligns with my values.

It's been incredible to be with them for the last two-ish years. I also independently produce. I'm a director. I'm a dramaturg. I'm a cultural shifter I think. When I imagine how I take up space and the spaces I inhabit, I'm often using my facilitation tools to shift culture to show up for people to make more humane spaces in each of the fractal processes I'm involved in.

Nicky Maggio:

I love that.

Sam Morreale:

Thanks.

Nicky Maggio:

And so what spaces, rooms do you find yourself in?

Sam Morreale:

All sorts. I'm generally working in, as I said, new work so often, not the classics. Love them. If that's for you, God bless. I just enjoy working with some living folks, some living, breathing breath behind them, some life. That's always good. I find myself in organizing rooms. I'm really dedicated to trying my best to really meet the contradictions of our field, right?

Nicky Maggio:

Yeah.

Sam Morreale:

I do theater for social change, which definitely I feel like can have a very performative lens to it, but when I say that, I mean it. I'm trying to show up in spaces that align with my hopes for liberation and figure out the multitude of ways that I need to be approaching my hopes for change because it's definitely not just in theater.

So I'm showing up as an organizer. I show up as a strategist for organizations and just showing up for my friends. Again, just thinking fractally about change and what change means to me and where it needs to show up in my life. Just staying dedicated to that.

Nicky Maggio:

Showing up as your entire self.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah, that's always the dream, right.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

I want to be as fully me as possible, and be welcomed in those spaces and welcome the same from others as long as it's not harmful.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes, and that can be challenging

Sam Morreale:

Certainly.

Nicky Maggio:

Especially when you're entering a room that maybe you didn't create right away, you're coming into a room that's already created, and you're contributing to that.

Sam Morreale:

Absolutely, yes. That's so real. It's difficult. Power is difficult.

Nicky Maggio:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Morreale:

It's difficult to navigate and move through and utilize, but I think that part of for me, showing up as my fullest self is to always be taking stock of my own agency in a room and doing my best to support others and myself with that agency. We're taught the horrible habit of letting go of our own power, letting go of our own agency because of the positions that we hold, because of our social positionality, and I love to defy that when I can. It's a joy.

Nicky Maggio:

We both went to institutions where you could say part of it was conservatory, part of it was free thinking. Some of it was general studies, but I remember just going to rooms being like, "Leave it at the door. Leave all your shit and whatever you're coming with, and then just be here." And I understand the practice of that, but in order for Nicky to engage as an artist, as a producer, as a supporter, as an ally, as a whatever, I have to bring me in.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah, totally. Contradictions are on the brain. For some people it is very much like, "I have to leave it all there." But I'm a person I would prefer that we name it, make it real for a moment, honor it, respect it, respect-

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

... those needs, and hopefully, with them named, we can find ourselves more present. I hate to ignore the reality of what we're experiencing under any given circumstance. It feels disingenuous.

Nicky Maggio:

So let's talk about your work entering these rooms as a consultant, specifically with a festival like Breaking the Binary. How does your experience as a dramaturg, as a culture coordinator, as however you identify as a cultural shifter, influence your work with these organizations?

Sam Morreale:

What I mean when I say that facilitation is the core of my practice, no matter what these labels are, the thing that I ground myself in is a desire to be really conscious and cognizant of the socio-political reality that we might be facing under any given circumstance. And I think that one of my superpowers is to help name those realities, name the patterns that we're seeing in rooms so that we might be better in relationship with them honestly. Instead of ignoring how a system of power might be showing up in the room, own it and use that to our advantage, right.

Even if we're falling on what might be considered the wrong side of power, I would rather we deal with that. Let's confront it. If we don't think, for instance, this room is as diverse as it could be, we might not be able to do

anything about that now, but by owning and acknowledging it, by accepting it, perhaps there is an opportunity for change on the other side. So yeah, I think that when I tie that all together with my consulting work and what George has asked me to do, for instance, with Breaking the Binary, it is just about helping people understand the contradictions that exist within freedom itself. George, when they were... I just have to say-

Nicky Maggio:
Shout out.

Sam Morreale:
... I love George Strus. Shout out to George Strus. Shout out to what they've created with Breaking the Binary. It is just been so incredible to see that festival rise over the last two years. I know their submission processes open right now, at least in this moment that we're recording.

Nicky Maggio:
Yes. Which is March of 2024.

Sam Morreale:
Yeah. Sorry if you're hearing this after, but hopefully, you'll be excited to see the lineup that-

Nicky Maggio:
Yes.

Sam Morreale:
... George is curating [inaudible 00:08:57]-

Nicky Maggio:
That's usually in the fall, right?

Sam Morreale:
Yeah, it is. But the work that I do there... When George asked me in, and we were thinking about how collaboration between the two of us could

exist, it was about acknowledging the thing that happens when you flatten power through the sharing of a singular identity. So my role as a cultural consultant, for instance, with Breaking the Binary, was to talk to these trans non-binary Two-Spirit+ folks who also hold many other areas of social reality, right.

They're also racialized. They are still gendered differently. We are gender-expansive people, right. They still are folks who would specifically identify as genderqueer versus trans versus non-binary, right. Not everybody considers themselves just under an umbrella. They also want to be holding the specificity of that identity.

Nicky Maggio:

It's way more nuanced in there.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah, exactly. And again, showing up for people's fullness means accepting those nuances. I think it also means accepting what we might just not be looking at ourselves, which I feel like I can't give a great example in this moment because I don't want to do any sort of harm, but hopefully, folks can understand what I mean. So yes, my role in that specific community has been just acknowledging we might all be gender-expansive folks here, but that probably means that let's say, you are also white and gender-expansive. Your whiteness might be showing up more in this room than you've seen it in the past because you might have been the marginalized person in other spaces. But now we're in a space where your identity might have shifted.

Your power dynamic in the room might have shifted, but my role was to be a holder and a safe space for people to come and be in thinking partnership about how they're holding space and making room for other folks through process. Even something I think that's really incredible that the festival does, for instance, it casts all gender-expansive folks regardless of how the role is written on page. So if somebody, for instance, wrote a show that is intentionally for a cis character, part of George's ethos is that non-cis people should be able to still play those roles, which I agree with.

And I also imagine that there's potential for damage when a role is written specifically for a cis person and a trans human steps into that, right.

If they are consenting to that, which they have to do through this process, through the casting process, right, incredible for them. We don't always know what the experience of power is going to feel like. One of the things that I hope to be doing in all areas of work that I hold is to show up for people in that process to give us the space as humans just to experience this new thing, maybe fail at it, maybe experience harm, experience discomfort. I think discomfort is so necessary for liberation actually. And so the hope is that, through that discomfort, you might actually still have some safety. You might actually feel braver to continue trying this new thing and experimenting in this new direction that helps us, hopefully, again, at the end of the day, better understand one another and create bridges in our humanity.

Nicky Maggio:

You could literally speak to me all the time, Sam. I just want to highlight, discomfort is necessary for our liberation.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah.

Nicky Maggio:

I think when I hear about your work with this festival in particular, I'm like, "This is the perfect person for this" because you have the experience of being able to hold that space for folks to process that, but you also have such a deep understanding and experience when it comes to dramaturgy and producing narrative.

So I would love to hear a lot of the conversation we're having around showing up for folks to allow them to be all the nuances of their whole selves, of their identity, how that is affected within art making, like the actual narratives of whether it's through this festival or through other places that you've been at.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah, totally. I mean, first of all, I just have to say thank you for all these affirmations. I feel so flattered.

Nicky Maggio:

It's a love fest here at A.R.T/New York.

Sam Morreale:

My ego is inflating in this room as we speak. But I do also want to say, while I appreciate the flattery, I also am a person, and I think something that feels just important for me to say is I'm not exceptional, right. I don't want to be exceptional. I feel like I've often fallen into the trap of being exceptionalized, and I am just as much learning this as I am doing this.

I think that being in that kind of learning, doing practice is so important. And for as righteous as I sometimes do believe that I am and for the work that I'm doing as I am trying to achieve justice and make justice real, I'm also not trying to just be stubborn in that or set in that. Going back to my collaboration with George, I learned so much from them every time we speak and work to create space together, and the outlets I have are also just spaces of practice and I fail and I learn from that.

Nicky Maggio:

Failure is key. I think that's something that I feel we have been trained to be like, "No, failure is bad. Be afraid of it. Run away. No, embrace when you make a mistake and hold yourself accountable so that you can actively change towards something else."

Sam Morreale:

Totally. I think our inability to fail is creating a stagnancy in the field. In many ways, I was sold a New York City that was much riskier and much wilder than I am currently experiencing.

Nicky Maggio:

Yep.

Sam Morreale:

And it's so strange to have a nostalgia for a thing you've never experienced, but I do really think very critically about what is it that I can do to help us find that bravery again. So going back to your question about how I'm showing up in these other spaces, right, everything that I do has this socio-political lens. And when I think about dramaturgy and artistic development and how I help to hold space with artists as their excavating their own art, first and foremost, I'm not trying to colonize that process. I think that no matter what position I'm in unless I am the generative artist, I am not trying to be a person who is dictating any part of process or the room.

I'm asking questions about needs and how needs can be met. I'm asking about what your version of success is, what your goals here are so that I'm working from that lens. But when I think about my own active participation, I'm certainly always being critical about how something is going to be understood from the sociopolitical lens, which is honestly, unfortunately, to always put it up against the norm somehow. It's like when we think about our general audiences, how are they going to experience the story? What is it that they're actually going to walk away with?

Nicky Maggio:

What's going to haunt them?

Sam Morreale:

What's going to haunt them? What are they going to keep thinking about? What might feel harmful? There are reasons, for instance, to depict violence or harm on stage certainly. But I am a person who wants to do that with deep intention, and I'd like to surround myself by people who also want the same. And as you start adding other lenses of power, you start adding race into this conversation, gender, ability, things become more and more complex, just worth interrogation.

And so my hope is to always with respect for what the art is trying to do with an understanding of what the lead artists are trying to do, to also sit in my own bravery of naming, "This is something that I'm experiencing from this work. Is that what you'd like? Is that actually the direction that you go? Do you disagree with me?" Because again, I think that part of excavating that helps us all be better people with one another, and I think that we have to be willing to do that kind of excavation and interrogation otherwise, we're just telling the same stories. We're not actually doing what I think art should do, which is drive us toward revolution.

"The role of the artist is to make revolution irresistible." That's Toni Cade Bambara who said that, and I do really wholeheartedly believe it. I think something that keeps me going when I wake up in this miserable, miserable world every day, the thing that makes me decide that yes, theater is what I want to do, is that I'm working in spaces that are working to reconcile the contradiction between the stories we tell and the freedom that they explore with the reality of confinement that we're faced every day through systems and policy and intentional use of power, right.

And if your space is not actually safe to do the work that you are claiming to do, the question is, how are you going to do that? What are you going to change so that your institution or whatever, your collective, your group, your collaborations, right, or safe spaces for people to hopefully show up in the fullness of their humanity?

Nicky Maggio:

This is why you and folks like you and the roles that you fill are so important to the progression of theater because we need people to hold us accountable. And I know when you and I were talking about this episode and getting you here, we brought up the word accountability partner. I would love to lean in on that a little bit. What do you imagine are responsibilities for these institutions hold space to educate, to provide care, the resources? How do we hold these folks accountable?

Sam Morreale:

I feel like I'm going to put my professor hat on for a second. I think the first thing we have to do is to find accountability. What does accountability look like? Certainly, it needs to be defined community to community, but I think that it is literally to hold to a standard, an agreed standard. We said we want to do something. Are we doing that? That is an accountability partner as somebody who's looking at those measures of success, measures of change, measures of whatever they might be, and clocking when we are out of alignment in hopes that a change, of course, is possible and wanted and desired, right. I think that consent is key here. Consent and agency feels so key to me.

I think that one of the most insidious things we do to one another is say that we want to do one thing and then do the other. I do not need to be in a space where my values, my questions, my queries are not appreciated and loved on and accepted in their fullness, right. If it is the case that we are not moving in the same direction, I could be doing my work elsewhere. I could be spending my energy in community that actually cares for [inaudible 00:19:10], and I would like to do the same for others. I would like to make sure that they know that when I say, "This is what I'm aiming toward," they know I want to be held accountable to that standard and be in thought partnership with me about how we can achieve that goal, right.

I think that it is the role of institutions to have a certain standard of care across the board to better their practices. If their hope is to be a welcoming space where people feel like they belong, where people feel like they can be their whole selves, there are things you must be doing in order to accomplish that, right. If I walk into a space that I'm consistently microaggressed in, I certainly do not feel welcome, especially will not feel welcome if nobody is holding that space to account for those microaggressions, right. What are we doing about it? And I don't want to perpetuate a punitive system, and I don't think accountability means punishment. I think that it means a number of things.

It means having the bravery just to talk it out with somebody and see if change is possible on the other side. Giving people an ability to learn, grow, and change, and practice a new thing. That is all accountability to me. So

that means that when I'm asking folks to show up here, when I'm asking workers to show up in this space, we do this at Soho Rep. We share this statement of values at the beginning of our process that is naming to each worker in the room how we hope to hold space with one another and what we think that it takes to show up in the fullness of our humanity. And we ask people to agree to that. And if they can't, we would have a conversation. It's a living document. We welcome criticism. We are here to edit it.

We're here to hear the responses that people have. But I think that sharing that helps us then work with our artistic community toward the endeavor of holding one another's humanity, right. When somebody steps out of line, when somebody harms another person when they're not showing up for their work, and that's damaging the humanity of another person, we're able to say, "Hey, I know you're really busy, and this moment might feel really overwhelming. You harmed somebody this way, and we need to course correct that. Or you are not showing up for the work in this way, with some clear example, and this is the course of action that we need to take in order to change that."

That is what institutional accountability really looks like to me. And I think it's the same way, vice versa, right. I think that artists should hopefully feel comfortable going to institution that they trust people, right. Institutions are made of people who are all workers and collaborators on this project. And so if there is something that's happening that you're like, "This is harming me," I think it is the same to go to those folks and say, "This process is not working." That, to me, is the beginning of an accountability process and what accountability can look like.

Nicky Maggio:

And it's so intertwined with transparency, right. Like the artists who are working in these institutions and institutions that are hiring these workers and artists being transparent of what was successful, what was working, and where were those moments of the oops, ouch. And we needed to course correct or find a solution-

Sam Morreale:

Exactly.

Nicky Maggio:

... and grow from that.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah. And I think that living in a kind of culture of accountability can allow us also because I think that there's a lot of fear. Fear is just something that keeps us from change and keeps us from expanding. The fear of punishment keeps us from actually naming our needs. Why do any of us deserve to continually experience harm in a space that we need to be in for our livelihoods, for instance, right. That's just the cards we've been dealt.

We all have to make money to survive, and this is the thing that we've chosen. So can we all make it feel all right? At least at the bare minimum, can we make it feel all right for us all to work here? And if there's something that we collectively are experiencing that is not allowing for that, why not address it, right. That's just the ethos that I'm coming from and the space that I hope everybody feels like they can have. So again, they're leaning into their own agency.

Nicky Maggio:

And I love that you used the word partnership because, to ground it a little more specifically, you are being hired as a consultant, as a dramaturg, sometimes as a freelance outside your work from Soho Rep to come in and be an outside eye to build upon that community.

Sam Morreale:

I'm glad you noted the difference between those capacities as well because I think it's an ongoing question for me as I continue to develop both my artistic practice and my leadership is also understanding my own perceived power in any given space that I'm in, right. The perceived power I have as a freelance artist is very different than the perceived power I have as the associate producer of Soho Rep. It has been certainly tough at times

experience to realize how, just because of the role that I have inside of an institution, people view me as an individual and I can't fault them for it.

There is positional authority that I have here. It might not be the same thing that they are imagining that I have, but I'm not going to disregard the fact that I have a specific kind of power. And so part of this, my thoughts about accountability partnership, even are about the transparency that can help break down those walls, right. I think that so much of what we consider the artist-institution divide has to do with the fact that we don't see institutions as collectives of individuals who have their own varied opinions. We see them as representatives of the institution.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

And there's a reason for that. And in a lot of ways, I do represent Soho Rep, and I want to do that with care right. And to be flat in that way it's also really disregarding of my own humanity and dehumanizing of my colleagues within that institution. We are not all the same.

We share experiences, but we're not all the same. We're not a monolith. Whether it's within the institution or beyond it, I always try to start my relationships by naming as much as possible where we're on the same page and where we might not be so that we can just keep that in mind as we're navigating together.

Nicky Maggio:

I would love to talk about your past work with TCG. In preparing for this interview, I'm going to shout out the podcast you're on, which was Mix It Up with Joey Reyes.

Sam Morreale:

Yes.

Nicky Maggio:

And the episode was called Empowering the Inheritors with Sam Morreale. I love that title. And I was listening to it, and I knew of this a little bit, but it made me go further about your work with TCG and what we call the Inheritors Project. So I'd love to hear a little bit about that specific project during your tenure there and what it means to be an inheritor.

Sam Morreale:

I love this question. Thank you for asking it. Thank you for doing research. Shout out to Joey and the Mix It Up podcast. You should absolutely go and listen to it along with the rest of this amazing season. The Mix It Up podcast is dedicated to helping trans storytellers tell their story in the theater specifically, and Joey is such an incredible force. It's lovely to watch them take on this project as their own creative outlet, and I love being on the episode. I'm glad you're bringing up generations.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

Age, in general, I think it's something we don't always confront super candidly, and it's difficult to do without sounding just ageist. So I want to recognize all of that. I have the utmost respect for my elders. I'm on the young side of millennial, the old side of Gen Z. As I was entering the field, and still now, there are all these conversations about where are the young folks in the field. Where are they in our audiences? Where are they in our administration? What is going on? Look in front of you.

Nicky Maggio:

Yeah.

Sam Morreale:

You're not programming for young folks. You're not programming with young folks. You're not empowering young folks to be decision-makers and leaders. So why would they be showing up here, right? And I'm speaking so broadly. I do not mean to flatten the people who have done this work,

who have helped to pave the way for early career theater makers to enter the field. I think that it is valuable to help folks my age now understand all of the fullness of what we're up against. I have seen many leadership transitions. I'm going through a leadership transition right now at-

Nicky Maggio:

That's right. That's right.

Sam Morreale:

... the organization that I'm working at. Something that I'm fearful of is ending up in those positions without any experience on the job, right. We aren't really training one another. In beyond the grad school route, right, people are not actually being trained to do these jobs. I had joined TCG and moved to New York in February of 2020, and then the pandemic happened, as we know, and I was like, "Oh my God, my life has upended." And thankfully, TCG kept me on in the capacity. I was the conference coordinator for that summer conference, which after much deliberation, they decided to pivot virtually.

Nicky Maggio:

That's right.

Sam Morreale:

And just as I was having conversations with so many of our field leaders, I was just recognizing that beyond this, especially right now during a pandemic, I have no other work. Part of that is because of the circumstances of the pandemic certainly, but the reality actually was that even before the pandemic, there were no jobs. There were no jobs, and there was nobody being like, "Sam, we're going to help you. We're going to be your life raft."

Nicky Maggio:

Yeah.

Sam Morreale:

And that was what I needed, and I was being so vocal about that. I was like, "Just so you know, I don't have work on the other side of this, so if you want me, if you value my theater leadership, you're going to have to invest in me, and you're going to have to do it now." And I just think about all of the me's who are no longer working in theater because there were no opportunities to do so. I understand so many of the circumstances that we're faced with, but I'm like, "Baby, rework your budget. What are you doing? Take a little less pet. What does that look like? What are the real circumstances that we want to be faced with?"

I just wish that we lived in a reality where we were that willing to do things. We're really just seeing the impact of our choices, the impact of our values, and that is something that we have agency in, so let's change it. That's just what I believe, and I know that people in my generation really believe that and want that change. The moment that I realize that none of these institutions that I'm a part of are actually on the same journey as me, I'm going to leave. Let me go find the direct action space that I need.

I certainly want to be an abundance of spaces that are accepting of me and the fullness of my humanity and the things that I want to practice, but I don't need to waste my time and my energy. The world is dying. We're watching a genocide. We're watching several genocides occur right now. The climate, a disaster, right. Houselessness, through the roof. Food depravity, through the roof. I don't do direct action work because I believe that in order to support that work, we need to be changing culture, and I believe that theater can do that.

Nicky Maggio:

When I think of inheritors, I'm like, we are the younger generation that's inheriting all these institutions, the work, whatever that was given to us, the good, the bad, the grays, everything in between.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah.

Nicky Maggio:

We need to support those people if you want them to inherit, right?

Sam Morreale:

Absolutely.

Nicky Maggio:

But we also need the power for the inheritors to be like, "No, I won't take this on."

Sam Morreale:

Yes, I agree. And I think that that's just the thing that we're really not paying attention to. "I'm here in the room with you. Stop talking around me and ask me the question." If you don't know how to treat Black folks, ask Black folks. If you don't know how to create a safe room for gender-expansive people, ask gender-expansive people. Certainly, there's an emotional labor that goes into that, and that should be respected. But if I consent to tell you my needs, why not? It just doesn't make... These are the things that do not compute in my brain.

So it's been really incredible to dedicate space and time to the Inheritors, and I'm grateful for TCG for helping me become that person and then investing in some programming that was specific to folks under 30. Unfortunately, I haven't seen much come from that other than certainly coalition building with a lot of peer colleagues in the field, but I don't think that TCG is continuing that practice. If anybody out there, anybody listening, I would love a clear, dedicated, frequent intergenerational space where we can actually organize ourselves-

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

... towards action. Yeah, let's make it happen.

Nicky Maggio:

And something I want to stress from that is I want us as a community to be actively witnessing what is actually happening out there. And what I mean by that is George and Breaking the Binary, they are the inheritors doing that work that you're talking about, having this conversation, holding these spaces, holding us accountable.

They're inheriting and letting go and releasing what they don't want, right. And I think we as institutions, whether you're mid, small, large, how long you've been around 50, 60, whatever years, open your eyes and actively witness and observe what people are doing.

Sam Morreale:

Yeah, we need it.

Nicky Maggio:

We need it. Sam, Sam, Sam, what keeps you up at night?

Sam Morreale:

Oh, no. Back pain.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes, yes, yes.

Sam Morreale:

Certainly, back pain. I don't know. I'm a heavy sleeper. I don't care. I'm going to bed. The answer is I don't think anything keeps me up. I am-

Nicky Maggio:

You come on, you have your beautiful, beautiful conversation, and then you're just like, "I'm going to sleep."

Sam Morreale:

Yeah. No, I'm going to bed.

Nicky Maggio:

That's so funny. So then I'll ask you a very... the opposite, I guess, question, which is what are you looking forward to in terms of your work in Soho Rep or your work as a freelance consultant and all the and, and, ands that you are? But also, outside of yourself, what are you looking forward to in 2024, 2025 in this world?

Sam Morreale:

Yeah. I'm looking forward to hopefully renewed dedication for revolution and freedom for people, and I really mean that. I need to keep looking forward to that. I'm waiting for people to really wake up to what's in front of us, and again, remaining as vocal as I am in hopes that more people will get on board and see that change of some kind has to occur. I do what I do in theater for the millimeter of cultural change that it has, but if when action is asked of us, we are unwilling to take it, are we actually doing what we have set out to do, right?

I continue to hope for a world where people are moved toward action. In my own life at a more personal scale and not so large and systemic, I'm really looking forward to being an artist as we more traditionally assume it. I think of my role as a producer, as an artistic one. Certainly, it is a craft to be honed that I'm having such a nourishing time doing at Soho Rep. Shout out to all of my colleagues who-

Nicky Maggio:

Yes.

Sam Morreale:

... helped me show up in that space and all the artists who I get to be in collaboration with. It's a joy to hold your work and learn from it and learn from process. I'm also looking forward to being more of a capital a artist myself and getting back in the room as a dramaturg and director. Just making waves and resting, continuing to find what rest looks like and what hobbies look like outside of theater.

Nicky Maggio:

Yes. I just love the duality of making waves and resting. I think that's just a gorgeous like.

Sam Morreale:

I know you have to ebb and flow, right.

Nicky Maggio:

Ebb and flow.

Sam Morreale:

That's what we do.

Nicky Maggio:

Ugh, Sam, this has been a joy and a privilege and an honor of mine to be in conversation with you today.

Sam Morreale:

Well, thank you.

Nicky Maggio:

Thank you so much-

Sam Morreale:

Thank you for inviting me.

Nicky Maggio:

Thank you so much for being here.

Sam Morreale:

It's been a joy for me.

Nicky Maggio:

Ugh, we love you so much.

Sam Morreale:
I adore you.

Nicky Maggio:
And thank you all so much for listening. We'll see you next time.

//MUSIC//

Nicky Maggio:
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