

**Interviewee Name:** Julie Moralee

**Interviewer Name:** Jung Yoon

**Date of Interview:** Friday 19 August 2022

**Location:** Restless Dance Theatre studio

**Length of Interview:** 12:37 mins

## **Transcript**

**Jung:** So first question can you tell me about yourself

**Julie Morlee:** Yes. I'm Julie Moralee. I've worked in the arts fir my entire career has been-in actually the entertainment industry. I've been in the arts for the last 25 years. Yeah, which has been a great career. I predominantly ~~have~~ worked with the festival centre so over a 14 year period with the festival centre. So I was exposed to all the genres of art forms and worked across multiple projects at once.

**Jung:** Ah... that's a vert long time. You have a long career. So how did you get involved in disability art?

**Julie Moralee:** It was by accident. I knew of Restless Dance Theatre through working with the festival centre. I was their marketer on shows when they presented at the festival centre and so when the position - I had actually stepped out of the arts for two years and started my own business, and when the position came up with Restless, I decided to come back into the arts and because I knew and loved the company.

**Jung:** So what makes you come back in?

**Julie Moralee:** So I did think about this question and it's really interesting because watching Restless performances I don't see disability and, and it's when you meet the dancers, and you talk with their families and you learn of the challenges that the dancers have had and you then, ah for me, I then realized how important it is for them to be on stage, because when they're on stage, you - I don't see disability at all and it's empowering them to be and to have careers in the arts.

**Jung:** So that's a really interesting point of, pointed out you don't see disability but as you're aware of it, sometimes there are some kind of conflict views that some people who want to see disability as identity, but at the same time it's not seeing disability. Can you kind of see your view means by you not seeing disability? -what do you mean by not seeing disability?

**Julie Moralee:** Not seeing. I just see people's ability. So people's ability to be on stage, to act, to dance and I don't see them having a disability. Is that answer that?

**Jung:** As a barrier,

**Julie:** as a challenge? Yes, they have their challenges in their own life, but when they're performing, I don't see that as a person from the, as the viewer.

**Jung:** That's an interesting perspective. So so far how long have you been at Restless?

**Julie Moralee:** I've been with Restless for three years.

**Jung:** So how was your experience like?

**Julie Moralee:** My experience with Restless has been amazing. I've worked part time for two years and this is my first year as the CEO working full time.

**Jung:** Wow, you are the new CEO.

**Julie:** I'm the new CEO.

**Jung:** I'm sorry I didn't realise.

**Julie:** No that's fine

**Jung:** I think Nick was, Nick was...

**Julie:** Nick was, yes, was the company manager..

**Jung:** and then he stepped down as he retired. He's coming back here

**Julie:** Yeah. He is coming in which is great.

**Jung:** So you are the new CEO now

**Julie Moralee:** Yes, and I have been inspired because I've watched the dancers grow and progress as artists, and watching them soar is inspiration for me every day to continue to make sure the governance of the organisation is in top shape and the funding, that we are well funded to continue, so that they are - our dancers are then inspiring the next generation of arts makers and arts performers.

**Jung:** I think you already answered a question before of which is what motivates you. Yeah. What motivates? dancers.

**Julie:** Yes. To work in the disability space. So yeah it was dancers.

**Julie Moralee:** It's the dancers and I have obviously - now that I am CEO, I've had a lot more to do within the disability sector and um and that's a, that's a new place for me to be. As I'm working my way through the different government bodies, there's always this thing that we talk about that's really interesting when you tell people that you work for Restless dance theatre, and you work with people with and without disability. We call it this moment where people go, 'Oooh...' when you say disability, and then when you tell them, that these dancers, are traveling overseas, they're performing with top choreographers. They're employed almost 52 weeks out of the year touring work, they're like, 'Oh, wow.' So it's like this expectation that their work is going to be a community work. It's not going to be of high calibre work. That inspires me to continue to keep working, to make sure that it is just the norm that people with disability can create work, that we as abled bodies can go and see anytime.

**Jung:** So you have a sort of a big plan?

**Julie Moralee:** Yes, there is a big plan

**Jung:** What's your next goal?

**Julie Moralee:** As the CEO of Restless? We are a defunded organisation currently. We lost our funding in 2019, Australia funding, Australia Council funding. So, our short-term goal, which is a two-year process, is to regain that funding and within that time as a CEO, I would like to see this organisation be able to have our dancers on full time annual contracts so that they're not contracted from show to show that they can be fully employed by the organization.

**Jung:** I'll be very interested about that. You probably don't know about me and my expertise in disability employment in the current industry. I'm doing my PhD in that area.

**Julie Moralee:** That's amazing. Yeah, right.

**Jung:** The next question is about what do you think the public will say the key milestone or major happening in the history of disability arts in Australia? It is a tricky question.

**Julie Moralee:** It is a big question because the public

**Jung:** Sort of the society, like a mainstream perception.

**Julie Moralee:** So, perception is that we call it the 'ah' moment. Sort of like the 'oh' 'oh'. I don't know how to articulate that in words... I believe that people perceive disability arts to be a nice thing for people with disability and especially we work with intellectual disability. It's like an art therapy practice or rather than it's a serious career for them. So that's my aspiration for Restless is to be seen as the place where people with disability can come and forge careers in the arts and to break down those perceptions that when you see people with disability performing, you're going to expect the best.

**Jung:** Have you seen any changes in, in past few years, or do you notice any changes in

**Julie:** with audience behaviour?

**Jung:** Yes

**Julie:** No not at this time. Other than they're, they're shocked at the quality of work they are seeing. That's the same and that is what we want to break down is that you don't need to be shocked. When you are paying for that ticket you are paying for a top arts experience.

**Julie Moralee:** That's why Restless is performing in festivals around the world and we're performing in 'Adelaide Festival', the 'Rising Festival'. Now we're going to the 'Coventry Festival' that is cementing our place as a high-quality art that we are performing. It's not because they're wanting to give people with disability a go, it's because the artwork is worthy of.

**Jung:** So maybe you'd have a slightly different perspective because everyone has different perspective on success depending on their roles. The question is how would you define the success in terms of disability arts space from your perspective?

**Julie Moralee:** From my perspective, how would I see the success...

**Jung:** when you do some projects how would you define the success?

**Julie:** there is multiple different areas that I would look at and I come from a marketing background and funding so my first thing goes to my success, is that they have a great audience and I am very passionate about that. That the work they are producing can pull in, I want, you know they should be able to have a 2000 audience to be seeing their work but then there's multiple successes and working with people with a disability does have its challenges as well. So, to see them on stage and performing is also the sign of success. I think they are the two key things is seeing them on stage performing at their best and that is a success and when they've got good audiences.

**Jung:** That's an excellent point as a CEO. The next questions can be hard. Do you think that disability art should be political?

**Julie Moralee:** Oh, I read this question and I was a bit stumped by it actually. Can you read it right through?

**Jung:** Very hard question... I also found myself answering this question is quite challenging too.

**Julie Moralee:** That one is hard. Yeah. I think Nick might answer that one for you differently because I got a different slant on it.

**Jung:** Yeah, yeah. Everyone has different perspectives even the timing of success and so last question. Is there anything else you wish to know about you or your predictions about disability on anything you want to add on?

**Julie Moralee:** What do I want to add onto that? Hopefully one day there won't be the word 'disability art' that we are just making great art. It doesn't matter who's making it and the stories that are being told through art is what we are there to experience. So that would be my take on it.

**Jung:** Great, thank you.

**Julie Moralee:** Thank you