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### [Episode 78: Poetry in Schools \(Part two\)](#)

Producer: David Turner – **DT**

Host: [Jacob Sam-La Rose](#) – **JSL**

Guests: [Miriam Nash](#) – **MN** & [Keith Jarrett](#) – **KJ**

Transcript edited by David Turner – 23/1/17

#### **Introduction:**

**DT:** Hello. This is the Lunar Poetry Podcast, I'm David Turner. Coming up now is part-two of the 'Poetry in Schools' discussion or conversation led by Jacob Sam-La Rose, and he is joined by Keith Jarrett and Miriam Nash.

We had a brief discussion actually after the conversation and all three of the guests and obviously myself, included, really do encourage any feedback. So if you want to contact any of us, if you have any questions or any tips yourselves or you want to keep the discussion going on we can do that on social media, on Facebook - [Lunar Poetry Podcasts](#), or Twitter - [@Silence-Tongue](#).

In the description for this part and the first part you'll find links to the guest's social media pages as well so you can get in contact directly with them. Especially if you have questions, I suppose, about getting into this sort of work yourself. If you have ideas for bringing poetry into schools, to young people or outside of schools as well.

I hope you enjoy part-two.

### **Conversation:**

**JSL:** We've spoken a lot about our experiences, we've had little stories start to flower, "Oh, I remember the time when..." In terms of, if we were challenging you to offer up any thoughts, any advice to an emerging poet-educator who wanted to do more work or who has perhaps run some workshops but is looking to 'skill-up'. Looking to figure out how to do better, how to succeed, how to develop their vision of success and what success means in a teaching experience.

What kinds of things would you put forward from your own experience that people should maybe bear in mind? What kinds of thoughts would you offer up as tools or tips of the trade?

**MN:** So I think, to come back to the notion of support, that we've talked about a lot. I think it's really important to ask yourself, where is my support coming from. And you know, I think we... It's easy when you're starting out, or at least for me I just thought, "okay what do I need to do, to be able to do this work?" To be able to be there to get there and be in that room and be able to handle it.

**MN:** But I, you know, I was thinking about external things. I need to meet this person, make this connection. I you know... But not about the support that's needed. And you know, we need to ask the organisations that we work with, the schools that we work with for support. And in order to be able to do that we need to have a sense of what that support is.

And so I think, you know, the way to get that starting out is to talk to other poets who have been doing it for longer. The others who are just starting out and even by having a small support group, you know, between poets who are working in different settings. Those things are really important.

**JSL:** So maybe starting something up for yourself if you're not aware of something that you can join? Just being able to say, "Hey guys we're doing... We want to do this kind of

work. Let's say we band together and share experiences?" I mean there is so much that's happening now in terms of spaces that are being set up for people to learn or... I mean there's the [Apples and Snakes'](#) masterclasses, for example. You know, there are things that are happening but beyond those to be able to kind of create some kind of community or community of practice for yourself?

**MN:** Yeah, absolutely and just to make sure that you have support... The support that you need wherever that comes from. Yeah it may take a while to fully understand what kind of support it is that you need or that each person needs. I'm really grateful to certain poets that I work with and in particular this year, [Jasmine Cooray](#) who... For reaching out and saying, "Okay I'm doing this work, you're doing this work, some other people are doing this work."

And we don't have supervision, we don't have regular supervision which is built into some other professions. And you know we need to do whatever we can to ensure that the organisations that the schools that we work with help us to get that, but we also need to take responsibility for it and give it to each other and ourselves.

So that's, yeah I think that's something really important. And the other thing I would say is, and again I guess it takes a little bit of experimentation but to try and figure out what kind of teaching work you actually want to do and what kind of work you are suited to doing. And that's something that I remember you challenging me on Jacob, from very early on. And it's great isn't it, as a learner you know years later you sort of have these moments where you think, "Oh this is really really what Jacob meant!"

And now, you know I think yes, it is great to go and experiment and I would encourage people to have the support that they need to be able to bring their work into different environments. And you know, don't feel like you always have to be the person leading it, go and be a shadow. Go and shadow different artists, expose yourself to different practices. Read books. But also you know, all the time be reflecting on, where does it actually work for you, where does it spark for you?

You know, for example I think for quite a long time I felt like I needed to be able to do the 'one-off' workshops, where you go and do the assembly in the school and then you work in different classrooms. I occasionally still do that work and it can be great fun but, you know, I had this mistaken idea that I sort of needed to prove to myself that I could go into almost any situation that.

**JSL:** That you're capable of it?

**MN:** Yeah and you know, actually I much prefer working on longer term programmes. I think I'm much better suited to working with a slightly smaller group of students over an extended period of time and it's very valuable to know that.

**JSL:** So there's this part of the teaching practice, in terms of the way that I conceive it anyway, which is you have to create space for your students to learn for themselves. And in Caribbean culture there is this phrase, "[if you can't hear you must feel](#)". And again the flip-

side of that can't hear must feel thing is you're going to learn. You're going to learn for yourself if you can't take it...

Again, actually what we're celebrating there is, it's not just about me telling you what it is that you should know. It's about you figuring out for yourself in a constructed space, right. And it's a joy to hear some of that thinking kind of land. Yeah.

But also that sense of actually really, genuinely getting that sense of. Well look, there's a lot teaching that needs to be done in this city, in this country, across the world. Not everyone needs to be teaching the same thing or in the same way and actually you're doing yourself much more of a service and you're doing your students much more of a service if you're figuring out who you are as a teacher. What it is that you can provide and yeah great challenge yourself but figure out where you're best placed and push that. Yeah, love that.

Any other tips that we want to pass on any other tools?

**KJ:** You've said the most in terms of, the most valuable fundamental stuff. I would just go on a practical level of just making sure each time you go into a workshop you know that you've covered the bases of... From as far as what you've been told and to try and get that information. So I know generally speaking I'll try and do a '[Prezi Presentation](#)' but that requires the Internet and a projector.

So just making sure basics like that [are in place]. Do they have the Internet do they have a projector? There are some schools I've been into which don't allow USB sticks to be used and I didn't know that until I walked into a school, tried to like... And I thought, "Come on!" and I couldn't use that. And so then that created a whole different set of problems.

**JSL:** That's like your IT department saying, "We're not going to accept any foreign USB devices because they might corrupt our network with a virus or something so forget that.

**KJ:** So I get it now but it's just so annoying because every other place that I go, like a USB is kind of the minimum and with PowerPoint or even Word I could have done something just by accessing the documents that I had. But I had no way of doing that.

Then also just knowing if you don't know the place that you're going to, especially if it's a school or something like that. Just knowing who to go to for specific... If there are any issues come up, who do you refer the pupils to? Are you going to be there on your own, is there going to be someone else there with you? And then again, what the different expectations are. You know, do they want you to do turn-tabling with without your consent.

So just having absolutely as much in writing as possible as well as on the phone, just having good contact with whatever space you're going into. And then again just checking my own motives. Obviously it's lovely, you know, sometimes I have gone into a place thinking, "Great it's, you know, a couple of hours and I'm getting paid which is nice". But actually, I'm here to share my experience and my knowledge and my craft.

So just making sure I'm at the right place to do that. That's all that I can think of.

**JSL:** And I'd jump in and I'd support... In terms of what you were saying about having things on paper so that you can always refer back to them. You know having those conversations.

I know again, with all love to the teachers that we work with. We all know that everyone's busy so we know that sometimes email conversations are delayed because marking needed to be done and so on and so forth. And really you're the poet who's possibly only in for the one session or only in once a week or once every fortnight or something like that so there are other priorities that get in the way.

But having that conversation via email so that you've got that kind of chain you can look through and refer to and if someone says well we thought you were coming in at this particular time and you were needing this you can actually refer back to. When actually it was clearly said and disseminate to this body of people that this is what we needed just in case there's any confusion. You know having that kind of recourse is, I think a very good thing.

Along the lines of paperwork, making sure you've got your [DBS, your CRB](#) and your public liability insurance and all those kinds of things. Just making sure that you are covered in any... And it's again, it's all about insurance right. It's the kind of stuff you hope you don't need but if you do need it's good to have in place, right.

And knowing that there are organisations... So for example, I believe that [NAWE](#) still does this. If you sign up as a NAWE member you get your you get your public liability insurance and you can do your DBS through them as well. And there are other organisations that you can approach along those lines. There's an organisation called [The Artist's Network](#) which isn't necessarily about literature as an art or the literary arts. But yes signing up for The Artist's Network gives you a fair amount of cover or gives you access to a fair amount of cover for public liability insurance and indemnity, which I found out about when I was running workshops for the Tate Modern a while back.

And in terms of, again the practicalities... Having that awareness of what the culture of the school is and what the procedures are if something happens. So from simple things like you know... Again we were talking about appropriate dress within a space, knowing that you're probably not going to be going to school wearing a cap or a hat because in some settings... You know even if you are dressed neatly but still wearing a hat there is actually a school rule against headwear. You know, knowing that before you go in in case you're having a bad hair day.

**KJ:** Which is me all the time!

**JSL:** Oh I remember an experience! There was a very short period of time where I used to wear caps all the time and I went into a school in Chicago and they were like, "Sir, you can't wear hats in this school!" Oh, because my hair was doing unspeakable things underneath that hat and it's like "Okay I'm just going to have to live with this now."

So yeah, learn through bitter experience. But yeah, just kind of that sense of whether it is that kind of stuff or whether it's if something happens in this classroom then a student will... because there isn't...

I mean generally you should have a teacher in the room anyway ideally depending on... You know, if you're employed almost full-time as a teacher or a member of staff then maybe there's a slightly different thing there. But if you are an artist who's being brought in to run a short-term workshop then largely you should have a teacher in the room with you as a representative of the school in case anything happens that needs a member of staff to be aware of or to march things through procedures.

We all know, however, that there are circumstances where you'll arrive, teacher will be there for the first five minutes and then say, "You've got this? You've got this! Great, good, I'm just going to go off down the corridor and just take care of this other thing from the next..." Never see them again. Yeah.

So kind of knowing what the procedures are and what's appropriate. Knowing or having some sense of... If something happens in the room or if there's a discipline issue then you're actually going to that office 'over there'. Any of that kind of stuff, having those kinds of conversations before you go in.

An awareness of the rules or the regulations or the kind of procedures around disclosure, for example. If something's said in the room that suggests that something's going on at home that needs to be escalated? Knowing who it is that needs to be informed of that and knowing for yourself... Not putting yourself, for example, in a position where you promise, "Okay, no one else will see this material. I promise it's just you. It's just on this piece of paper." But then you see that piece of paper and you're like, "Wow there's something happening". And now I am duty bound to report this or pass this on to someone else who has a responsibility for disclosure in this case.

Having an awareness of all of those kinds of issues. Have any of you had an experience where a student has cried in one of your workshops?

**KJ:** Yes.

**JSL:** How did that feel?

**KJ:** A few times. There was... Particularly under the, I'll call it a traineeship though I was really shadowing [Peter Kahn](#) for a while, going into the school. And he developed one particular session that was guaranteed to have at least one pupil cry.

**JSL:** Right.

**KJ:** And I've since just done it as a one-off workshop and again like with him, they're balling. It's quite a generic thing you know it's, I mean the title is like, "What it's like to be... For those of you who aren't". And there will always be a few kids who will do something silly you know, what it's like to be a spaceman, for those of you that aren't. But then will be

someone who like, what it's like to be bullied and they'll go really in deep and then suddenly the atmosphere in the whole room changes.

**JSL:** Yeah.

**KJ:** People are like, whoah and then the tears come and whatever. And it's brilliant because I feel, wow, something has been opened and accessed. However, it's how you deal with the aftercare.

**JSL:** Yeah.

**MN:** Yes.

**KJ:** And how that is perceived by the institutions. Some schools and school managements will think that's a very negative thing, suddenly there are these kids crying and being emotional and it doesn't fit with the school ethos. And then there's... Or, things have come up in that which I then have passed on and disclosed, because I do immediately. And this is something, again a big one...

Like before the writing process saying look this is your opportunity to express yourself. At the same time you know like, I'm there's no... Things that we say about each other we're not going to gossip about each other in the room we're not going to allow certain things to leave the room. However, if there's something that I'm slightly concerned about, and it's good to know the name, I might just have a chat with Mr 'So-and-so', or Mrs 'So-and-so'. And that will be good because, you know, the whole point of this exercise is to open up a bit.

That said, we don't want everything to be going outside the room. So if you couch it in those terms generally speaking it works.

**JSL:** You frame it so there's an awareness of the fact that if anything does flag up [**KJ:** Yeah] you may well pass that on to an appropriate person? [**KJ:** Yes] Right.

**MN:** I think it's a really good example that you bring up, you know, this exercise that people can take in a quite humorous or light direction and if they want to they could go somewhere more serious. But I think it's really important to have those options and to never be trying to... To never be pushing people, even without realising, because that's...

You know, we would never try to push someone to reveal something they didn't want to but if there's an implicit feeling that in order to fulfil the task you kind of need to dig deep. Then, you know, you may not realise how difficult that might be for certain students.

So to always kind of make sure that writing a poem about football is as celebrated as writing a poem about your little sister's illness.

**JSL:** Yeah. So we're creating spaces for these things to happen right? Rather than saying you must be this way or that way. [**KJ:** Yeah.] So in terms of that kind of, "Oh you came in

and you made the kids cry. What's wrong with you? You're the poet was the fluffy stuff about clouds and things!" So there's that kind of, on one extreme, that sense of doing the light fluffy work. On the other extreme there's a sense of, "Well I'm the poet. I'm supposed to come in here and then go deep and bring out all of the trauma." And all that kind of stuff.

That notion of creating the space that the students need, I think is so powerful rather than pushing them in any one direction but giving them those options.

**KJ:** And that's the other thing, like, where else is there the opportunity to deal with death in school?

**JSL:** Right.

**MN:** Exactly.

**KJ:** Something like that. But at the same time don't push it. I know as someone who's been a participant in a workshop that at any given moment there are things that I want to write about and I don't want to write about. Things that I feel safe writing about, things I don't feel safe writing about. So like just providing that opportunity to go with it.

Like, all the other advice is just to allow a lot of air in the workshops to go in multiple directions that don't force humour and lightness. And that don't also force stuff that can be really heavy because, I mean... Yes, sometimes I do want to talk about death and sometimes I want to talk about roses and sometimes both.

**JSL:** At the same time in the same poem, yeah. I love what it is you just said, where else is there for our students to talk about their inner most thoughts and feelings? Their experiences and their perceptions on the world to bring their insides out in some way in a space that is supportive? For them to kind of stand up and read that work, put forward that expression and to have a class or showcase, an audience in that showcase, put hands together and say, "We hear you. We hear you and we celebrate what it is that you've just written and offered." Those are special spaces they really are yeah.

Along the lines of these kinds of requirements and things we should bear in mind as people going in to schools and running workshops and working with teachers and working with students and doing this work. Someone talk to me about the notion of looking after yourself in this, because so often we're forgotten.

So sometimes I run workshops, in fact I run a lot of workshops for people who do this kind of work and I'll say okay so who are we serving when we're in a classroom? Who are the stakeholders? Who are we thinking about when we're running a workshop? And the first thing that most people will say is, the students, obviously students we're there for the students!

Okay, that's good but there's more. Okay so who else? Oh! Okay the teachers maybe, because yeah actually some of the work that we do benefits the teachers. We're supporting their thinking around what poetry can be and how poetry can work. And we're supporting

their understandings of who their students are, they get to see their students in different ways.

So yes, the students and the teachers, yes! And I'm like, actually there's more, "Who else?" Yourself, right. What are your thoughts on that, in terms of that notion of looking after yourself in the work that you do. How important is that for you as a consideration?

**KJ:** Yeah I mean we've kind of skirted around it but one of the big thinkers on, you know, pedagogical theory was [Paulo Freire](#), he had that kind of banking... He critiqued that kind of banking model of education where you know you have the teacher who's like at the top of the pyramid who's sort of imparting knowledge and sort of pouring knowledge into these empty vessels the pupils and they must get as much logic as they can.

But that top down view not only is hierarchical, not only belittles students and necessarily aggrandises the teacher but it also just means it sort of ignores the importance of the pupils in some way. As people who already come into the space with a lot of knowledge and a lot of value that they can add. So I know whenever I go into a space whether it's with adults but more often we have young people that I'm getting something from them.

Sometimes it's just mannerisms and ways of talking. And I'm paying attention to that because I love language so I'm thinking, "Oh, wow they're saying that in that way. Okay interesting." So sometimes it's just that, it's their sense of humour, sometimes it's their sense of optimism. I can be quite pessimistic at the moment with politics and everything else. But they're like really young and hopeful you know, they don't think the world's going to end.

And yeah, it's the humour most of all, especially the so-called problematic kids they come up with... Even when they're insulting someone, they'll say something so creative, I'm like wow. That's amazing, that's really great.

Some of the bravery. They're coming with different cultures and different first languages sometimes. And sometimes if I get it right and if I'm getting things out of him they'll say, well actually in Turkish or whatever we'll say this and that means that. So suddenly I'm getting poetry. So if I pay attention to myself as a learner and as someone who is soaking up stuff then it changes the whole dynamic. And then you know obviously I'm the adult in the room and there needs to be some respect for authority but at the same time it's not a hierarchical one.

It's just, I happen to be in control and I'm the one being paid. You are the one who's forced by law because you are a minor but actually you have value. And I'll try and be honest about that as well and say look, you know I think what you have to contribute is amazing.

**JSL:** There's a way in which you're also being fed by that interaction, you're gaining from it. With regards to that kind of 'pedagogy of the oppressed' and all that kind of thinking of 'the bank of education' is also a guy called [John Maeda](#) who put forward this notion of the relationship between traditional leadership and creative leadership.

And the model of traditional leadership is kind of analogous to the notion of the orchestra and the conductor where the teacher is or the leader is the conductor and orchestra follows, "I'm here, I'm leading and you follow what it is I'm saying." Right, and all of the kind of rigid associated notions of that.

Whereas the notion of creative leadership was put forward as being analogous with, the jazz band. Where you're a player within this kind of collaborative space and you may lead some of the standards, you may lead how things are moving, and again you're responsive and you're listening and you're in the mix with things. And again that notion of being fed rather than just being solely the lead of that kind of experience is a beautiful beautiful thing.

I'm really interested in where it is that we get our energy from and how we respect that sense of energy because again being in these kinds of spaces particularly... Is it fair to say that we teach from the heart.

**KJ:** Yeah.

**MN:** Yes.

**JSL:** We have a care for the work that we do and for the people that we interact with, right? So how do you sustain that energy? Where does energy come from and how do you keep that fire and how do you keep some of their energy for yourself?

**MN:** Well it is a challenge and I think, you know, in many ways... Because the way that I've been working in education is quite different to the spoken word educators program where you're, you know, essentially a member of staff within a school. And there is a great privilege in that role of being able to come in to a space and come out. You're not carrying all the weight of that institution in the way that the teachers do every day.

You know, they engage with that space absolutely every day and that you know... We all see and know the incredible work that that is. But even coming in... I mean if I'm teaching in the way that I want to teach, it is very much from the heart and that can make me very porous as well that can make me actually quite vulnerable in a way, if I'm not taking proper care of myself. It can be very overwhelming to come into contact with this many people, this many stories and to be that open.

And, I know that I have a sensitivity there and that's what's part of what makes me who I am and that makes me want to do this work with writing and teaching. But if I'm going into a space and I'm not able to, kind of, fully hold my own then I shouldn't be going into that space.

**JSL:** Right.

**MN:** And I guess the tricky thing with that is like, with any work that we do is that it's very easy to up a front. It's very easy to, you know, get good at what you do and be able to sort of go through it without really being in the right mind set to do it fully, in a way that kind of fully respects the students the teachers and yourself.

For me, it's involved a lot of learning about taking care of myself, taking time off what I need to. Paying attention to... Just small things like checking in with myself before going into the classroom like, "Oh how are you doing?" Because if you don't have a colleague that you're going in with, you know, they're not there to ask you. And when you meet people who you don't necessarily know that well you're going to be like, "Hi I'm great yeah. I'm all enthusiasm.

And you mean it, you want to be that but you need to check in with yourself and say, "Okay, how are you doing? What are you going to do to make sure that this day is okay for you? Okay, you're actually going to go out for the lunch break and not be in the staffroom where you'll have to speak to a lot of people. Or, you know, you're going to arrive a little bit early in your classroom so you get to see that room and just take a breath."

But, you know, what are you going to build into your day so that that happens? And I think it is about these sort of small actions. Oh who am I going to call after my session just to say, "Oh this went great or this didn't go so great"? So that you're not carrying everything by yourself.

**JSL:** So if you're listening, myself and Keith we're both gesticulating wildly and nodding with fervour here for everything that Miriam was saying because it is all so important and it is so crucial and vital. But it is all so easy to... I mean, I think we all kind of, there are points okay...

Let me put it this way. Do you have that experience where you kind of pick up and realise that you're actually in the middle of a period of time where you haven't been looking after yourself? And all those good things that you should be doing have just fallen by the wayside because you got busy and it became really difficult to keep all of that stuff up and you kind of realise what it is are you actually missing? Have we all had that experience?

**KJ:** Yeah.

**MN:** Yeah of course.

**JSL:** It's so important, but it is so easy for those things to fall by the wayside. It needs to become part of our practice.

**MN:** Also it can be shared. [**JSL:** Yeah.] I think we shouldn't underestimate the people that we work with, the teachers you know. If you are on a slightly longer term program you can get to know you're, the teachers that you work with and you know, be able to have a little conversation. A little wind-down afterwards, debrief, "How did it go?" We need those things, we shouldn't think that we can just function completely on our own.

**JSL:** We are not machines!

**KJ:** Yeah. And even if you do find yourself in a situation where you are kind of on your own and you do feel you've kind of been left to your own devices... Just the basics of,

proper sleep and decent nutrition. Especially if you're like going from class to class, just making sure you are eating properly and sleeping properly. I find that helps and when I start to let that go it's usually because there's other things going on and I'm feeling a bit stressed and overwhelmed. And then you know sure enough a few weeks later I am ill or you know something's not quite right.

**JSL:** For sure. What is our work worth?

**MN:** It's that great question that you get asked, you know, if you have some time where students can ask you questions and it's the first session, there's usually someone who's like, "How much are you being paid?"

**JSL:** Yeah. "Do you get paid for this sir? Do you get paid for this Miss? How much" Yeah. What is our work worth and do you... So ya'll have been teaching in various different ways and guises for, you know, a fair while now, right? Do you still have that kind of awkward moment when someone asks you to come in and run a workshop and maybe they haven't pitched the fee yet and you're like, "They haven't pitched a fee yet! At what point do I actually start to talk about a fee.

Do you guys still have that kind of thinking, that thought, that awkwardness around asking for monies for the work that's done? Or asking for a fair set of monies for the work that's done?

**KJ:** Sometimes, it depends who... I can be really awkward anyway with emails and stuff, with conversations even. It just depends what space I'm in but it's best to be just upfront from the get go.

**MN:** Yeah!

**KJ:** On a couple of occasions it's been expected that it would be free, which is weird. But otherwise it's good to know beforehand and just... There are polite ways of doing it and I think that comes with the practice of just saying you know... Even having it as part of a list. You know, so what kind of a fee, how long? You know basic because again when they say half a day you know, half a school a day can mean like from 08:00 till 14:00. Which you know, a full school day is only an hour and a half extra, so it's like okay. So things like that come as part of it.

And I know Apples and Snakes and other places do actually say what the kind of expected going rate is so you can find out, you know, if people are really being insulting by offering you fifty quid for a whole day. And travelling up to, you know, some place where it'll cost you that much to get there.

So, yeah I still find it awkward but I'm getting used to it. I know that I do a better job if I feel that I'm not being insulted. You know, I'm being paid a decent amount and I'm expected to turn up and it's professional and then I behave like a professional. But if they're sort of just treating it like, you know, it's a little favour then of course I'm not going to come in... As

good as my intentions are my spirit isn't going to be the same as if I feel I'm doing a professional job. So yeah that's my rambling answer.

**JSL:** Miriam, your thoughts on that sense of awkwardness in terms of what it means to have that conversation around monies when it comes to this work? Because you know there is this sense of, you're an artist you should enjoy doing this! That kind of thing.

**MN:** Yeah I think what's tricky about that as well is that, because we generally get paid daily rates the daily rates may seem high to people who are on a regular salary. And that's really understandable but it's just a very different way of being paid. So you know, if your daily rate is £250, £300 this may sound like a lot of money. But when you factor in the fact that you cannot do that work every day, necessarily and that you're bringing in your...

You're really bringing in your expertise and the job that you're doing is not something that you can do in an everyday way, you're actually being paid to come in to do something special. And so you can't go about your business in an everyday way you know. So I think that it's really important that that is being valued and understood.

And I feel really lucky in that the teachers that I'm working with at the moment. I've been having a really good experience with the schools I've been working with in the last year and I think it's... Because I've been trying to work more with schools that are delivering long term programs, there's already that investment and that's amazing. To be able to work with teachers who on top of everything else that they have to do, are putting on this after-school program. Or making sure that in the incredibly stretched timetable there is time for this thing.

So I don't think that there's necessarily... I don't know that I feel awkward but I still don't necessarily feel great at negotiating on my own behalf and I think that's something that we, again can easily take for granted. Like, I'm a writer, I'm an educator I know I can deliver a great workshop and I love what I do but that doesn't necessarily mean that I have all those skills of being a freelance professional. You know, I'm not necessarily great at all the mechanics of that.

**JSL:** That's a really important part of it, that notion of... I mean a lot of what we've been talking about in this time has been, how we manifest as educators, as poet educators, or artist educators, or teaching artists in educational spaces. But there's a large part of this conversation that really is about how we operate as creative professionals how we do that work of promoting ourselves, how we do that work of managing the administration and how we do that work of managing the finance of what it is that we do.

I mean, we were talking a little bit earlier about the notion of the work that we're doing of being almost unregulated. [MN: Yeah.] As you were saying, there are no supervisors necessarily you're working for yourself but that also means that you are responsible for setting your pay grades, so to speak. If we simply go by...

So yeah there's an awareness of the market that we exist within and what the economy is, right and what a fair rate might be in relation to generally what budgets are available from

schools and all that kind of thing. But there's also a sense in which if you're constantly going by just what the set rate is... So again for example, we might use the measure of an Apples and Snakes rate which I think is fantastic in terms of an understanding of a baseline.

But if we continue to take that as simply the baseline there is, you know, where do you go in terms of, as you grow and develop experience? Are you always going to be at that rate and how is that rate indexed, for example, to inflation? Do you get a pay rise at any point in this career? If you don't how do you factor that in to the way that...

You know we have to think about how our work can be sustainable for ourselves and how it is that our work, as we consider it as work. How it is that our work facilitates the lives that we live in the same way as anyone else's work in any other sector or industry will facilitate the lives that they live, you know.

**MN:** Yeah.

**KJ:** Yeah, and the respect and the professionalisation issue you know. When I feel I'm being respected for my time and with, you know, money wise, then I walk into the space very differently.

**JSL:** As a professional!

**KJ:** Yeah.

**JSL:** Alright, there is so much to speak about, there is so much else that we could talk about but we've been in this room for a fair while now and I think we've touched on a fair number of topics. I hope you the listener have gained something from this conversation. I know it's been a joy to be in this room with Keith and Miriam. Thank you, Keith, thank you Miriam.

**MN:** Thank you.

**KJ:** Thank you.

**JSL:** You are more than welcome and thanks to David Turner and Lunar Poetry Podcasts for making this possible and making this happen. Thank you for listening.

**End of transcript.**