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BLOG 1

Personally, I consider the rise of infectious diseases one of the biggest threats to humankind. Of course, global warming is also the biggest threat to humankind but with the recent [Covid-19](#) pandemic it has made me personally realise that we are in fact just human, and it feels a lot closer to home from my personal experiences.

There is an estimate of **100,000 identified infectious diseases**.

Infectious diseases are the leading cause of death in children (and adolescent and one of the top three causes of death in adults, according to [World Health Organization \(2023\)](#) and I feel that this information puts into perspective the dangers that infectious diseases pose to humankind. Infectious diseases can come and evolve in humans, animals and plants. With the ever-growing population having to expand into previously unoccupied regions, contact between humans and wildlife reservoirs have increased. Agricultural growth and population growth have led to larger property sizes and increasing wealth in these areas, leading to interactions that haven't between humans and such that haven't happened before and the possible evolution of unknown diseases or simply evolving already identified diseases (Nature, 2021).

Recent historical pandemics before Covid-19 like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria have made a comeback in Africa and remain the most important infectious disease in the coming decades. Modern medicine can treat or help some of these and keep them contained. However, one of the main reasons for so many deaths is remedies needed for them not being available to the populations with the greatest needs. This is an incredibly important factor of the death rates for pandemics, including Covid-19.

I think that infectious diseases and medicine are an important topic going forward, this being highlighted more by the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak from the late 2019 to 2023. According to the World Health Organization close to 650 million people worldwide were infected by the end of 2022, resulting to close to 6.65 million deaths. Compared to previous pandemics such as [Black Plague of 1350](#) and the [The global influenza outbreak of 1918](#), never in the record of human history has a pandemic literally paused all human activity all over the globe. No one was exempt from this pandemic due to the many trades between nations (food, beauty products etc) and the constant travelling happening in our modern world. This is an obvious difference between previous mass pandemics and Covid-19, however I think that it has severely highlighted how we live our lives and how this should get taken into consideration.

Covid-19 already has numerous variants that could well overpower our current vaccines made for the original strains, but there are more virulent threats that could make Covid-19 seem like a common cold. For example, take superbugs. Strains of bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics and known treatments. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (2023) has declared that the [zika virus](#) has no vaccine or preventable drug to treat it. There are also

diseases that are in their evolutionary stage and can emerge at any time, leaving us waiting and not being able to prepare. They could be transmitted by air, water or food – these could rapidly spread through all the populations similarly to covid and have a devastating impact on humans and life as we know it.

I think that the future of medicine is an extremely important topic in our current global state.

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BLOG 2

I will be discussing skills that i think will give you an advantage over your peers and allow you to advance in your field. Whatever career you chose, a wide range of skills is always valued by an employer.

An important skill to have in theatre design is, in my opinion, leadership. An important element of working in theatre is the hierarchy and how every group has a leader to report too, as you advance in your field you more about leadership and how important it is to our industry. "Leadership has been identified as an important contextual variable contributing to the culture and climate of the organisation and perception of support for innovation" (Reiter-Palmon, Roni and Illies, Jody J., 2004) and as our industry evolves with the modern world, we need people to lead with innovation and allow the people under them to flourish in the chosen field.

Organisation skills are also extremely important in theatre, both when you work in a company or as a freelancer. The industry is extremely busy, and you are always multi-tasking, so it is important to stay on top of the workload. For example, Production managers have to extremely organised with how the production is moving forward and are concerned with how things are accomplished and how people perform their tasks (Bogdewic, S.P., Baxley, E.G. and Jamison, P.K., 1997), Organisation is useful across all roles in theatre and in life itself, perhaps making it the most important skill needed for the industry and it will make you stand out offering you adavantages.

Another important skill in my chosen field of set design is understanding how you can keep your work as sustainable as possible and the economic impact you have on the industry. Having knowledge and experience in sustainability will give you an advantage as the industry moves towards being more green. The theatre industry is, like many businesses, inherently temporary. We typically make sets out of raw materials and ask people to travel to a particular location at a particular time. I think that constant research to fully understand and incorporate sustainably is extremely important for the future of our industry, the innovativeness of the leaders in our industry will lead us into sustainable economic development (Howkins, 2013) for theatre.

Already we have resources such as the [Theatre Green Book](#) that guide productions on how to become more sustainable, companies such as [The National Theatre](#) are already working

with the Theatre Green Book and trying to become more sustainable in 2022-23 by “aiming for 50% of a production materials to have had a previous life, and then 65% of materials to go on to a future life” (National Theatre, 2023)

With research like the [Act Green](#) (2022) showing that audiences are expecting change in theatre and how it uses its resources, with “77% of audience member agree with the statement: Cultural organisations have a responsibility to influence society to make radical change to address the climate emergency”. This is showing the major importance of sustainability and how knowledge on this topic is important to advance in theatre.

Overall, I think that having a wide range of skills is extremely important for our industry but unfortunately it is still important to consider factors out of skills. For example, experiences. If someone of a better well of background who has had access to more work experience than someone of a lower-class background with no experience due to their living situation, it is likely that the person with a better background will get the job.

No matter what happens, someone will somehow be at a disadvantage no matter how many skills they have.

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BLOG 3

In this blog I will be discussing merits and shortcomings of the Design Thinking process from my perspective.

One of the main merits of using [Design Thinking](#) is the fact it is built on user participation, making it useful for many fields of study including theatre. It allows projects and ideas to have a 'human centric element' that benefits the company or business.

However, due to its heavy involvement from user participation it also has its shortcomings. These user-based surveys and interviews require a lot of resources and considerations despite the benefits it brings. For smaller scale businesses or theatres, it would be difficult to properly research this way as they may not have the funds for it or time. The "initial researching, interviewing, co-developing the ideas, and testing on the prototype" takes a long time and over time it becomes a loop process where you are having to update and change the project based on each user interaction. This makes the duration of the project longer and not everyone has sufficient time and effort to do comprehensive research like this. (Julia Tsoi, 2021)

On the other hand, the user participation element "reduces risk associated with launching new ideas" (IDEO U) saving resources that would typically be used for ideas that could turn out to be unsuccessful.

Another shortcoming of designing could be only focusing on the best-case scenario, design thinking often over-simplifies the issues of following the 5 steps we are given. When creating and defining the core idea it is easy to design the best-case scenario in an ideal world however the reality could be completely different.



It is important to consider all scenarios and remember that "the Design Thinking process is not linear; it is flexible and fluid, looping back and around and in on itself" (Emily Stevens 2023) and to not let that discourage your team. Everyone involved must be fully aware of the risks and be prepared for the worst-case scenarios so that no one gets discouraged at the first sign of the loop process, especially if there is an outside organisation that funds the research that could be pulled out and stop the research before it is fully completed.

Overall, when looking at Design Thinking I see a lot of more shortcomings of the process instead of merits. I can understand how it is useful for built up business and such as it states out the process and how it works, it seems like it would work well in that sense. However, in terms of creative industries such as theatre, I think that it doesn't work as well. Many theatres and companies are lacking funding and interest from the public, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, so it would be difficult to fully utilise the Design Thinking process. Yes, it would help to get information from the public through the user participation research on what musicals or plays they'd like to see, and it would save money and time before starting the process of a production and spending the limited funding. However, in the same way, many struggling and small theatres do not have the funds to fully utilise the Design Thinking process.

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