

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

LENNI

Interviewer: Kyle Katz

Date of Interview: April 29, 2017

Location of Interview: Utility Closet at SAGE, Midtown, New York

Transcribed by Jamie Magyar

NYC TOHP Interview Transcript #028

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Kyle Katz: Hello. My name is Kyle Katz, and I will be having a conversation with Lenni.

Lenni: That's right.

Katz: [flipping through papers] Lenni Eyes. Did I say it right?

Lenni: Mhm.

Katz: —and I will be having a conversation Lenni Eyes for the New York City Trans Oral History Project, in collaboration with the New York Public Library's Community Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experience of trans-identifying people. It is 4/29/17, and this is being recorded at SAGE [Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders] in Midtown, New York, in the utility closet.

Lenni: [Laughter]

Katz: Okay, Lenni. Um, thank you so much for agreeing to participate in the project, and [flipping through papers] [singing wordlessly] let's start with: tell me about your childhood.

Lenni: [Laughter]

Katz: Tell me about your childhood, and your feelings about gender-related things, and...

Lenni: Um, yeah.

Katz: Oh, no. Wait. I have things I have to say. Okay, so, tell me your name and your age.

Lenni: My name is Lenni Eyes. I'm 32 years old.

Katz: And what are your gender pronouns?

Lenni: They, them, and theirs.

Katz: And how would you describe your gender?

Lenni: I am genderqueer, non-binary trans person, under the trans umbrella—the big, big, big umbrella—and, um, I also like using the words “genderfluid”—

Katz: Cool.

Lenni: —and “genderfucker.”

Katz: And I think you should say about your t-shirt.

Lenni: Yes, and so I also really—my gender feels very galactic. I'm wearing a shirt that has the galaxy on it, and, um, the galaxy and like, space, and like, the expansiveness of space plays a lot into, um, how I envision myself and my gender, and other people's gender, and gender in general.

Katz: When I see that shirt, I think of the—the multitude of stars, the almost infinite—we assume infinite, we don't know—amount of stars as being all the many possible genders that there could be, and that gives me the freedom to be who I am, so I loved that metaphor.

Lenni: The first time I ever heard it was—I was, um, doing a theater project about—I was doing a theater project as a part of a Master's in Applied Theatre at CUNY [City University of New York], um, as I was saying before, but—where I was creating a piece of theater—an educational piece of theater for fourth-graders about gender beyond the binary—

Katz: Oh, wow.

Lenni: —and I had—was not out at all, and had really thought about my gender, but hadn't like—was like, a really strong ally, but hadn't taken the steps to be like, “No, this is you, boo-boo,” you know? And I was doing the work of making this theater piece, and I felt so—I was—I would stay up all night reading things. Like, the entire night I would read about gender, and I would be like, “Oh, this—yes, this—yes, that!” and a piece that I came across that really like, ended up being essential part of the theater piece but ended up being like, essential part of my life was this piece on the Sylvia Rivera Law Project's website. And it was like, literally just called “Trans 101,” and it's like, one of the best trans 101's I've ever read in my whole life, um, and at the one point in it, it says, um, “What if we imagine gender, instead of a spectrum—um, imagined it as an absolutely infinite number of points in the sky, because on a spectrum, where would you fit, like, a butch sissy fag? Where would you fit, like...” you know what I mean? Like, all the—all the ways in which like, gender is so fucking beautifully diverse, um, and—

Katz: Yeah. It needs more dimensions.

Lenni: Exactly. So in that theater piece that we ended up making, um, I made sure that at the—at the point in the theater piece where the like—the gender like, non-binary—like, child with a non-binary gender who's sort of expressing their gender—um, the way—the place where they start to come to terms with it is at a campfire, looking up at the stars. So we like, projected a night sky, um, and, yeah.

Katz: Oh, wow.

Lenni: Whenever I start to feel like, really kind of stuck in other people's vision of my gender, or other people's vision of who I am, um, and internalized—and that internalized stuff, I like, go back to that image, and it really helps me, like, just let go. Um, but as far as my childhood, um, I was—I'm the only child of two Jewish parents from Quee—from, both from Brooklyn. Um, and I think—

Katz: So, you're so New York.

Lenni: I'm super New York, yes. I'm very New York. Both my parents, um, were born and raised in Brooklyn, so I'm a second-generation New Yorker, and, uh—you know, we're culturally Jewish in the way that like, we definitely ID as Jewish, but we're not religious at all. Um, and growing up, I—um, I don't remember—I remember, um, like—I went to a very racially and ethnically and socioeconomically diverse elementary school, and so like, what it meant to be a girl and what it meant to be a boy, like, looked very different across a different young people's like—like, versions of being at home. And what it meant to be a woman and what it meant to be a man looked different in my home than in my friends' homes. Like, you know, I'd go to my friend's home, and their mom would be wearing a sari, and my mom, you know, would look the way my mom looked, and so I was like, "Oh. There's a lot of options here." Um, and I don't remember having a very strong, clear sense of my gender. I don't ever remember thinking that I was a girl, though. Um, and when I was a little kid, my mom always would say that I would like—would go into the store, and she would try to get me to put on like, puffy pink things, and I would refuse. Like, I just wouldn't even, and all I wanted to wear was Daffy Duck. Daffy Duck and anything with epaulettes—like, shoulder pads, which, I still rock shoulder pads like, really hardcore. Um, and I grew up, um, and ended up going to like, a pretty like, normative high school in Queens, and sort of like, ending up falling into like, a crowd of people who were pretty like—not—were not queer, were very, very straight, and very, very like—I don't know, like, cool kids in Queens. Like, so I wore long nails—like, long acrylic fingernails—um, like, lots of gel in my hair. Um, I was like, really just trying to fit whatever it is that I thought I was supposed to be, and I was really afraid of like, being found out that I wasn't that, so I was like, "I'm just gonna try real hard to make this work."

Katz: What year was that?

Lenni: That was—uh, high school was from—was 1998 to 2002. Um, and then I went to college in Grinnell, Iowa, uh, from Queens. And—

Katz: And how was that?

Lenni: It was—it was interesting. And I should say that like, in high school—or, in junior high—in junior—maybe as early as nine or ten, I like, knew I was something other than straight and something other than what I was supposed to be. Like, I didn't quite know what, but I knew like, the things I was drawn to, and the things I was reading, like, didn't—especially like, with the internet—when I was like, twelve and thirteen, as the internet was starting to become a bigger part of my life—the things I would Google, you know? Like, I would Google trans people, and I didn't know why. Like, I just—I just would, and um—at like, eleven. And, um, I knew—you know, I knew that I was interested in maybe women and men—I had crushes on boys, and I had crushes—like, I just—I was like—I had like, a lot of curiosity, and I think that I, um, what I—I remember knowing lesbians. I mean like, "But I'm not that. I know I'm not that. I don't know why, I just know I'm not." And I remember being like, in high school, and like, knowing some girls who came out as lesbians and being really jealous of them, because I really just wanted to be a lesbian.

I was like, “If I could just say that that’s what I am, it would be really easy, but I don’t know what I am, and it’s not that, and I don’t know why, and fuck,” you know? And so I ID’d as bisexual for a long time—or, for a while, and—but it never fit. I was always like, “Yeah, that’s a—okay, if you want to use that word, fine. Whatevs.”

Katz: Labels.

Lenni: Labels, yeah.

Katz: People require them, but they don’t always fit.

Lenni: And I—you know, my—I had a very loving family. I was an only child, though, so there was like, a lot of like—you know, it was all on me to be like, the good one, the bad one, you know? And I had a lot of, um, trouble at home. Like, I just—I just fought all the time with my family—like, especially with my mother. Like, all the time. Like, knockdown, screaming fights. Like, a level of rage that didn’t fit the situation, and I think back now to like, just what I was going through, and how I didn’t know how to handle it, um, and didn’t have words for it, and so... Sorry, mom. I was such a little shit. And my mom was also struggling with stuff—with mental health—and I know my family, they were struggling with things, and I think I just really wanted to be stable and normal. Like, I wanted some stability and some normalcy, and so as I got into college, I—um, I knew I was weird, but I just—I sought out mostly straight relationships and mostly straight friends, and I would—I knew that like, the lesbian—I knew who the lesbians were and who the like, gay community was, but I didn’t even know how to access them. Like, I didn’t know how to talk to them. I just was like, very conf—you know, I would like, avoid, and ended up meeting my now ex-husband in college, and we got in a relationship when I was a senior in college, and then, um, we were together for five or six years and then got married. And, um, I think in all of that time, like, I just was like [sigh], being a version of myself, but not a full version. I always knew—like, from when I was a little kid—like, “I’m just different. I don’t know how. I just am, and like, maybe I just—maybe I’ll just—maybe what will happen is like, when I’m fifty, everyone I know will die, and I’ll just get to live a new life.” Which is very creepy and weird to say, but like—and I know—and I loved everyone in my life! It wasn’t like I wanted anyone to actually die. I just thought, “Maybe that’s the only way I’ll like—you know, I got lucky enough to find these people who love me and like, who like me and want to spend time with me. I gotta—this is normal.” And my ex-husband was like, super—is like, a super normal human. Like, he’s just like, a really good person and like, you know—and his family’s like, really loving and normal, and all together, and I just—I was gravitating towards that.

Katz: Did you feel like your gender identity had something to do with you breaking up with him?

Lenni: Um, he actually broke up with me. Um, I think that [sigh]—I think that both of us trying to pretend to be people we weren’t played into it. He wanted to go be a farmer, and I wanted to go be a genderfucker, queer, like, trans person, like, doing my thing, you know what I mean? And like, a radical, and—and I think we were both like, really trying to love each other, but also holding each other back in different ways. Um, and we were really young when we got together. So, we

had literally just—we grew up together, and like—I’m more—as I’ve realized now, like, things about him, I’m like, “I just liked dressing that—like, I dressed him that way because I kind of like dressing that way,” [laughter] you know? Um, but—so then, um, you know, I think as I—it’s all been pretty recent, like, in terms of like, really being public and like, talking a lot about things that I’ve felt since I—you know, junior high—but had like... Now I look back, and I’m like, “Oh, yeah, that all makes a lot of sense now. Like, I get why I was Googling those things, and I get why I was drawn to these things, and I get, you know, that...” And I didn’t know anyone in my life, except for butch lesbians, who were sort of like, maybe more masc, even though I don’t identify as masc. I definitely identify as femme, and that’s—but I’m not a woman, and so like, I didn’t have any like, role models of what that looked like. Um, and then I met a couple people who were like, genderfuckers, and, uh, I was like, dating people who were like, trans people, and I was like, “Oh, like, yeah.” And I still had this, like—I still—I think I struggled with this idea like, “Well, I’m—I don’t feel like I’m a trans man,” and so like, that still—I still fought it for a long time. I was like, “You have, you know, funny gender feelings, but like, everybody does,” and I think I realized like, not everybody does. And I think I—my like, path in life is to like, figure out how to like, actually listen to the things I feel inside, as opposed to just being like, “It’s okay. Just let it go. Let it go. It’s fine.” Um, and, you know, it makes me think about all the people who like, don’t ever get the space to like, play and experiment with their gender, and I feel very privileged—I am very privileged to be able to.

Katz: That’s why I thought it was so important to interview you, because I feel like this is going to be clickable on the internet, and somebody who’s eleven is going to be able to listen to this story, and they need as many options of how to be, you know, as possible.

Lenni: Yeah. I was like, apparently a straight woman who was married. A straight-passing woman, you know? Like, when people who meet me now find out, they’re like, “What?” You know? Uh, with like, punky hair and like, you know, the way I dress now, and I’m like—I’m so much more comfortable in my body now—um, and uncomfortable in ways. Like, I think I’ve—I’m like—it’s interesting, because the more gender nonconforming I present in the world, the more I feel like I—you know, parts of me that I’ve wanted to experiment with for a while, like, freak other people out in my life, and suddenly they’re like, “Wait—oh, you’re really doing this. Oh, we thought this was just a—like, a little thing, but now you’re like, really doing this,” as I think about, you know, what other transition spaces I want to—to go into, you know, with my body and with myself, and...

Katz: Can you give any concrete examples?

Lenni: Yeah. Um, I mean, I think that like—um, I definitely, when I started using different pronouns, um, a lot of people were super loving—and again, that came from role modelling. Like, I was living with someone who was using they/them pronouns, and I remember it was just like a snap. It’s just a click. I was like—my whole body relaxed. It was like I—I wanted to be around them just so I could say their name and use their pronouns, um, and everybody else was like, “God, this is so hard,” and I was like, “This is so easy. Like, this is the most natural thing in the world.” And again, I realized like, “Oh, it’s so—so natural. I can do this for someone else, but it’s

because I want it for myself.” Um, and so when I started to use they/them pronouns, I lost some friends—some like, people who were really close in my life—and they would say—I think that person maybe—maybe it was, people would say—maybe say that it wasn’t because of that, but I—I know in my heart that like, that was part of it, and they thought I was like, seeking attention or making things difficult, or being, you know? Because they had known me so—for so long in another way, they were very—and we were really close, you know—that they—I don’t know—they maybe felt betrayed by it, or just like I was being selfish. There was a lot of like, “You’re being selfish, or you’re self-centered,” um, and that’s—I still sit with that, you know? It’s—if I’m being real, you know? Um, and then, as I’ve been thinking about, you know, whether or not I want to pursue hormones of any kind, um, I think it’s been a struggle for my mom, um, but, you know—and this is pretty recent, actually. Like, we just had a conversation where, you know, she was like, “Wait, you’re like, really trans,” you know? And I felt—it like—I was like, “What? Like, what do...?” and I realized. I was like, “Oh, you know, I’m sitting with this every day, and she sees me every couple of—every couple of weeks or whatever, and it’s not—it’s not an everyday thing for her, and this is hard for her,” and at first it was really hard for me to hear that from her, and then I realized like, “Okay,” like “She’s going to be where she’s going to be,” and then, you know, she like, called PFLAG, because she’s an obsessive Googler like I am. Like, once I started thinking about my gender, I literally—I got on Tumblr and just like, obsessed. Like I—again, I would be up in the middle of the night, reading about—you know, people joke about Tumblr genders, but like, I think I learned more about my gender from Tumblr and like, 17-year-olds as a thir—as, you know, someone in my late twenties—than anywhere else, you know? So like, talking about like, trans elders, but I think I actually like, learned more from like, trans kids, which is really cool.

Katz: Yeah, I really resonate with that.

Lenni: Yeah.

Katz: Do you remember any specific things you read, that maybe are still out there, that...?

Lenni: Yeah. I like—if you just Google “Tumblr genders,” like, there’s a hundred different—like, me and Christian used to like, when we’d be freaking out about stuff or like, both as like, non-binary—my friend, who I also do the TransGenerational Theatre Project with—would be kind of like, having weird feelings about gender, and I’d be like, “Let’s Google the Tumblr genders,” and we’d pull them up, and it’d be like, um, “cocoongender”—like, a gender that has yet to become.

Katz: Oh, wow.

Lenni: You know? And I’d be like, “I don’t know if that’s even—that,”—I mean, I would say, “Is that even a thing?” And then I’d go, “Well, who gets to decide what a thing is?” you know? And like, I think...

Katz: It’s out there. It’s a thing for somebody.

Lenni: It's out there. It's a thing for somebody, and it brought me some peace in a moment when I needed it, to be like, "You know, I don't know what my gender is. I'm a coccoogender right now. I'm in a cocoon, and I'm about to come out," you know? And I think that's just really cool, and no, I don't walk around telling people I'm coccoogender, but it's an internal identity that—that brings me a lot of peace.

Katz: That sort of uh, reminds me of the whole unicorn and snowflake metaphors, and there's a way in which people say, "Oh, you're being selfish. You've got to—you've got to be special, like you're—you're the only one. You're a snowflake, or, you know, you're a unicorn." That's sort of derisive.

Lenni: Mhm, and derogatory.

Katz: And I feel like that's what all the points of stars in the galaxy are. We really need that to exist. I feel—

Lenni: Yeah, would you say like, to a star—

Katz: I feel like I'd rather need to say, "No, it's not that I'm like, a special snowflake and there's something wrong with that. You are a snowflake. We're all snowflakes, every single one of us."

Lenni: Right.

Katz: "Just get with the program and stop trying to put everybody in a box," you know? But I guess probably there have to be both ways. Maybe a whole lot of people, like, their gender is the box, and that's what they want.

Lenni: And I'm like, "Cool, you want to be in that box? I'm so glad for you."

Katz: Yeah, that's right. "We're happy for you to be in the box. Let us be snowflakes."

Lenni: And I would—and I don't know that—I don't know that I would love to be in the box. I don't actually think that's true, but like, you know, I... Maybe I wish I never had to think about this at all, you know? I could use brain space on something else, and it would never be a thing, you know what I mean? Like, but I also think there's power in it, and so I embrace it because like, I embrace the questioning of my gender. And, you know—like, Christian was like, one of the first people I ever told that I wanted to use different pronouns, and—as a loved one of mine who's also non-binary, and was also using they/them pronouns, and still does, and is also like, a genderfucker, and awesome, and such a role model to me—and I just—I—we were at this like, sort of like, sex and identity camp in the woods, and they were—and I just turned to them, and I was like, "I think—I think—I have to tell you something," and I was so nervous. And this loved one who I knew so well, and who knew me so well, and I said, "I think I have to tell you something. I think—I think I need you to use different pronouns for me, and I think I need anyone who meets me to," and they were like, "Fuck yeah, you do! Of course you do! Like, how does anybody move

through the world and question this shit, and still come out cis on the other side?” You know what I mean? Which I think is an exaggeration, like, because I know people who do question and still come out cis—that’s a funny metaphor, like, they come out of like a—some sort of like, transformation chamber. But I remember just feeling that, and then feeling a lot of relief and a lot of support from other people in my life, and so I’m—I am like, deeply blessed. And then this project, you know, and like, being around—the theater project that we do—and being around, you know, a multigenerational group of trans and gender conforming people. When we started this project, I was like—Christian and I were talking about doing a thesis project together, and I was like, “I would love to work with trans and gender nonconforming people, but I don’t feel ready. Like, I barely know who the fuck I am. Who am I to stand up in front of people and—um, and talk about gender? Are you kidding me? I can’t do that.” And then I realized like, “Oh. I need to do it, but I need to do it from a place of humility. I can’t pretend to be anything I’m not, but if I do that, you know, maybe something cool could come out of it,” and what’s come out of it is a lot of very powerful community, a lot more clear sense of who I am—and who I’m not, right?—and [sigh] I met—I’ve met trans and GNC people who like, came out in their seventies and transitioned in their seventies, or transitioned in their forties, or transitioned—you know what I mean? Or transitioned in their teens, and like, just remembering like, it can come at any point, and—at any point, or never, and it’s still okay, you know? Like, that there’s just no one pathway for this at all, and—

Katz: Yeah, and there’s no right way to be...

Lenni: Right.

Katz: I think Christian’s going to be famous one day. I think we should say his name on here, because—

Lenni: Their name, or her name?

Katz: Her name. I’m—I’m terrible at pronouns, because—

Lenni: I know. A lot of trans people are terrible at pronouns. It’s hilarious.

Katz: —I haven’t had community to talk to and about in my life, so I’m sorry. Christian, she—they are fabulous and going to be famous—

Lenni: For sure.

Katz: —and I think that you’ll all know—

Lenni: Christian Hansen Appel is going to be famous. They didn’t consent to being on this video, but they are a trans oral historian, uh, interviewer, so I think it’s okay.

Katz: And they're one of the founders/leaders of the TransGenerational Theatre Project, which we're all a part of right now, doing these interviews.

Lenni: Mhm. Yep.

Katz: Kids are going to want to know. They're going to be like, "Oh, Lenni's talking about Christian." They'll—you'll probably be famous, too.

Lenni: [Laughter] Yeah. I'll just—I'll ride their coattails.

Katz: [Laughter] Huh, what else—what other direction do we want to go? Have you got—how much time have we got?

Lenni: I only get like, fifteen minutes.

Katz: Huh. Well, it's for the New York Public Library, so I think I'd like to hear how New York has been in your life as a place, with transgender-ness or queerness, you know? Like, what queer—what maybe queer spaces that people in the future will have heard of have you been in, been a part of, and seen, and been to?

Lenni: Oh, um, that's a great question. Um, I think that—I mean, SAGE, where we are now, is such an incredible space in New York City. Um, I think I remember the first day I ever walked in here, and it was like—or, one of the very first days—and it was Halloween, and it was like, all these—these amazing like, beautiful older LGBT adults who I—I just had so much fun with, and I was like, "Oh, this is what my future could look like?" you know, and that was really beautiful, and I love coming here, and I love all of the like, older trans and GNC adults here. Um, and I think that it's really powerful to have people in their thirties and forties be part of this place, because like, eventually this will be ours.

Katz: I know. I feel the same way. Does it stand for something, SAGE?

Lenni: It's the Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders.

Katz: Services & Advocacy. Good, good. Okay.

Lenni: Yeah, and it was the first of its kind to like, be an older adult center specifically for older adults—or, for LGBT older adults—and like, one of the things I love about them is like, a lot of older adult centers like, have din—have, um, lunch instead of—and SAGE has dinner, and it was because they like, polled their constituents and were like, "What meal would you want?" and they were like, "Fuck lunch. We want to have dinner and then go out together and be cute." Like, you know? Like, they wanted nightlife, because like, nightlife is such a big part of queer and like, LGBT community, right?

Katz: Yeah.

Lenni: So, for me, I think also like—yeah, going out, um, to like, you know—going out to parties and like—particularly like, it came actually through like—well, if you’re my former student and you’re listening to this, or you’re my current student listening to this, you know, know that your educators are also adults—um, to like, consenting kink and sex-positive community. Um, and that’s where I’ve met a lot of incredible trans and genderqueer people and like, gender nonconforming people, and actually learned to accept and love my body in its current form as it is, um, and to like, see it as a beautiful thing even if I’m not sexualized as like, a “woman”—like, air quotes around the word “woman”—because I think I—I learned to be sexual as a woman, and very confu—and I don’t—but that never felt quite right, and I didn’t know how to quite be my full self in those scenarios, and so being around trans people in those scenarios and seeing them struggle but also be in their power has been really incredible. Um, so, some of the spaces in New York City like—you know, there’s a place called like, the—there’s a space called Submit, and there’s like—um, like, there’s a—there’s like, things called the Myth Parties that don’t really exist any—could exist in the future, but were mostly put on by community members who were interested in showing up. They saw a need, and they wanted to like, start things. Um, so those are some things that were very important for me in terms of like, coming to a place of real like, love and self-love around who I am, like, as a whole person.

Katz: I think that there’s so much truth in that, because as trans people whose bodies don’t necessarily conform to whatever the norm is, I feel like there’s a way in which you’re your most true self—or I am my most true self—I don’t like to speak for other people—in the nude. Like, you’re naked, okay, somebody can see, “Oh, this part’s sort of like, what I think of as masculine. That part might be feminine, you know?” and that being with a whole bunch of different trans people in the nude, and seeing the wonderful variety of their bodies, and also then seeing that they’re not broken and fucked up, they’re actually sexy and gorgeous and fabulous—

Lenni: —and whole, exactly.

Katz: —and whole. It’s very healing—

Lenni: Totally. Totally.

Katz: —and I’ve thought of that in terms of, uh, art instead, because there’s been, uh, projects that do photographs of nude trans people, and I’ve thought that’s—that’s powerful.

Lenni: Yeah, and the narrative also, like—it’s a—and I like—I know so many trans people who have so much shame around their bodies, and like, different parts of their bodies, right, whether there be the genitals—but also just, any part of their body, right? Um, and that’s—and they deserve—and I deserve whatever shame I feel, like, to have the support or resources to have that—like, have their bodies match how they need it to be, right? And there are trans and gender nonconforming people—I would consider myself one of them—that really feel a lot of love for parts of their bodies that other people with the same exact identity feel less love about—

Katz: Right.

Lenni: —and sometimes I don't feel any love for those parts of my body, and some days I really do, and it shifts, and it's not a static thing. And so like, I wish that—I wish that growing up, that I had like, known that it didn't have to be like, one really clear idea. Like, I was always just so jealous of these people who just like, knew who they were, and like, I know I—like, I would—I was jealous of these lesbians because in my head—in my head, the story was they just knew they were a lesbian, it was so clear, and everything was clear-cut and dry, and I was over here like, real confused, you know? And like, one day I'd feel one way, and another way I'd feel another way, and I think if I—I would love to have heard—and I'm grateful now that I think—like, the young people I work with have a lot more role models, but there need to be even more still, of people being like, "It shifts. It changes. It can be whatever it is. I can love my body exactly the way it is and be trans. Like, does—there's all lots—and then maybe like, for five years I can love it, and then five years later I can—I can do something else, and then I can do something else after." Like, I think that that is really revolutionary, and I don't—and just getting away from the like—a single narrative that, um, you know—that I internalize, you know—like, and that kept me from being my—from being out as my true self for a long time, because I'm like, "Oh, like, if I don't feel X, then I can't be Y. Like, if I don't feel like I hate this part of my body, then I must not be..." Like, but I knew—it was like I was stuck between a rock and a hard place, and I was like, "I don't—I don't"—like, I didn't feel like I had space in between. And so that's why, coming back to that galaxy idea, just like, freeing out of—maybe it's because I'm a Virgo and I like, always—I think a little in boxes, like a lot of—like a lot of people, but I'm like—I like lists and rules and things, and sometimes I get in my own way around that. Um, and so—I'm also Aquarius, so I have some space to like, flow and be airy. Anyway, um, I think that I want there to be more narratives out there, and I—I also—one of the things about this project that I've really loved is like, being around trans people and watching them and myself shift their own narratives. Like, sometimes in the project, people will be like, "Only X pronouns," right, "Only he/him pronouns," and then like, halfway through the project they'll be like, "He/him or xe/xem/xyr or they/them/their, or, you know, she if you're feeling cute, you know, like—or if you're in the family," like, people getting really fluid with different parts of themselves, and having—because I think when trans people feel safe, they often—not always, actually—can get a lot more fluid and have that space to be, but it's because the world like, sort of tells us we have to be one way. Yeah.

Katz: Yeah, and the community gives you more options, and when you see other people doing all the different ways, you can try it out, or you—or not—

Lenni: And you can be like, "Oh, yeah cool."

Katz: —and then see how it fits, and maybe keep it, or slough it off later.

Lenni: Yeah. Keep the stuff that works and—and chuck the rest, for sure. Yeah.

Katz: Well, I think we've made a really good message for kids about—

Lenni: Genderqueer kids at home, you're okay!

Katz: Like, you're okay, and you don't have to be anything, and try to listen to yourself, right?

Lenni: Yeah. That little like, weird gutty feeling, you know, it's like, really important, and like, the practice of listening to it, for me, I feel like I'm still learning it so much, and it's like, what makes me excited to be alive, even when I struggle with like, feelings of sadness or whatever. The things that make me feel like, happy to be alive are the parts where I'm like, "I'm getting better at listening to myself," and imagine if I'm getting better, then what I'll be in ten years, you know, "How good will I be with myself in ten years if I'm—if I'm better to myself now than I was ten years ago?" So, that's—that's what, you know...

Katz: And it's deep, you know? It really might be about evolution, you know? Like, listening to yourself and letting yourself evolve into what you want to be, or should be, or really are but didn't—you know, that it takes some opening up of the layers to know.

Lenni: Yeah. Letting yourself evolve is like, all of it. That's—I feel like that's what it is about for me, is like, letting myself evolve, um, and standing—getting out of my own way, and, yeah. Thanks for interviewing me, Kyle.

Katz: That's beautiful. Well, you rock.

Lenni: You rock, Kyle!

Katz: Don't stop it.

Lenni: Don't stop it. Okay.

Katz: Wrap-up questions: How do you feel emotionally, mentally, physically right now? So basically, you're okay, right?

Lenni: Yeah. I've got a little bit of a headache, because we had a long, badass day of making theater. Um, I feel proud of myself and I feel more connected to you.

Katz: I'm really proud of you, too, and more connected to you. I think we did "If you wanted people to hear one thing from you, what would it be?" but if anything else leaps to mind...

Lenni: Yeah. It's an evolution.

Katz: Yeah, okay.

Lenni: Yeah, for sure.

Katz: If you wanted to be remembered for one thing, what would it be? I think it's your look.

Lenni: My look? [laughter] You can't see my look, but I wear—I—I love color.

Katz: You are so fabulous. Like, we have to take a picture.

Lenni: Oh, we'll take a picture, and I have color—I like sparkles, I like color, and I like galaxy imagery, for sure.

Katz: Yeah.

Lenni: Thank you. Alright, I'm going to hit stop.

Katz: Okay, thank you. Yep.

Lenni: Bye!

Katz: Bye.