

**ART BEGINS WITH RISK –
WHAT RISKS SHOULD WE
BE TAKING NOW?**

Friday 15th May 2009
The Australian Theatre Forum
Open Space

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ACTIONS

Action number	Title
1	Specific: research models for long service leave for theatre workers
2	Reconvene Blak Stage and look at supporters / partners to help move towards Indigenous Theatre Strategy
3	Empty Space: circus / physical theatre / site specific / outdoor hub and laboratory
4	To find pathways for collaboration among small theatre companies
5	National Theatre Festival

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6	Find partners to deliver local outreach for new writing across Australia
7	To address culture diversity in MPAB Theatre companies as a matter of urgency
8	To consider different ways to share risk
9	Create informal Peer to Peer network for small/mediums
10	Develop organization Indigenous strategy
11	Implementing \$1000 stencil project
12	Develop a women directors professional development mentorship initiative
13	Establish a forum of theatre training institutions with a view to furthering co-operation in creating training programs relevant for 21 st Century Australian theatre / dramatic arts
14	To explore potential for regional MLBG as Arts drillers
15	A project to explore the place where metropolitan stops and regional begins and monitor how this effects Arts practice for regional artists
16	Form an action group around the issue of climate change and the Arts
17	For every Australian person aged 8-14 to go to the theatre at least once each year
18	Regional Arts Conference to engage regional arts centres
19	National Theatre Forum 2
20	Identify issues for further debate and advocacy through the TNV vote / activity over the next 18 months
21	Smaller more often (?)

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 001*

Issue: Tell people what you want. Who? How? When?

Convener(s): Emilie Collyer

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Fiona Winning

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Those independent artists feel they risk a lot by asking for what they want.
- Culture of 'fear' between artists and organisations (reflective of Howard years?)
- That it is the responsibility of artists to identify what they need for their professional development and initiate, articulate those needs.
- Artists can have the courage to speak to organisations and to each other and engage in genuine collaboration about what's not quite right and what is possible to collaboratively devise solutions for.
- That organisations think they are more transparent than they actually are - is there a way to open up more robust and genuine mechanisms for feedback/dialogue?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes)* 002

Issue: How do we dissolve sector hierarchy by changing our language?

Convener(s): Jennifer Barry

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Various

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The language we use can have a negative effect because of what certain words imply. It's time to take a risk and LOSE the term "Major" organisation because it implies the semantic opposite of "minor" and sets up an artificial dividing line. Can we start to define organisations by their function rather than their size? Can we conceive of movement within our arts ecology, which is not linear (e.g. artists/funding/producers move from 'independence' through to being a "major")? Can we abolish the notion that the "small-to-medium" sector is the "seeding ground" or the "nursery" for the "majors"? Can we only look at the sector in terms of a 'path' - one from small to big? How about some new language?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 003*

Issue:

Creating and building interesting partnerships: Or what to do when the majors won't call back...

Convener(s):

TJ Eckleberg

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Jo Coventry; Nathan Bennet; Emilie Collyer; Carin Mistry; Fraser Corfield; Margie Brown Ash

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- 1 In regards to majors:
 - Know the company you are approaching - shared values, common artistic aspirations, audience development goals, future directions
 - Focus on what the partnership offers them and what they have to gain: tangible and intangible
 - Work on articulating this clearly and simply
 - Find a conduit... who do you know in that company? Or who do you know that might know?
 - Think about engaging the board or a broker
 - Make sure key people in the target company are invited to see the work, engage with your company

- Ensure some protection of your ideas, intellectual property and reputation are in place
- 2 If they don't call back...
- Be aware of the sympathetic connections you already have. Actively seek companies who share similar goals or ideals
 - Also look for partners who might otherwise go overlooked – outside the sector, or across arts platforms, markets etc... who are seeking to engage and connect
 - Ask yourself... who is actually coming to see this work? What opportunities does that present?
- 3 In summary...
- Think through your approach using research and making the idea concise, tangible and clear
 - Look for the most natural place in the target company to build connection / make an approach
 - no response? consider a different partner
 - no response? consider a different project
 - no response? create the project of your own choosing in your own sweet time

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 004*

Issue: Holding onto belief/inspiration in the face of survival

Convener(s): sue giles

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Kate Sulan, Daniel Lawler, Ingrid Voorandt, Fiona de Garis, Xan Coleman, Erin Milne, someone else didn't get her name

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or

recommendations: Necessity of peers in providing support or clarity of opinion on ideas

Issues of making decisions on the run because of deadlines, time restrictions, funding imperatives

When is a window of opportunity your only one - when it passes is that all you get?

Ideas become old - must do it now

Are you being precious or pragmatic - your choice

Balance between what you want to make and how you're going to make it - can you meet your vision or does it become compromised because of resources

Even initial conceptualisation involves pragmatism

The need to be in the pure artist space - re-connect with beginnings - desire, inspiration - the reason you wanted it in the first place.

Survival often means the artist is the last to be paid

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Presentation/producer model is based on what is sellable

Where is the audience in this - they are able to become the advocates for new work - we need to know how to work with our audiences to this end - risk.

The art/market dilemma - market consideration before art - where does that get you? We all thought that got us to a hideous place.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 005*

Issue: To develop a national arts incubator

Convener(s): John Paul Fishbach and Sue Hunt

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

John Paul Fishbach, Sue Hunt, Liz Burcham, Lenine Bourke, Bronwyn Edinger

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Goal:

Improving the confidence of artists to deliver their practice, by fast tracking artists and small companies in a supportive environment.

To activate a national network.

Seek funding to enable the national network

Objective

A real space and online hub

Network in all major cities, bringing arts incubators together

Providing national training modules

A one-stop shop providing online services- ticketing, marketing and budgeting

An Advice bank

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How

National network of arts incubators - set targets and actions

First meeting at APAM 2010

Call for all those who think they are an arts incubator on Arts Hub to attend

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 006*

**Issue: How do we measure our real impact on people?
(and do we want to know the answer?)**

Convener(s): Jackie

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Ian

Libby Anstis

Libby Christie

Tim Joss

Jute?

Jeremy?

Fee Plumley

John Baylis

Loads of other people

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Summary of discussion:

Strong points which came up:

- We need to think about measures that "matter," not just measures that the funders ask for.
- Artistic quality: how do we know if it's any good?

- Not just about critic's reviews: a piece can have impact, but how do we measure it systematically? (not just through feedback)
- How to measure impact beyond "measurables," like box office
- What difference is our art making to society?
- What about the people we change over the longer-term: collecting stories as a way to record rather than quantify
- The impact of our art on the audiences is also important to artists
- There are easy and hard things to measure:
 - Quantifiable things, like audience numbers
 - Anecdotal things, like impact on an individual right after a show or even six months later
 - Then there is the ephemeral impact of theatre on society which seems very hard to measure

- Issue: workloads on s2m companies
- Issue: s2m orgs don't want to admit failure
 - Personal pain
 - Danger to funding (perceived or real)
- Issue: skillset in an org for this type of evaluation, which currently make it undeliverable
- measuring, not just the art, but also the organization's performance in how well its processes and so on work eg governance, decision-making, strategies
 - This may need a different type of evaluation

Big questions:

What do the arts do that nothing else can?

- E.g. arts can tell people what the issues in society are before they have been articulated elsewhere

What are we measuring?

- Impact of the art on audience
- Impact of the art on wider society
- What people get from the art (or don't get)
- What artists get from the art (or don't get)
- What the organisation gets from the art (or don't get)

How do we measure?

- Quantitative data
- Stories from audience, artists and society
- Maybe draw on other research or practices in NFP sector
- We don't have a really good way of doing this in the arts yet
- We may need to set up baselines and methodology for the sector

Why do we need to measure?

- For proof to government and funders
- It's important to us to know what our impact is
- So I can make programming choices for my organisation (i.e. choose between which items to program depending on the impacts I expect each item might have): have to avoid the danger of government using this to push policy
- INTERNAL use
- To make changes to my organisation if necessary

- This is about thoughtfulness and being thoughtful in our work

How do we do our assessment now?

- quantitative data and some qual

Ideas

- Perhaps we are talking about not measuring, but recording impact through storytelling
- Formulate the right questions of ourselves, our audiences and the wider community we may affect (circles of influence)
- There may be research that can help or things we can learn from other areas:
 - Social returns on investment
 - Develop some methods and measures consistent across the not for profit sector
 - What is our baseline?
 - What are we measuring?
 - Need to agree about this as a sector
 - Develop measures beyond \$ terms
 - Measures that mean something to artists, the organisation, and the community too; BUT at the same time, are not cynical and just for the funders
 - May be able to learn from the wider NFP sector, with an eye to what of their evaluation studies are rubbish and what is genuine. Other NFP orgs like charities can clearly articulate the change they want to create in society. Can arts orgs for this too?

- Collecting stories more systematically
 - Stimulate the conversation within your organisation first, and collect stories within your organisation
 - Record the stories

- Need a bit more of a scientific approach to how we gather feedback, record impacts - find ways that mean something for us, not just copy from other sectors

- Research that looks at what part of our work leads to which outcomes

- Maybe we can learn from sport - they know the content of the sport is irrelevant, it's about measuring outcomes like teamwork, collaboration...is there a parallel in arts? (e.g. forget that you are staging hamlet or kosky...are you having impacts which all the arts can have and can be recorded and measured, such as social cohesion, wellbeing)

- May be able to use Internet to ask ppl what they want, and to measure impacts beyond numbers

- Set up goals clearly at the outset: eg:
 - Who is going to access my product?
 - Will it be good for the artists involved?
 - Articulate at the outset why we are doing a thing?

- The timing of conversations / debriefs and assessments of an artistic work has to be sensitive: not on opening night! Consider the artists involved!
- Set up a culture within an organisation of positive constructive feedback
- No one size fits all
- Create safe spaces for measurement of artistic impacts and organisational performance

- Debriefs need good facilitation; recognise successes before failures

- Might be able to borrow from the “art labs” and intensive hothouses like national play festival

- Recording and measuring don’t end at the immediate end of a project; might need to be open to recording impacts further down the track
- As for long term, longitudinal studies, this might be useful for the big picture of culture/society and the theatre sector. It can be expensive, so another way to do it might be milestone analysis: looking at early indicators and if you’re hitting them, you know it will be a success in the long term

- May need another skillset in an arts org, which currently makes this sort of deep evaluation undeliverable

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 007*

Issue: Professional development and training in 'dramaturgy' and the role(s) of the 'dramaturge'

Convener(s): Paul Monaghan (VCA-Theatre & The Dramaturgies Project)

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Paul Monaghan, Jaclyn Booton, Kylie Trounson, Sarah Austin, Chris Summers, David Latham, Jude Anderson, Stephen Nicolazzo

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Starting point: there is a need for greater understanding, dialogue, professional development as well as tertiary training in 'dramaturgy'.

The first step in this development is to promote a greater understanding of just what 'dramaturgy' is, and how dramaturgical practice (which involves writing, direction, light, sound, space, structure etc etc) lies at the core of theatre making. It is *not* restricted to work on a script. Dramaturgy is about content/impetus/idea into form, or vice versa.

This development needs to operate on a range of levels.

1. **Dialogue and critical reflection** post-production: as a community we are not particularly good at examining our work postproduction with peers. There is a need to develop a mindset, a better approach and language, and a mechanism to dialogue with peers about our work (the foyer post-show is not a good place to do it).
 - a. What informal but organised and regular mechanism can we set up that will achieve this?
 - b. The idea might be to something like: the team who made the show talking with interested and informed peers about what they were working on, what they think worked well, what didn't etc. The role of the peer group is to ask questions, comment, and critique in productive ways.
 - c. It might also involve groups meeting, something like a 'book club' (a 'performance club'?), and discussing a particular production.
 - d. The concept might perhaps be termed **'Feedback'**

2. **Professional development** in dramaturgy: What regular opportunities might we create (in addition to anything that currently exists ...) in order to further engage with and deepen our understanding of dramaturgy and our practice of it?
 - a. What are the current opportunities? How do we all get to know about and access them?
 - b. There is a need for regular cross-state gatherings as well as local ones.

3. **Tertiary training:** there currently appears to be no tertiary 'course' in Australia that focuses on dramaturgy. Is there a role for one (or rather, several), and what would it look like? The points raised by this group were
 - a. Dramaturgy is a broad concept – any course would need to encompass that breadth and depth and then allow for specialisations (dramaturgy of writing, sound, light, space etc).
 - b. Needs to involve training in concepts, practices, collaboration and personal skills.
 - c. Involve a very strong interaction with the profession, and set up pathways into it.
 - d. Involve dealing with emerging forms as well as well-established forms.
 - e. Be post-grad level.

4. **A working group** has been set up to continue to discuss these ideas (to express your interest and views, see email address below). This is a very open group.

5. There is a national event to be held at the VCA in February 2010 focused on dramaturgy:
Dramaturgies #4: new dramaturgies for the C21, set up by **The Dramaturgies Project**: Peter Eckersall, Melanie Beddie, Paul Monaghan (funded by the Australia Council and the University of Melbourne).

To express your interest in this area, please email Paul Monaghan on pmonag@unimelb.edu.au

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 008*

Issue: Art vs. Sport

Convener(s): Ben Laden

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*
Ben Laden

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

What can the Arts learn from the success of Sport and the culture that has developed around it? What should be gleaned? What should be rejected? Guerilla tactics to steal sport's thunder. The spontaneity of sport. Is that why the public love it so? The violence. The risk to body. The risk of your team losing every time 'you' enter the fray. Does art risk in the same way, or differently. Perhaps we can learn something from Sport to inspire the same kind of mass passion and commitment that the Arts currently only produces in a small section of the community.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 009*

Issue: Who are we doing it for?

Convener(s): Meropie Carr

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Various (but just me for quite a while)

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

All The possibilities we can think of who we are doing it for:

- The Public Good
- Personal Artistic drive or Satisfaction
- Career Development
- Extending Arts Practice of Self or Company
- The Audience (what do they really want? (Who are they?))
- Other Arts Workers (create dialogue....)
- New Audience who don't go to the Theatre
- There must be others?

Discussion evolved into Question of:

WHY are we doing it?

Does that then lead into who, and then How ???

THE RISK OF HAVING CLEAR INTENTIONS

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 010*

Issue: Sharing Resources Dialogue between Majors and Independents

Convener(s): Sonya Soares, Red Stitch Actors Theatre

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

17+ participants including reps from PICA/ STC/ Bell Shakespeare/ DCA/ Griffin/ Storeroom/ Deckchair/ Black Swan/ Darwin Festival, Sarah Greentree & Caroline Stacey

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

We took as our starting point the fact that 'major' theatre companies receive a large portion of the arts funding pie and discussed ways in which they could share their resources with 'independent' artists and companies, thereby growing the sector.

We identified some of the resources independents would like to access as follows:

- Advice & assistance from creative/ technical personnel
- Review of/ feedback on project proposals, scripts, funding submissions, etc.

- Marketing support
- Partnering on programs/ initiatives with the same identified outcome: e.g. the development of high quality new writing
- Access space for artists to create
- Opportunities for co-management of unused spaces

We noted the existence of informal/ adhoc partnerships between "majors" and "independent companies" as well as noting the formal programs available, listed below:

- Black Swan - formal emerging artist program & formal one-year relationship with Steamworks
- PICA - residency programs/ research & development program/ access to venues
- QTC - regional partnerships program whereby they paid for dramaturgs and directors to work with regional companies
- Bell - opened spaces for independents to conduct research & development via formal submissions
- STC - associate companies including Thin Ice & Zeal

Festivals were also identified as organisations with the potential to share resources, including technical, creative & administrative assistance.

We debated the necessity of formal pathways whereby independents can initiate partnerships with majors rather than these predominantly being initiated by the major companies. It was suggested that all 28 companies create a formal plan outlining the way in which they intend to actively support the sector. Formal pathways

were also called into question - whether these were necessary giving partnerships were based on relationship building and persistence/ whether these could create more bureaucracy than outcomes. It was generally agreed that mapping of initiatives undertaken by major companies would be worthwhile in the form of an audit of their engagement with the sector that is made explicit for everyone's (including each other's) reference.

We acknowledged that the decision to partner with independents will always reside with the major companies. However, it was generally agreed that encouraging dialogue in both directions - that is, openness on the part of majors to conversations initiated by independents - is important in terms of exploring unidentified opportunities and the growth of the sector generally. The major strategy identified to encourage this openness seems to be the audit suggested above.

The terms 'major', 'independent' and 'responsibility' were all discussed, with particular reference to the way these entrench hierarchical relationships with companies within the sector. The words 'partnerships' and 'dialogue' on the other hand, imply equality, which in turn engenders a different mindset.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 011*

Issue: Governance/compliance vs. the Art – restoring the balance

Convener(s): Chris Pidd

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Markus Michalowski, Vyvian Wilson, Angela Salome, Jan Clancy, Cathcart, Peta Handrahan, Natalie Jenkins, Pippa Bainbridge*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Boards - some false assumptions; they take some of the risk away, they are always engaged, they are there for you, they ensure that we are compliant, they ensure succession, are value for money, set strategic direction, do not take up a lot of the CEO's time.....

Of course Boards assist from time to time - bringing in the cash, marketing support, stakeholder feedback.

However Boards cost money and time that may well be better spent on specific expertise i.e. an accountant or lawyer that are engaged on an ad need basis.

Will still have to ensure that we comply, have policy and procedure, plan for succession

So lets park the board to the side and decide what it is we need to assist in running our organisations. And so lets talk about our mates. People we can rely on in our hour of need (great or small)... they might be the artistic directorate, peak body or simply someone you know with the knowledge you need who has no interested in being sucked into the board black hole.

There are things you will tell your mates that you would never tell the board!

The Hollywood model - the casting agency, getting the extra pair of hands when you need them.

Compliance - lets risk the riot and challenge the system of compliance.

- It is very time consuming
- We are not confident that reports are read and then actioned
- Where is the information disseminated to
- Is the relevant minister and or senior bureaucrat receiving the information

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 012*

Issue: Is there ever any real risk in a subscription artform?

Convener(s): Nick Marchand

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Rob Brookman, Tom Wright, Ann Tonks, Sarah Neal, Champion Decent, Daniel Schlusser, Sue Donnelly

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Provocations and responses:

1) Does striving for "balance" in a season reduce a company's artform risk as a whole?

- Discussion that it can *encourage* risk, because larger loss-leader model subsidises risks that could not be absorbed outside subscription programming (e.g. *The Women of Troy, Eldorado, The Lost Echo*, etc.)? Does the model in fact open a door to new work and new artforms?
- Discussion that subscriber audience are the real active risk-takers as they choose to engage with the unknown, not waiting for critical response or word of mouth.
- Question - does it mean we are conservative in our own programming balance, as we pre-empt and

second-guess audience response to riskier work?
Perhaps not, if you know your audience well enough.

- Would programming become even more conservative in a single ticket model?

2) Ability to respond...

- How often do building-based arts companies really *respond*? Programming cycles are still 12-18 months in advance - so would it *really* change programming?
- Do we really miss anything from this model - does it really reduce opportunity for independent arts companies to exploit work and extend presentational life? Discussions that aside from subscription companies do commercial pressures ever allow bigger single-ticket (e.g. Powerhouse of Opera House) companies to programme within 4 months of a production opening anyway? So are they able to respond any quicker in real terms?
- If we scrapped subscription season, wouldn't we still be releasing individual shows in mini-seasons of single ticket sales? And if so, does that mean we are just in a *half-pregnant* state?

3) Does a season "reduce" a company's individual artistic identity?

- Argument that ultimately a company is still a product of artistic director, not subscription season. Yes, there may be a remit - but ultimately it is still the curation that defines identity.

4) Will subscription programmers be forced to reimagine model in light of Generation Y and i-generation? Will it have to change?

- Statistics show in Sydney over last 10 years, subscriptions remained same (across city, in total) - suggesting it is a learnt and continuing pattern of behavior. Is this really going to change in the future? The feeling was not. And as audiences get older, they will always prefer this model over all others.
- How else could we do it? Airlines reward early bookers by staggering price from low to premium based on how early you book. In theatre we tend to do the opposite, discounting at last minute, to fill empty seats. Would airline model work, encouraging audiences to engage with company, not individual production. Is that any different to subscription selling?

5) Why is it a peculiarly Australian model?

- Is it a question of the scale of activities in this country, when compared to the UK, US or Europe?
- Financially it is the essential tool for operating costs, with around 55-60% of sales coming from this model.
- Discussion - is subscription season a much better way of defining company aesthetic and identity over a year, than staggered shorter blocks of programming? Is it, in fact a more effective a way of communicating company identity? Actually, are we artistic leaders in this regard? Discussion that it can be tricky to get a clear sense of some overseas

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companies' identities. It is actually easier in Australia to see the longer artistic threads and journeys?

Final question - was our perspective shaped by the fact the group was skewed by 'subscription defenders'? Would independent companies and artists feel the same way about the provocation?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes)* 013

**Issue: Training the 'untrainable' – saving the species
(Producers and Artistic Directors)**

Convener(s): Lynno Wallis

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Nicole Lauder, Sarah Stewart, Marguerite Pepper, Teena Munn, Annette Madden, Brenna Hobson, Julie Waddington, Daniel, Jennifer Greer-Holmes, Jo Duffy, Annette Vieusseux, Sue Broadway and spectacularly at the end- Scott Maidment

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- The QUESTIONS: LW- The indefinable, composite magic that creates producers and artistic directors - can we train them? How? Background: there are only a couple of producing 'elders' - we are at risk of losing a wealth of expertise and knowledge. Artistic Directors: mainstage companies might say they don't know where the successors are coming from - how do we develop this next generation of ADs?

We begin:

- Trend: fragmentation of other roles within companies to 'take on' producing roles/tasks - how do we upskill these people?

- Companies in residence model (small with large) can work really well
- MP talks about mentoring producers, passing on her knowledge - how to accommodate them all? To not let those hungry and talented lose out because of limited opportunities?
- JW: There are issues with throwing young people into producing roles and them burning out. How to support? Small companies great for mentoring, but in survival mode themselves.
- One definition of 'Artistic Director' - ADing is about 'creatively directing' an organisation. You can 'learn'; tools like budgeting and dealing with infrastructure, you cannot 'learn' intuitive way of developing work, vision, contextualising vision etc. Only can learn this by immersion.
- A tendency for long-standing ADs to hold onto power rather than sharing, opening up?

Ok, the tricky dicky part of the discussion. WHAT IS A PRODUCER? Define it. We are venturing into uncertain area. A lot of brow-creasing.

MP is crystal clear - for her, Producers are people who take financial risk with their own money. Not everyone agrees! TM argues that another version of this is a producer working within a company (or exec producer) - they facilitate the AD's vision, and take risks with company money. Others contribute many different versions.

Breakthrough - a statement everyone likes:

A producer is someone who can facilitate an artist's vision from the inception, through to the manifestation of the work and beyond with touring etc.

There is a strong thread emerging that emerging producers (and ADS) must push to create the path they want for themselves - it must be driven by them. Put your hand up. Conversely, once you've got there, it is your responsibility to give it back and share and open doors for others. You gotta learn it on the job, and the path to producer may be a winding one.

More observations:

- There's a huge drop-off rate for producers - how do we keep inspiring them?
- How can emerging producers be encouraged to take risk, when there is also a need to protect them?

More conversation about ADs:

- More and more, ADs are required to be CEOs. There's a very small pool of ADs with requisite skills for CEO work - where do they get these skills?
- Should NIDA be running a course for ADS (out of new federal budget money?)?
- SB: The first 3 months of an AD's appointment is crucial. Every AD brings a unique skills set to the mix, companies should examine their skills and work out gaps for companies
- New ADs need mentors. Associate positions sometimes work/sometimes not
- Regional, small companies are critical training grounds for emerging ADs - you get to do it all!

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- Overseas experience really important

NOTE: MPP & Justin McDonald are holding an independent producer forum on 25th June - to create strategic paper addressing fragility of sector - informing how to proceed

We are winding up. Scott Maiment launches his fabulous hairdo and booming voice upon us, and quotes from BAC's producing book: "Producers are born, not made". AM elegantly comments: Maybe there are those out there who have it in them, but haven't recognised their calling yet?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 014*

Issue: How do we keep it 'risky' when we've gotta 'plan' and 'manage' it?

Convener(s): Erin Milne

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Erin Milne, Fiona Maxwell, Nathan Bennett, Nicole Beyer

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- separate OHS issues and artistic risks
- Yes, we're overregulated but you can't risk people's lives or safety
- Content risks: some funders are too involved in regulating content e.g. City of Melbourne controversial content clauses; the federal govt's children in art protocols
- Do we get to a point where vibrancy/diversity of work is affected or goes underground – because companies or funded artists feel they can't take risk?
- Higher level of compliance for funded companies
- Issues for festival and event programmers – can't go certain places or with certain artists
- But business planning and risk management frameworks can be a good thing – can lead to sustainable risk-taking over time. For example, budgeting for risk-taking (can we afford lawyers fees or a fine?)

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- Interesting that GMs all part of this discussion topic – would be interesting to hear ADs perspectives on whether/where this question comes into thinking
- Risk to reputation – how far can funded companies / artists go in criticising the government / funders
- **We need to get better at cost/benefit analysis – what's the risk of us NOT doing things? What's the risk of us NOT existing? There is real social and economic value to us taking risks.**

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 015*

Issue: IS CULTURAL DIVERSITY A VITAL ISSUE?

Convener(s): Rosalba Clemente

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Antoinetta Morghillo, Chris Mead, Annette Downs, Rachel Maza, Chris Kohn, Libby from NIDA, Chris Bendell, Gail Kelly, Alison, Letiora, Kate Cherry, Stephen Ch, Thomas P, Todd MacDonald, Rose Good, Nick Beyer, Pam Creed, Marcus from Flying Fruit Fly, Peta Tait, Jod....and more....*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The discussion was wide ranging and passionate and the group grew like a triffid!

It is a fact that artists and stories from non-English speaking backgrounds are still being marginalised in theatre overall.

We need to re open a dialogue as a matter of urgency with our whole sector and also at an educational and govt level.

We believe we live in a culture of Institutionalised Racism.

The open door policy of most companies - especially mainstage is a fallacy for artists from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The training of our artists is quite narrow. Training Institutions for theatre artists and practitioners needs to embrace cultural diversity not just by choosing students from different cultural backgrounds but then giving cultural diversity an expression in the very training methods that are used....methodologies, movement practises, thinking structures for different types of performance practises, exposure to music/ paintings/ plays/ ways of making theatre form many different cultural perspectives....

Break "cracking the golden triangle" syndrome in our young ethnically diverse artists. Empower them to move outwards and create their own ways of making theatre that feel authentic to them and the stories that pulsate meaning through them. Get out there and be yourself and make work that means something to you and stop trying to be a clone of what the mainstream dominant culture wants you to be - that way lies death! Literally for those who starve themselves and dye their hair blonde with peroxide because they can't afford the Shwarkopf.

Start to understand the sources of money available outside the current funding models that might support culturally diverse work EG HEALTH/ SOCIAL JUSTICE/ CRIMINAL JUSTICE.

Multiculturalism as an issue has been eroded. The Liberal Howard Government was particularly helpful in creating this sad truth. It is seen as passé. It was always viewed pretty much as the work of community arts and artists. That tradition has also been eroded by government policies. The top end of theatre making has always marginalised cultural diversity. It is alarming how few non white faces we see on our mainstages. Why can't we permanently dissolve this line of dominant culture practice excluding so many non-Anglos?

We need to encourage culturally diverse writing and theatre making as an imperative act that will lead to a true representation of who we really are as Australian artists and audiences and citizens and HUMAN BEINGS.

The Major Performing Arts Companies need to be particularly challenged. What do you get funded for and for what? You must demonstrate some responsibility for setting the cultural agenda. What message are you giving our artists, our audiences, and our governments? How can cultural diversity reinvigorate your practice at the top end? These are conservative times- help us break them....become parent bodies to cultural diversity.

We need to develop an ecology in this area for artists of-ongoing practice and pathways of development opportunities across all levels of our sector.

Cultural Diversity is not just stories about migrants. We have artists with the capacity to challenged not only our views of identity and migration but artists who make

theatre in different ways, who think and dream differently than us challenging we are not seeing expressions of this diversity in the landscape OR when we see it seems to be trapped in some kind of repetitive pattern of expression. There are some exceptions to this and the work of Urban Theatre Projects and Playwriting Australia's work in new communities is demonstration of this. It is not enough. Community practise in this area is still quite strong but has lost some steam since eighties.

There are niche markets to be found for cultural diverse work.

Is there an argument for a lead agency that make a space for culturally diverse artists to develop new work in a rigorous setting- work that may indeed begin to break the common codes of theatre making, that bring new stories and new ways of telling them...that are not token or recognisable? That do not reduce cultural diversity to sentiment and simplistic feel good gestures...

We have skilled foreign/ exotic artists and voices right here under our noses...if this energy and talent and skill where given full reign where might it end? New theatrical languages might start to take hold...we might be surprised/ thrilled/ appalled or even shaken.

We need to train leaders- who will carry forward the agenda of cultural diversity- Artistic Directors/ Producers/ Festival Directors...people from culturally diverse backgrounds themselves passionately committed to the expression of difference and the richness it adds to the overall culture. WE NEED CULTURAL LEADERS.

CUTURAL DIVERSITY creates more sustainability, more employment, more audiences, generates more income.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE CULTURAL MINISTERS COUNCIL RECOMMENDS A DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVT/ NON GOVT/THEATRE SECTOR TO SUPPORT CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS.

2. A REVIEW OF TRAINING SYSTEMS AVAILABLE BOTH IN CITIES AND REGIONAL AREAS THAT INVESTIGATE CULTURAL DIVERSITY AS AN IMPERATIVE PART OF ANY CURRICULUM- TERTIARY AND PRE TERTIARY. TRAIN CULTURAL LEADERS IN THIS AREA.

3. A REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES REGARDING MULTICULTURALISM/ DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS AND PARTICULARLY THEATRE.

4. MAJOR PERFORMING ARTS COMPANIES DEVELOP POLICIES IN THIS REA ACROSS THE BOARD - EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES NOT JUST FOR ARTISTS BUT ADMINISTRATORS ETC ETC.

5. EVERY PRACTITIONER AND OUR CULTURAL LEADERS WRITE TO GOVERNMENTS TO SE CULTURAL DIVERSITY PUT BACK ON THE AGENDA.

6. LEGISLATE EOQUAL OPPORTUNITY.

7. DON'T LEGISLATE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.

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8. FUND A MULTICULTURAL ARTS HUB IN EACH STATE AND REGION - YEAH WHY NOT!

9. ESTABLISH A NATIONAL LABORATORY THAT ENCOURAGES/ SUPPORTS AND RIGOROUSLY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS CULTURAL WORKS BY OUR ARTISTS/ FOREIGN ARTISTS WORKING WITH OUR ARTISTS/ OUR ARTISTS WORKING IN OTHER COUNTRIES/ BRINGING BACK IDEAS/ SEEDING IDEAS IN OTHER COUNTRIES. MAKING CULTURAL DIVERSITY BOTH AN AUSTRALIAN AND A GLOBAL THEATRE CULTURE MOVEMENT. MIGHT GET MORE AUSTRALIAN WORK OUT THERE IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETS TOO.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 016*

Issue: **Being brave enough to stop in order to start: appropriating the time space matrix**

Convener(s):

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Being brave enough to stop in order to start: appropriating the time space matrix

Convener: Sarah Miller

Participants: Chris Drummond, Dave Brown, Mel Cantwell, Ingrid Voorendt, Joanne Kee, Jansis O'Hanlen, Jennifer Hamilton

The discussion quickly turned to new artistic directors taking time out from producing shows for the sake of producing shows: theatre company as work horse. How can you make good work if you're operating like a mouse on a wheel. Internationally admired artists (Robert le Page for instance) are often quoted as beginning works without knowing whether they're going. How can you make arguments to funding bodies before you know what it is you want to do - before you even know what the question is.

Chris described how in his first 20 months as AD of Brink Productions, the company effectively made no work, focusing instead on the artistic vision – i.e. what the company would do in the future, giving the company essential time to grow a new vision and body

Patch on the other hand, lost its funding in 2000 and David Brown described how ultimately liberating that was, as with nothing to lose, the company was able to reflect deeply on its own practices, refocus, reinvigorate and return with a new vision and body of work.

Not taking the risk is more risky.

It's important to set your own agenda and to recognize that it's a slow process.

How you might make those arguments to funding bodies was also discussed, but most people in the group seemed to feel that tenacity, integrity and a passionate believe in an artistic vision would be supported and certainly there seems to be evidence to support that.

It was also agreed that companies may have a limited life and that keeping the sector flexible was important. Certainly keeping companies going for the sake of it was understood as death.

The issues for independent artists who may have too much time and not enough of anything else was also discussed, including the ways in which mainstage companies might usefully support artists. Instances of

when this has been less than successful were also talked about - anarchic theatre making collective meets mainstage production house... How might well-resourced companies facilitate art making?

- The assumption that risk produces inaccessible outcomes
- Wanting answers before we know what the answers are
- Protecting the not-knowingness of the creative process
- Holding off on pulling things together
- Resisting making connections

Towards the end of a really rich discussion, John Baylis asked about the importance of being prepared to discard work (to sop) if it's not working. The paradox of allowing immature work to develop beyond its first outing was seen as one of the fundamental paradoxes of art making.

- Do we know when a work is finished?
- Finding the unexpected.
- Balance between letting go and containment
- Embracing TERROR!

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 017*

Issue: Creating an online resource that represents theatre for by and with young people.

Convener(s): Jane Gronow

Participants:

Dan Evans, Mark Fitzpatrick, Saffron Benner, Chris Kohn, Nyunkia Tauss

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Nyunkia asked if anyone knew of a British site getintotheatre.org that is for 15 to 25 years olds wanting to 'get into theatre'. This site was supported by the British arts council for a three year period.

Jane discussed how Lowdown magazine the national youth performing arts magazine will be developed into Lowdown Online which is to be the national online information and discussion resource, due to be launched in February 2010. The project has a 2-year funding commitment from the Australia Council theatre board.

Questions were based around what it would look like and whether it intended to be a portal or website and whether it would be an information saturated site or more interactive. Who was the audience, who is it intended for? What is the need for a site such as this and it was

identified that there is a further need for a site that is specifically for young people. Could Lowdown online have the potential to host and work on development of a satellite or sister site that could be based on the getintotheatre.org model?

The group identified needs for a national resource:

- Need for educators to be given more access to different kinds of work and opportunity
- Place to encourage audience contribution - more active participation - feedback and response to work
- Online forums and networks about work being produced and its processes
- Frequent updates and constant flow of information
- Provide a place where audiences can respond to works immediately in a safe environment, Where audience are encouraged to give critical and honest comments and feedback and that this feedback can be given with out fear of "hurting someone's feelings" in a safe space that is separate from the company.
- Place for companies to profile work and information
- Create a market place - giving audience the control and power to decide what works they would like to see, educating the audience about what's available so that they can lobby for what work they would like to see.
- Profiling of work that is accessible to schools and funders.

- Company and individual profiles including multi-media file of examples of work and contacts and links to further information

There is a risk of trying to build a site that attempts "to be all things to all people". There is a need for another parallel website that caters to youth as Lowdown does not satisfy the needs of the youth audience or community.

Lowdown Online could service the needs of its current audience such as education sector, schools educators' arts and cultural orgs and government for example.

But youth audience are currently using social networking sites such as face book, my space twitter etc, trying to reinvent the wheel is pointless. By creating a "one stop shop" there would be a danger trying to be all things to all people and being of no use to anyone.

POOL an ABC run site TINA This Is Not Art festival uses for their web presence. POOL gives access to all archives which users can do mash ups with content. It's more for the new media crowd and capturing their art.

Chris put forward the idea of a performance based 'mashing' and used the example of individuals posting their year 12-graduation performance? When capturing theatre or any work produce that contains young people permission can be problematic.

Marketing and advertising could make up a very important part of a sustainable future. *Stickability* is a term that ensures that a website encourages that the users experience doesn't end after the first visit, i.e.

keeping them on site. By measuring the time spent on a site and how many pages are visited you can increase your own marketability and therefore increase advertising revenue.

It was identified that there are 2 requirements for an online resource for youth theatre for by and with young people. One being Lowdown Online and the other being a site that is directly for young people like the getintothetheatre.org. This site seems to be successful in as much as it does cater for everyone but most specifically for 15 to 25 year olds. It is an excellent resource for teachers, youth workers, educators etc. get into theatre is run by Laura Drane Associates in the UK.

Jane and Nyunkia continued the discussion of using the platform used by lowdown online to create a sister site that represents 15-25 year olds that emulates getintothetheatre.org as separate to the Lowdown program but offers connectivity and information sharing.

Mark also pointed out that marketing collateral and print material such as postcards or printed information would be essential promotional tool.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes)* 018

Issue: How do we share information as a sector?

Convener(s): Brenna Hobson

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Nicole Lauder

Tim Joss

Fraser Corfield

Teena Munn

Kyle Morrison

Nicki Pittorino

Jasmine Watterson

John Paul Fischbach

Brenna Hobson

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Discussion

- The AMPAG members share information and it's been really useful. The system isn't perfect but it's a great start.
- We need help benchmarking.
- It can be hard to ask for information and scary sharing it – what if someone says no or 'steals' your ideas
- This flows into how we can lobby effectively as a group rather than a collection of individual organisations

- We need to stop reinventing the wheel in isolation
- Other industries have online bulletin boards that can facilitate a sort of advice bank within the industry (as distinct from the ABAF model)
- Brisbane has a monthly General Managers' lunch for all of the key/major arts organisations. It's a forum to talk about broad trends, good and bad experiences (and each other). It operates on a cone of silence principle.
- Love Your Work is an example of a paper that collected some great and scary information.
- Asking for information can be a way of breaking down barriers in itself – if you admit you don't know it all the person you are asking can too.
- Informal relationship building important to being able to ask one on one questions
- All of the above examples could help getting us to the table to share a range of hard data
- Canadian Example: the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) produces a book triennially analysing fees, ticket sales, staff turnover, staffing numbers, trends, employee conditions etc. This information can then be broken down into geographic areas and by size of organisation.
- The MPA information is great but there are many comparisons that can more usefully be compared between theatre companies and the non majors currently don't have access to the information even though they are often the most in need.

Conclusion

- Look at data MPA companies collect and Canadian book (care of John Paul) to form a model of what sort of data we want
- Approach the Theatre Board of the Australia Council to help.
- We need an independent collator of information (through Ozco or ABAF?) so that we can hand over details with confidence

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes)* 019

Issue: How can we force our enemies to make theatre?

Convener(s): Ralph Myers

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Brenna Hobson, Rachel Healy, Jeremy Rice, Harley Stumm, Nick Dorwood, Glenn R Johns + more

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- * Who are our enemies?
- * Our political enemies?
- * The Dance Sector?
- * The mainstream?
- * Are we really all like-minded politically?
- * Why are we all like-minded politically?
- * Is this good?
- * Should we encourage people we disagree with to express their views through theatre?
- * Should conservative Culture Warriors be given a platform to express their views in the theatre?
- * Would Keith Windshuttle write a play?
- * Could Keith Windshuttle write a play?
- * Would anyone program it?
- * Should anyone program it?
- * Is theatre that confirms our beliefs useful?
- * Why do we not talk about our ideologies?
- * Why do we not declare our ideologies?

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- * Is there no Conservative Theatre because theatre is fundamentally about change, and it challenges the status quo?
- * Is it because conservatives can see that theatre is not an effective way to disseminate their political ideas?
- * Is it because conservatives can see that theatre is not an effective way to make money?
- * Why are there no pro-abortion plays?
- * Are David Williamson's plays Conservative Theatre because they affirm and celebrate our middle-classness?
- * Is Priscilla the Musical Conservative Theatre because it fails to challenge stereotypes?
- * Are we just snobs?
- * Is Commercial Theatre theatre made by our enemies?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 020*

Issue: if we started again – what would it look like?

Convener(s): Stephen Armstrong

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Duncan, Graham, Brad Spalding, Kim Durban, Tamara Searle (additional scribe) , Katrina Gill, Katerina Kokkinos-Kennedy, Robert Paini, Angharad Wynne-Jones, Getha Williams, Eamon Flack, Sally Richardson, Christian Leaveson, Ben Laden, Annete Madden, Simon Abrahams, Naomi Edwards, Jan Clancy – Marshall, Matt Lutton, Liz Jones, Kay Jamison, Lindy Hume , Paul McGill, Glenn Hayden, Richard Murphett, Scott Maidment, Catherine Jones, Robyn Archer, Angela Campbell, Caroline Lee, Sarah Greentree, David Berthold, Fraser Caulfield, Geoffrey Williams, and others.

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

What is *it*? Theatre? Art? Culture? The world?

In the new world - Life long engagement - not just engagement during a phase of life.

(We should be actively engaging with new art in education curricular)

Do elite spaces create elite audiences - do different spaces create different work.

Think about "convening spaces" rather than "venues"

The position of culture in the new world?

Is there funding at all? Tax incentives for the arts? If the people really want art and tax incentives for art - the government will go there.

Strategies for winning advocacy (see below, regional locations, new transactions etc.)

The big, public event (taking the work to the people) alongside the refined, small and beautiful thing.

Acknowledge "art" as an entitlement (vs. art as a secluded professionalism)

What would the banner for revolutionary change say?
"Yes we can"????

A shared purpose coalesces

Difference a virtue in conceiving a whole

Leadership in the new world:

Evangelical church structure success, small cells, convincing people that this matters, groundswell, taking responsibility, Foucault - local and specific.

Where would the energy come from? (If we started again?)

The covered wagons (of colonization)- would they be the audience? Those wanting to make sense or nonsense

Who would it be? The storyteller of what happened. The house is made of the stones available.

Should the government be the cultural engineer?

Anything loved and known that has an audience no longer receives funding/subsidy. "We demand you program unfamiliar, crazy, world and we will support it until you're audiences demand it".

Philanthropy - the pitch for supporting experimental programs so that sponsors who value R&D take ownership over the new.

In the new world - people would innovate harder in hard times - real innovation would be a model for genuine experimentation without outcomes that have to be justified.

"You've had some good ideas - here have some resources now go away and experiment" ...

In the new world? Artists protest - art objects - protest exists where there is a dominant ideology

In the new world - Virtuosoic versus small and human - both? and? The virtuosic obscuring what lies behind the act OR revealing t?

In the new world - Is it DNA, nature or nurture that some people respond to 'good stories' and others 'aesthetic experience'. It is possibly gender, the titillations of chaos /order, a question of how we experience education (and therefore what we value, need, desire).

In the new world - political AND gloriously beautiful.

In the new world - presumptuous to draft all artists into contributing to social issues - weirdo's who want to do weird shit need place too.

In the new world - people will not wait for the per diem in the new world. DANGER! Of saying if you take away money art will still exist. - True but dangerous

In the new world - permission for artist to be slow - the slow art movement.

In the new world - the basic production not obfuscated by expensive sets, studio productions that allow for more opportunities. The canon may be the controversy rather than the innovation. (Which doesn't exempt the canon from innovation)

In the new world - consensus that change would be great - change that eventually would be outdated - what would be the transition?

If we accept realigned aspirations, a new work would result?

Note how music is experienced

The challenge for a relatively non-mobile, resource intense theatre, which you cannot take home (Its beauty)

National Theatre of Scotland is free as it is not restricted by a venue - presumes that elsewhere managements are in chains!

In the new world -

Epochs of art/ritual/shared knowledge performed for free around the campfire.... compare this with the idea of Box office - a new transaction?

If theatre were free would it be valued... receive an offer of something else from the audience e.g. painting the theatre floor on the day of bump in Zimbabwe and the loss of the value of the currency. Everything is barter.

Theatre is always selling a promise - It exists in the future.

Artists read stories to children and old people so that their carers might come.

In the new world - A Space that had no programming money,

Work made viable through relationships with their communities rather than the imperative of box office - uncurated work as it might be self-chosen through its very viability
professionals...communities contributed /developed, money and work.

In the new world - basic productions not obfuscated by expensive sets that allow for the world to speak, studio productions give more opportunities.

Salable repertoire often doesn't break even and audiences have a right to see it - not trying to do away with the canon.

In the new world - Difficult times require support for grass roots so that in five years time there will be a resilient theatre. Requires different model than programming which retreats into "safety" and risks losing the audience over the long haul or stunting the new.

In the new world - theatre/art for

Communities experiencing anxiety (terrorism, economy and climate)

Will there be singing in the dark times?

Yes, there will be singing about the dark times.

No petrol in Cuba, food had to be grown in cities, bicycles imported from China - reads like a green model for the future but came about through crisis

The experience of Mildura as an endangered city... Big Hart project, the citizens using theatre to dance their existence into being (however ephemeral)

Theatre that documents the times because the community needs to reveal meaning

In the new world - art will be decentralized.

Regions don't know the world - don't want it, cant have it.

Regional centers as culture makers.

What about climate change impact?

In France much contemporary dance is outside of Paris - they build regional identity, loyalty, ownership and with it an economy.

Decentralization removes aspiration for identifying success through the major Co's.

Would result in different work being created.

Decentralization can be suburban - Northcote versus Swanston Street.

Decentralization is by its virtue protest.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 021*

Issue: Risking inviting the audience into the conversation about what we make, how we make it, and why – not just inviting them to the show at the end.

Convener(s): Simon Hinton

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Ulanda Blair, Penny Miles, Scott Maidment, Carin Mistry, Jaclyn Booton, Leticia Caceres.

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Are we talking about current audiences or potential ones?
- Is it piggybacking onto other forums (cinemas, galleries etc...) and starting the conversation there? If so, how?
- Discussion about refunding the ticket price if you hate the show - pros and cons.
- If theatre starts and ends with risk, why try and convince people otherwise, mitigate the risk etc... why not sell the risk, provoke people to take the risk - are you brave enough etc...?
- Maybe not about going out and seeking a conversation with the audience, and more about how to bring the conversation/s into your space

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(foyer). Practical ideas - bar open after show is a MUST, to hear feedback and Ideas; creating space for these conversations to happen organically.

- What if there were lots of other reasons to be in the theatre foyer: tourist info centre In foyers, Seven Eleven in foyer, late night kebab stalls in foyers, a piano anyone can play

The End.

Issue number: 022

Issue: how can we enable more ensembles to exist?

Convener(s): Dan Clarke + all participants

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Naomi, Kim, Anna Louise, Andrew, Daniel, Kat, Louise, Jane, Ralph

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Some of the reasons why people wanted to form an ensemble, be part of ensemble:
The time to create work, continuity, reflective time, to engage on a deeper level with the work, the other ensemble members, create original work, to be able to take risks, to work with the same group of artists daily over a long period of time

Do we aspire to the myth of an ensemble?

Ensemble not necessarily just actors and a director but could include gm, prod manager, visual artists, designer

"If you want to do it, then do it"

How do we expect people to work for free?

Is it about the magic of a director that makes people want to work with an ensemble?

Red Stitch - a successful ensemble is an actor ensemble that engages different directors

What about an ensemble that exists but people can drop in and out of the ensemble, but the work that is being created is passed on?

Director: I love my actors, I never get bored of them, but they get bored of me

Important that there is a solid Visioning process so that all stakeholders understand what the ensemble means, the structure, expectations

Perhaps when ensembles don't work - everyone has bought into a different myth, had a different understanding of the ensemble

Challenges for establishing ensemble - money, families, mortgages, space, members leaving when they get other paid work

First conversation to set up all the contingencies

The idea behind an ensemble to be generated by the people within it

Very important for ensemble to have a space - A HOME

Artist run venues

Home is where the heart is

Could an ensemble support each other in other ways -
e.g. - food, spiritual support?

Sell your ensemble to a regional town - live in this town,
creating work for years

How can major orgs support independent ensembles -
resources, space - what does each party get out of it?

Could all the major theatre companies offer an
opportunity for an ensemble to be attached to them for
a period of time?

Is it more possible for ensembles to exist if we ignore
calendar time, but value creative time i.e. - instead of
working together for a set time, perhaps agreeing to
develop 3 projects together; more flexible approach

Looking back over your work history - have you been
part of an ensemble, can an ensemble exist in
hindsight?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 023*

Issue: Indigenous Theatre – Time to be ambitious / the role of Non-Indigenous People

Convener(s): Todd MacDonald and Wesley Enoch

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Liz Jones, Lucy Freeman, Cate Fowler, Janine Peacock, Shona Johnson, Alicia Talbot, Paul McPhail, Kyle Morrison, Carl Neilson-Polias, Olivia Allen and more

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

What can the relationship between non-and Indigenous Artists?

The role of non-administrators...everything is about partnership

Pay scales...many indigenous Admin get sucked into government or areas of Health, education etc etc

Artistic vs. Disadvantage...shifting the discourse away from supporting Indigenous Artists because Indigenous People are disadvantaged and more for intrinsic cultural and artistic value

Indigenous overlays and cultural values being engaged in decision-making

REC - developing a National Indigenous Theatre Strategy which looks at whole of sector issues

Art begins with risk – what risks should we be taking now?
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Dreaming Festival as a model - the sector still needing enablers and gatekeepers to prepare the way

Employment of Indigenous people across the Arts

The key is participation and involvement

IT'S NOT EASY - NOONE SAID IT WAS

Outlining existing protocols

Non-Indigenous people doing the research and accessing what already exists

Searching for self determined artists rather than creating a program and looking to fill it

Talent identification/apprenticeship/journeyman models

Talent led models

A central information platform for protocols, employment opportunities, talent spotting etc

Exposure of/to Indigenous cultural values/arts/stories

Schools, young people, general public

Aboriginal Reconciliation Plans/Papers - every large-scale company is responding to the call for

Reconciliation Plans - this is an opportunity to seek support

Non-pathologising Indigenous People

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 024*

Issue: How do we teach Circus Artists to embrace artistic risk as compellingly as they embrace Physical risk?

Convener(s): Sue Broadway

Participants: *Markus Gididwski, Annette Downs, Patrick Nolan, Fiona Next Wave*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Discussion on the theme - are circus artists challenging and expanding the conceptual framework of circus?
Yes some - Scattered tacks, A4, Circa, Branch Nebula.

Markus talked about the success of Fruit Fly graduates with no other training in the sector - Circa , Tom Tom Club, Circus Oz - because their training is ensemble based so they have good collaborative skills.
Why so few? Why are so many still stuck in the vaudeville/street theatre aesthetic?

Markus: The need more space and opportunity to nourish the development of small companies.

Interesting work is often driven by theatre directors - examples Circa, All of Me, Homeland (Legs on the Wall), Honour Bound (last three all by Nigel Jamison).

Circus performers can be resistant to working with directors - reluctant to trust and unwilling to change. Why?

Annette gave example of working with a highly skilled street performer. Sue talked about the armour street performers develop - lines, attitude, schtick, tricks - to protect themselves in the challenging street environment. It can be hard to get them to let down their guard and take artistic risks.

Circus performers need to be exposed to different ways of developing and conceiving work through working with directors, master classes in other forms etc. Markus gave example of the choreographic training model at Folkwang institute Essen - Pina Bausch trained here. Is there a model that parallels dance methodology?

Fiona talked about the lack of circus at Next Wave - proposals from the sector are poorly written and do not engage with the defined Festival theme. Could this be addressed curatorially? This year's theme: No risk too great - still no good response from Circus!

Life long learning - circus artists need to focus on their physical development at an early age and then accumulate other creative and performance skills later if their art is to grow and flourish. This could be facilitated at postgraduate level, through work in productions with a diversity of directors or through creating their own work in collaboration with directors, writers, dramaturges etc.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes)* 025

Issue: Balance: New Australian work vs. the best of International. **Convener(s): Annette Downs**

Participants:

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The demise in the production of new Australian work in favor of staging the best of international work. After three years on the Theatre Board I am concerned about the swing toward international work by so many companies. Whilst it is good to benchmark Australian work and give our audiences a global view...the long-term outcome of telling Australian stories to our audiences is concerning. It would be less concerning if Australian plays were regularly produced internationally so that other nations could benchmark against us, but I don't think that is the case.

Issue number: 26

Issue: Looking after Employees (Leave for freelance and casual staff) inspired by artists but expanded beyond...

Convener(s): David Pidd

Participants: *David Pidd*

Jennifer Greer Holmes

Vernon Guest

Malissa Gough

Fiona from Next Wave

Georgie Davill

Tim Joss

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- We don't think it's a big stretch to enable and reward work by all freelance or casual employees (creative, technical and otherwise) by implementing a LSL, Annual Leave and Maternity Leave scheme.
- For example a % of one's pay could go into a fund (similar to Superannuation) then once they have served 10 years continuous employment (not necessarily with one company) they can apply to the fund and are paid.
- In WA there is a scheme run by the Construction Industry Long Service Leave Board, which manages a similar scheme for sub contractors.

- For example, based on the nature of this industry/sector, festivals, actors, seasonal staff, work for 6 month contracts, are employed for 6 months at a time and then re-employed annually, and after 3 years most expect that this will be ongoing. It would be great to be able to pay LSL.
- Currently if someone does 12 weeks work, they are paid 1-week annual leave but this is often spent looking for the next gig or developing a work and not taking time out to replenish health. So it works as a top up of pay instead.
- The view of the group was that it should be viewed as a reward for servicing the sector long term and reward loyalty to the industry, not necessarily to one employer. This acknowledges that the industry is NOT 9-5 or consistent with "normal" business hours or formats.
- This would encourage social cohesion and health, safety, family, community, well being etc.
- Who would run such a scheme?
 - Media Super (not ethical investors), do we lobby their Board to expand their services to LSL etc?
 - Oz Co
 - MEAA (doesn't cover everyone, not looked upon favorably by all)
 - Other Unions (e.g. ASU)
 - Sector driven
 - ABAF (Damien Hodgkinson, Jane Hayley) could facilitate the relationship with the Builders Board.

- A number of stakeholders are needed and a Board is required so that there is accountability and structure.
- Theatre Network Victoria (Nicole Bayer)
- A national peak Theatre Network
- A community bank
- Live Performance Australia (David Hamilton)
- Discussion about an artist's dole / living wage has disappeared of the agenda.
- Does it need to be legislated and policies developed? Or no need for this?
- We are in a divided industry and need to unite... how?
- Who drives this from here?
 - GMs?
 - Moral obligations would lead to more and more companies who participate.
- The acceptance of continued Professional Development and LSL, AL etc happens in other industries, why not the Arts? Why is it considered a luxury?!
- Cruel development of funding has led to the "running on empty" leaving leaders with no time to invest in strategies like this which would ensure longevity of workers and loyalty to the industry.
- What else?
 - Needs to be recognized by artists and freelancers/casuals as a problem.
 - Companies and artists need to unite.
 - Lobby government and relevant organisations to make an investment in the sector's health and wellbeing.

- Market the fact that this would support MOBILITY in the industry (which is what the funding bodies encourage)
- What happened to the independent Arts Industry Councils? (Only 2 left in Oz?) They would be ideal to lead this discussion and unite people.
- Would it need re-branding to make it a more marketable concept? Or should we use existing language, which is already understood?
- New maternity leave structure could also feed into this.
- As state peak orgs are being defunded, is there a move toward a national peak theatre body? It seems evident that now it is needed.
- OzCo have the ability to unite the sector around this issue.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 027*

Issue: Heart and sustainability

Convener(s): Kate Cherry

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Charlie Parkinson/ David Lander/ Natalie Jenkins/
Campion Decent/ Olivia Allen/ Jan Clancy + more

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- * Need for reflective culture
- * Restoring the artist's role to the artist
- * Valuing the heart as a critical part of the artist's engagement with the audience

Issue number: 028

Issue: National networks – building and bridging interstate and national networks

Convener(s): Chris Bendall

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Todd Macdonald (Storeroom), Fiona de Garis (Performing Lines), Sue-ellen Maunder (JUTE), Paul McPhail (Yirra Yaakin), Jo Duffy (Darwin Festival), Marguerite Pepper, footscray arts centre, Arts SA, John-Paul Fischbach, Fiona Bainborough (La Mama), Vallejo Gantner (PS122) + lots others –Apologies for omissions and spelling mistakes - please add your name and correct my spelling mistakes of your names!*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Discussion of notion of creating national network of small to medium orgs and venues, in order to tour work nationally and build interstate and regional connections.

Other organisations that currently assist in touring discussed – along with their shortcomings – ie Playing Australia, APACA, Short Paddock and Long Paddock. Discussion that the festivals have MFI to connect their work, that Major Performing Arts Companies have MPAB and regular systems of co-productions, but to do diversity of small to medium sector, and distance and limited time, financial and people resources – the

challenges are substantial in building and maintaining these relationships.

- ? How to share resources?
- ? How with our limited time to stay in touch with work happening around the country?
- ? How do we not simply ‘break’ a small to medium company by adding the additional burden of touring (despite the advantages)?
- ? How do we encourage larger regional venues to take risks with innovative, edgier work?
- ? How to combat financial obstacle of touring work from Footscray to Fremantle.
- ? How to resource share across interstate boundaries

Suggestion of “open conference model” – from Arts SA - where funds are pooled from presenters and a work is jointly commissioned. Advantage then that the work lives longer, and that artists are engaged for longer period of time.

Suggestion from Jo Duffy of an idea for festivals that could support not just large scale but small scale work also – a “mini-MFI” model, where a range of small presenters each put in, say, 10% of cost of developing and creating new small scale work – and share responsibility of supporting work through development to presentation.

The JUTE model discussed – where significant regional connections made from Far North Queensland to Darwin, and also to Launceston now.

This model expanded to the small to medium org sector – where a national ‘small to medium peak body’ is created, with an online presence - a virtual online network of organisations that are interested in sharing work. Each org willing to join network would also need to be willing to contribute each year, say, \$10k, towards the development of a new work. This network can use its combined strength for increased leverage in lobbying for governmental (federal and state) funding, philanthropic and corporate support – especially for the cost of touring (travel, accomm and freight) – the largest obstacles to touring. The members of each org would, say, each year collectively vote which project(s) will gain the support and be the work to be developed & to tour.

Many logistical challenges to this proposal discussed – and suggestion made to limit parameters from the outset of work proposed for touring network. (I.e. 1 tonne truck, limit number of actors). But does this limit the work artistically? Are we placing parameters therefore on the type of work that can be toured? Are we limiting risk?

MAPS and performing lines models discussed – MAPS providing a range of venues in WA additional leverage in order to share and better use existing resources

In the proposed model, suggestion that its advantage would be a level playing field of colleagues and peers, rather than an external panel assessing “our” work

Discussion that there are many different models for touring currently – and centralising these different

systems will make “time-poor” presenters/producers in small to medium sector better able to consider national connections.

Key suggestions

- (1) Use the ‘navigating and negotiating’ connections “Who’s who in the zoo” map that was created on a state by state level – and pool in nationally – and make available and shared across presenters and producers

- 2) Create national peak small to medium network – where orgs who elect to join would put in \$ to a collective pool which would be used for development and touring of work amongst the member orgs.

- OR

- 3) Create several smaller networks of like-minded orgs – and create links and regular connections between each of these networks (rather than one huge organisation)

Issue number: 029

Issue: Do we really want our audiences to be involved?

Convener(s): Fee Plumley

Participants:

Jeremy Rice, Tim Joss, Caroline Stacey, Annette Downs, Jane Fuller.

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

* Audiences (or, um, 'people') are our biggest advocates ('viral is king'). We (artists) should harness this.

* Interaction is NOT multiple choice (although it is all too frequently presented that way). An experience can be fused within the work, so that their engagement with it irrevocably changes the work, or affects another person's experience of the work.

* We (artists) are experts. How could they (audiences) know what they want? And if we give it to them, is that populist? What about the joy of exposing them to work/concepts/ideas they have never experienced before?

* "Niche is the new black"; "Mass" (e.g. Disney audiences) is now (finally) being overtaken by "Niche" (the more interactive, non-local communities, often user/producers). A local niche can become a global mass through new technologies.

* Performance can take place outside of the venue and across multiple platforms to engage different people in different ways. Bums on seats is not always the aim, the experience can be just as successfully mediated through the Internet, sms, newspapers, etc (think Augmented Reality Gaming for live performance).

* An interactive process need not necessarily create interactive 'outcomes'.

- **Questions/issues we asked/discussed:**

* **Do we really want our audiences to be involved?**

* We don't really want it; we think we *should be* offering it. It's a buzzword, funder/policy driven, like 'innovation'.

* We are unwilling, as artists, to surrender control. WE are the experts. WE know best.

* What defines 'involved'?

* **Is UGC (user generated content) shit? Is YouTube shit? Is improv shit? Is 'community arts' shit?**

* Often the 'outcomes' are shit, because producers are forced to show 'results' from work made during the first lesson over short timeframes; give them a month and see the difference.

* Yes, unless mediated by an 'expert' - filters, critics, etc.

* This is a really old-school elitist argument.

* Too often considered in a binary sense: EITHER 'professionally produced' OR 'community produced'; could be more like co-productions between community AND 'expert': more like prosumer model (professional consumer).

*** Why is 'interactive' often just 'multiple choice'?**

(See above summary)

*** Do they really know what they want/need/like?**

* Yes and no. The role/responsibility of the artist is to make that a YES & make it meaningful.

* Do we trust them to even know what they want? We should, because we *think* we are giving it to them. Do we really know them? Are we really making *for* them?

*** Are user/producer experiences youth focused?**

* “Participatory” is too frequently defined as a workshop participant. The user being a part of the creative process is rarely considered participatory.

* Are youths more pro-active in the creative process? Or are they pushed/given more opportunities than adults?

* P2P production – peer-to-peer productions: we are all experts, we are all idiots.

*** Live vs. non-live**

* We all too often experience ‘the live’ actually after the fact (TV on demand, documents of performances, etc...). The reality is that we re-live (make live again – as in “live’, not life) archives through cross platform viral engagement. I am sent a link to a video while on instant messenger and I then discuss that as a shared experience, making an archive into a shared live experience.

*** UGF – user-generated-funding**

* New models of community-lead funding: are they populist? Is a market-lead approach good or bad? Why is critical mass appealing? Is un-funded work more valuable? Is there a shift-change between our relationship to money and each other since the global financial crisis?

* Is democratic content selection necessarily a good thing?

* The free market, share market, is our closest comparison; only we also have social conscience.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 030*

Issue: Collaborating with audiences

Convener(s): Gail Cork

Participants: Clare Watson, Viv McWaters, Tim Joss, Erin Milne, Robin Birrell, Champion Decent, Charles Parkinson, Penny Miles, Chris Kohn et al.

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Now that the tools of artistic creation, publication and global distribution are so readily accessible, audience members are increasingly likely to be creators themselves. Today's typical audience member is becoming increasingly accustomed to having a say in what, when and how they consume.

How can theatre respond to pressure to collaborate more effectively and more creatively with their audience?

- Creative: Audiences can be invited into the process at every level, starting with the most basic and scary idea of collaborating with the audience to create the work itself. Implications for excellence? Does this lead to a 'lesser' kind of theatre? Dumbing down the art form?

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- Programming – let the audience decide? Would this lead to boring, predictable programming? Populism vs. innovation and risk – do audiences only want what they already know?
- Marketing: Viral, word of mouth, street teams etc. Lots of opportunities to make the audience your champions out in the wider world.

How can we give audiences more say in when and how they experience a work? Multiple formats, mash-ups, Theatre on YouTube? Facebook? Twitter? Second Life? Does it have to be live? Does it have to be spectacular? What about pared down productions for time-poor theatre dabblers?

In the end, we collapsed under the weight of opportunity.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 031*

Issue: We need time to search in order to discover the unexpected

Convener(s): Chris Drummond

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Ingrid Voorendt, Olivia Allen, Kay Jamieson, Richard Murphett, Jane Fuller and Kate Sulan

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The discussion began with the premise that good work comes when artists have the time and resources to explore their ideas without the impediment of striving to achieve a preconceived outcome. The issues that were raised focused predominantly on the isolation and limited resources experienced by independent artists, prohibiting their capacity to pursue this ideal.

Ingrid observed that she experienced a sense of guilt or even indulgence as an artist if she took time to reflect or dream.

Richard reiterated a story from a former conversation about Cuba, after the Russians left (with the oil), deciding to purchase thousands of bicycles to substitute transport needs. As a result of this people became healthier, lost weight and began growing food and

vegetables on the side of the road... life in Cuba effectively slowed down to a gentler and more reflective pace. Richard's observation was that the ideal we were discussing was difficult to argue in Australian society, which moves at a rapid and non-reflective pace.

The point was made that a strong political argument needs to be made to funding bodies, presenters and other stakeholders validating the time new works requires without quantifiable &/or described outcomes. To validate risk as essential to the creative experience.

Olivia talked about the difficulties of being an independent artist operating in a resource vacuum – personnel and financial – where the artist plays all the roles, finding herself in a position where she must make pragmatic choices across a whole range of areas – venue, design, rehearsal time – before she has articulated her full vision.

Kay talked about part of the search being for the right people to support the artist in pursuing their vision. A conversation ensued about the need for independent producers who could support independent artists to make their arguments to funding bodies/investors/presenters and go on to support and protect the creative process over a sustained period of time.

Kate discussed her need to find to time to stop and reflect about the here and now, to be able to creatively

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operate 'in the moment' more often, rather than driving
always to consider the future.

It was observed that companies with the resources to
undertake an explorative approach to new work could
be advocates through example so that artists, when
they are seeking support for new visions, don't have to
pretend there's an outcome before they've even
begun...

We need a new language to do this!

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 032*

Issue: Sustainability of Independent Artists

Convener(s): Deborah Pollard

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Fiona de Gans, David Pidd, Jude Anderson, Jim Adamik, Kate Hunter, Kylie Masten, Pippa Bainbridge

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The following is a pretty rough paraphrasing of discussions. What is outlined is the thread of discussion that leads to a desire for a more pro-active stance and participation in the greater ecology of how art is received and understood within Australia.

*Reality of project funding. Is it sustainable? Can a practice be built and development through one off projects?

*Independents must pay themselves at professional rates and factor in their own on costs of super etc.

*90% of the sector are independents. The sector cannot exist without the Independents.

*Without a casualised workforce there is no workforce.

*How can there be more support for this sector through funded sector.

*Alternative models for producing work and relationships with producers.

*New start -lobby professional development as education. As unemployment rises will they be looking for new strategies for training? Can we capitalise on this moment. A dole stipend of \$200 a week? Ethical dilemma, setting up precedence of underpaying artists.

*Building audience- makes for greater sustainability.

*How do we sustain artists practice beyond 35 when burn out is more likely?

*Thinking around a new culture for making and receiving work.

*How do we change the perception of arts in this country? How can artists be more proactive in this regard?

Role of artist as provocateur

* Keep making work. Be prolific and put it into all sectors of community.

*Create forums and artists discussion groups that are non competitive, that allow artists to develop strategies and languages for lobbying policy makers. Become powerful as a group that is able to instigate change.

- Lobby the Education Minister. Artists to input into the high school art and drama curriculum.
- Artists to have input into teacher training.
- Greater representation of Independent practitioners at an Annual Theatre Forum.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 033*

Issue: I'd like to chat with people who believe that they are taking risks.

Convener(s): Suzanne Kersten

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Deborah Pollard, Ian Pidd, Katerina Kokinos-Kennedy, Peta Hanrahan, Dan Koop*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Sitting in with the empty space, the no-thing of a work that doesn't yet exist, tasting into how disgusting this particular version of nothing tastes
- Braving the above
- Depending on a good night's sleep or several (& some hard thinking, but not at the same time as sleeping) to move the work along a little
- How to take the fear out of risk?
- Coming up with protocols takes the fear out of risk
- Strict rules take the risk out of risk

- I know I'm risking something when I really don't want to do it
- I know I'm risking something when I upset the usual contract with the audience
- How responsible are we for the consequences of the work?
- Risk & trust are 2 sides of the same hand:
 1. Trusting that you'll come up with something;
 2. Trusting that the audience will finish the unfinished nature of the work
- We talked of people who live in daily relation to the risk of death
- An example of risk in process - Peta Hanrahan is running a venue in the western suburbs, dancing dog theatre, she is funded by a single parents pension, this will last for another 3 years - an example of 1. Being awake, 2. Getting into motion.
- Within the field of a work being performed, uncontrolled eruptions are risky, scary & dangerous and feel alive.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 034*

Issue: Regional Cultural Hubs

Convener(s): Stephen Champion

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Various including Julie, John, Marcus, Kim & others*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Using regional performing arts facilities and their resources to establish residency dialogue between theatre companies, primarily metro based, and regional communities
- Rehearsal space, equipment, tech labour used as \$ support from local community in producer / presenter funding application
- Regional communities establishing cultural hubs to assist venue poor metro groups and remote groups as well
- Surprisingly regional communities often have a higher percentage of their population willing to support contemporary work than metro populations. The problem is the overall low population base of many rural towns

- Extension of the "Month In the Country" (Hothouse) model around the nation. Leverage to lobby national state and local governments to support regional development
- Allowing and encouraging regional communities to develop ongoing partnerships with established performing arts companies.
- Regional "International Workshop Festival" circuit. Using advantages of focused regional setting.
- Question of issue of some individuals' desire to not be aligned with any established structure. Suggestion this may be an issue of age and experience, or lack of.
- Need for awareness of possible effects of climate change on many rural communities.
- Need for some regional communities to be a role model for others for the hub initiative to spread.
- Regional hubs can add to the attractiveness of moving inland rather than hugging the coast.
- Need for a party to broker links between artists/companies and regional communities
- Potential use of mobile venues?
- Need to question existing company structures and work towards more flexible directorate and board models to accommodate links to regional centres.
- Awareness that the cultural landscape in regional communities has changed enormously and the time is ripe for establishing regional hubs.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 035*

Issue: Help Save the Planet:

Convener(s): Alice Nash, Back-to-Back Theatre

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

I am sorry: I failed to note this. But individuals noted on the issue sheet were: Pauline Cady; Angharad Wynne-Jones; Wesley Enoch; Nina Bonacci; Kate Sulan; Erin Miln; Alison Richards; Jennifer Hamilton; Kay Jamieson; Kat Gill; Victoria Spence; Ahmraryya (spelling?); Rosabla. Sorry, I couldn't read them all. And please add your name if you were there but we I didn't get your name.

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

STARTING POINTS What is the role of artists in a time of extreme environmental degradation, or the end of life as we know it? Can we still contemplate being artists if the world is ending? Artists always have been the ultimate existentialists, so the question of survival seems to be a natural one for us to address.

OVERVIEW

We need to let go of what we have been attached to, as citizens, and as artists. We need to radically change our processes.

We, as artists, can use our skills to make sure that this message is heard, to lead these conversations across our community.

There seemed to be a number of ways to do this, not mutually exclusive, possibly (definitely?) concurrent,

1. DECLARE A STATE OF EMERGENCY;

We need to declare a state of emergency, to declare there must be a radical paradigm shift in the way that we all do things so that we are saving the planet, rather than decimating it.. We need to say: I draw the line now: "Not in my house. Not in my theatre practice. Not in my local community. Not on our planet." We urgently need to make sure this message is heard. A collective, violent intervention is needed.

We need to be fierce. (We need some firebrands who can get some really radical ideas out there and then we need some more moderately minded (or seemingly so) artists to work to bring forth change. The firebrands create ground for the moderates. (This example from the indigenous movement...))

But then too, is there any need to jump in now, before the train crashes? Is this the best way and the best time for artists to use their energies to effect change for the good of the planet?

2. RADICAL LOCALISED / ORGANIC CHANGE

(That might sound contradictory...)

For the planet: we need to do everything differently, everything well and nothing badly. We need to act deliberately, systematically to green [as a verb] everything that we can. We need to begin with that closest to us - the people that we know, the neighborhoods that we live in, the theatre practices or organisations of which we are a part.

SOME SPECIFIC IDEAS

Go slowly: The planet needs to move more slowly. We, as practitioners, need to work more carefully, deliberately, and more slowly.

Slowness could complement sound artistic practice.

Language Can we imagine vocabulary that connects us more and more to the land? In Indigenous language, people are sometimes described as trees, with the shape of the tree reflecting the shape of the person. If the tree is cut down, then that person dies.

Remove artificial divisions between artists and others. We need to remove the segregation between artists and other professionals. What sorts of dialogues can we be having with other sectors? Where are the bridges between us? We have something here to learn from indigenous culture [as ever]. Some ideas for intersections between artists and others, particularly scientists:

- Transition Towns: a 10 step process whereby a community or town works towards localised sustainability. Not led by artists but there could and should be strong roles for artists in such communities.

There are transition towns around the world, some with their own currencies.

- Tipping Point: meetings between artists and scientists. In the UK, they have an annual Tipping Point meeting, with 80 artists and 80 scientists.
- Local government positions where artists and environmental officers are obliged to work together.
- We need to modify our language so that it is understandably for people from other sectors. Our language is sometimes difficult to understand. We are not necessarily always discursively flexible.
- Festival of Ideas: Climate Change / Culture Change - an upcoming Festival...

Green our practice: Look at or (better yet) have other people, with clear new eyes, look at everything that we do, to see how we can do things 100% well. We need to have outside eyes look at our business - the business of theatre making - to see how we could do things differently. Our buildings, our programs, our travel, our use of resources to make work. Everything 100% well. We need, in doing this, to act as beacons for how things can be done well and can simultaneously be amazing. We need to audit ourselves and be audited ruthlessly.

Some specific ideas:

- An arts festival, which closes down the center of Sydney for 3 weeks, where there are no cars, where all is greened...
- Using technology as an alternative method of connecting: an artist lecture delivered via skype as he did not want to travel

Share our changes with our audiences Communicate the changes we have made in our practices with our audiences. Tell them what we are doing and why. On our websites. In our printed materials. Everywhere.

Build relationships in specific places / offer alternative ways of being in our world: Work with people in our theatre practice, In our homes, our streets, our local streams, to redevelop our relationships to the land and to action. Do this through a reconnection to local narrative. Example: community members working on small community theatre events / rituals at their local stream, then beginning to lobby for rubbish traps, and measuring water quality...

And

We are all NOT SURE what the best thing to do it is.

We maybe need to STOP FOR A MOMENT, to work out what to do.

WE NEED A MANIFESTO. Modern art started with a manifesto. We need a manifesto for this time.

Don't wait for people to tell us that we - artists - are relevant. ASSUMME what we are doing and will do IS RELEVANT.

HOPE needs to be part of the story.

GENERATIVE IDEAS / SOME OTHER QUESTIONS POSED

SHOULD WE STOP WHAT WE ARE DOING? Should theatre companies stop touring internationally? Should we only work locally? How can we exchange between cultures, around the globe, if air travel is so damaging.

CUBA After the withdrawal of the Soviets, Cuba had no oil. The people began to starve, as there was no way to import food. The people could not drive their cars. The Cuban government: imported 1.5 million bicycles from China; maintained all funding for health and education; imposed rationing of food and power. The citizens began to grow vegetables everywhere. They began to be healthier as they were eating a larger variety of food and exercising more, to do things locally. A place peak oil might be a place of better slowness and that this is a better place for artists.

SUFFERING we need to remember that the world may not simply seemingly shrink, or slow down, but that there is likely to be extreme suffering (death, starvation) from environmental degradation.

MAKE CONNECTIONS LATERALLY a biomechanical engineer worked with a group of cardiologists to work out why some blood vessels rupture. He looked at the tyre industry in the United States in the 1930s. He found that red blood cells have a thin sheath that enable them to travel frictionless through arteries. He later hired a female ski instructor and found that when you ski on freshly fallen snow, much of your weight is carried on the air trapped within the snow. He bought some pillows (of various kinds) and worked out that a train track covered in a thin coating of down could carry a train the size of a

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jumbo jet 770km / hour, airborne at 15km per hour, on the air in the down. Lateral.

We need to learn seriously lateral thinking ourselves. We need to do it.

IMAGERY The rainforest became something worth preserving when the abstract idea of the rainforest (a scientific word) became associated through images of trees frogs and beautiful trees. People understood emotionally these things were important to protect and began to do so. These things need to be tangible for people.

BOOK OF THE PIG a book made of images of everything that a pig becomes. All the things it becomes. HOW A LIGHT BULB comes into being - a theatre show about how a light bulb is created. The whole process.

We need to pass on good practices to our CHILDREN.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 036*

**Issue: Who is Barrie Williamson? Who is David Kosky?
What is high and low in the antipodes?**

Convener(s): Eamon Flack

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Tom Wright, Matt Lutton, Vallejo Gantner, Bruce Gladwin and many others

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Art vs. entertainment. We claim it can be both. But audiences are very clear which is which.

The cult of personality around these issues means that public discussion becomes a media beat-up about sniping personalities

We are conflict averse - we seek consensus. Is having it out more honest? It gives a greater sense of what's at stake

so bullshit debates like kosky-williamson are actually quite useful - have it out, put it out there.

Who owns these debates? Arts editors? Audiences?
Artists?

Playwrights vs. auteurist directors

Where do directors find rich and complex material?
Recently we look to classics and enlightenment lit etc...

Where is the grand Australian narrative poem? In it's
absence artists will inevitably go to other sources

what David Williamson represents: consensus about
CONTENT; identity; "Australia"; narrative; conclusion;
solutions; logocentrism; resolution; fixing

What Barrie Kosky represents: a reaction against that,
FORM; problematisation; international

So this debate is actually about mapping a change from
70s/sexual revolution/Australian vernacular etc to
global/post dramatic etc

Many mainstream audiences can absorb the most
challenging CONTENT so long as they're not threatened
by the FORM. But play with the form and they're not so
willing

e.g. Ridiculusmus' Importance of Being Earnest
compared to Ridiculusmus' Tough Time Nice Time

e.g. Harrower Blackbird cf Kosky Women of Troy

You can use form to open up possibilities in content (e.g.
Mnouchkine's Caravanserai)

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You can use content to open up possibilities in form (e.g. Katona Josef Theatre's Ivanov)

Audiences seem to have quite a strong language about these issues e.g. "out there... strange... visual..." vs. "the scene with the shockjock..."

Is High/Low related to class? What is class now? In Australia?

Not related to wealth any more but more to tertiary educated vs. non-tertiary educated

We're better-dressed and better-fed middle class

High vs. low =
Entertainment vs. art
Secret vs. shown
Privileged vs. authentic

Do we ask too much of playwrights? Can they deliver what we expect them? It's like looking for the great Australian novel... so anything which takes the pressure of writers - i.e. directors - is a good thing

What's the knife edge between FORM shows and CONTENT shows? Do we need to aim for a perfect balance? Or is it alright for it to be one or the other?

Most shows will fall on either side or the other

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IT'S NOT A PROBLEM. It's ok for there to be a difference.
And it's ok for us to argue about the differences. We
don't have to seek consensus.

Consensus makes us look like an elitist ghetto.
It gives us the appearance of heterogeneity
Heterogeneity is a problem

Not just a question of "where are the black faces?" but
also "Where are the right-wing plays?" where is the play
in favour of the Pacific Solution

Why aren't the producers/makers of Breast Wishes and
Puppetry of the Penis here today?

Can we leave the word 'Australian' behind now?

Is there a lack of rigorous conversation? Are we scared
of it? Do we put too much value on consensus?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 037*

Issue: How do the values and structures of organizations affect risk-taking?

Convener(s): Jansis O'Hanlon

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Steve Shaw; David Everist; Liz Burcham; Rose Godde; Mark Fitzpatrick; Tim Joss*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Conversation began with a brief discussion of different funding models currently in place around Australia and how the "success" of an organisation/company/project was currently measured (i.e. what is valued). These were noted as being on the whole quantitative measures, measuring short term outcomes that were easy to track over time, i.e. box office take - audience attendance - Number of works produced

These, however, may not be the criteria that best encourages risk taking and could be counter productive by encouraging unrealistic and unsustainable growth. It was noted that the current global financial crisis is a good reminder that a model of continuous growth was unsustainable and that a "W" curve (rather than the 'J'

curve) ... was a more reasonable graphic representation for quantitative changes.

We talked about audiences and our relationship with them. Who was the work created for ... peers ... particular audiences ... niche audiences ...

Through this conversation we started to pick up on some core values that were linked to organisations/companies/Individuals that showed greater capacity for risk taking such as ...

- Courage: being brave and taking a stand, having a strong sense of the work you're creating and who you're creating it for.
- Tenacity: not giving up the ability to fail, evaluate and keep on going as well
- Supportive / collaborative: the capacity to both give and receive support
- Reflective: the capacity to both give and receive honest feedback; the capacity to be honest with yourself

It was also noted that it was handy to be connected to 'people of influence'.

It was noted that the way a company (etc) perceives (it)self can be self-limiting. Companies (etc) needed to be more proactive in determining and achieving the outcomes they (it) want.

We questioned whether there was a discrepancy between what we say we want to do and what we actually do.

We questioned whether there was a discrepancy between what the Funding Bodies say they want to fund and what they actually fund.

There was some support for devolved funding models.

We discussed business-planning models and asked if the business-planning model that we were being asked to create by funding partners was also inhibiting risk.

It was suggested that this framework was old fashioned and out dated (even within the wider business world) and was perhaps partially responsible for encouraging increasingly conservative cultural institutions (etc) with increasingly conservative boards. In addition, reporting requirements were often disproportionate with level of funding received. Was this taking the focus away from what was more Important and of greater urgency?

It was noted that we needed to create plans that were flexible and responsive to the changing environment, allowing organisations (etc) to respond and adapt more quickly to change. This was a living-planning model that was fluid and accountable to change.

It was also generally agreed that the Business plans was a useful tool for the organisation (etc) in setting strategic direction and measuring success and ensuring

accountability. It had little real value to the funding body.

It was noted that in the dialogue between Funding bodies and the funded there needed to develop greater trust and a more honest dialogue.

R&D

It was suggested that Business Plans should allow for an R&D component and that this in itself should be allowed for within the business plan as a valid measure or outcome

Other observations on organisation (etc) culture that encouraged capacity to take risks:

A healthy cultural organisation would be a reflective, learning organisation.

Companies (etc) need to take greater responsibility for their own health.

They (etc) need to stop overstressing ourselves by trying to do too much on too little.

Prioritising outcomes over development

Q: Are we protecting our own turf at the expense of real change and the health of the wider sector?

Organisations (etc) needs to be market / audience focused ... i.e. start with the relationship of the work is to

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The intended audience ... who is the intended audience
... be honest about this ...

We asked ourselves why in some fundamental ways things hadn't changed much in the sector over the last 20 years. We noted a continuing lack of solidarity within the sector; working within an environment of fear. A need to communicate with a single voice our continuing value to society.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 038*

Issue: Risk offense, embarrassment and punishment by inviting rigorous dialogue and self-assessment

Convener(s): Chris Kohn

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Daniel Schlusser, Stephen nicolazzo, Nic Dorward, Sarah Miller, Sarah Neal, Emilie Collyer, Sarah Austin, Kate Huner, Chris Summers, Hannah Durack, Alison Richards, Merophie Carr, Caroline Lee, Lucy Freeman, Jackie Baley, Paul Monaghan, T J Eckelberg, Bagryana opov, Richard Murphett, Robyn Archer

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The Australian Theatre Community has not been particularly good at fostering a culture of genuine critical dialogue around work that is made - there are no broadly understood and shared codes or forms of interaction which encourage the free flow of genuine, rigorous dialogue and self-assessment. This is a problem, because such genuine dialogue is essential to a flourishing, growing theatre culture. We as theatre makers and producers need to think about ways of growing a critical culture.

We have become conditioned into responding defensively, through operating in an environment of scarcity in which a combination of anxiety about survival and fear of putting oneself at a competitive disadvantage results in self-censorship, blindness, lack of rigor and critique about our own, and associate's work.

The problem is a cultural one, and the solutions are cultural.

We need to build up a robust, broad-minded and long-sighted view of our theatre culture. We need to understand that every work is inherently contradictory and inherently subjective and therefore always encapsulates aspects of failure and success. We need to continue to develop our ability to identify and engage with this truth as it pertains to each work and bodies of work.

We need to encourage sober critique from our audiences, our peers and ourselves in order to fail in better and more interesting ways.

The cultural shift will be led by artists. Artists will propose, define and argue over the terms and parameters, and communicate these to each other and the audiences.

Criticism is already being democratised through blogging - this will be encourage further - perhaps new administered sites may be created?

In funding apps and acquittals, greater emphasis will be placed on mechanisms of critique and evaluation. An

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assumption here is that each work exists as one part of a larger investigation.

A national theatre festival showcasing the works which different companies or states identify as the most interesting of that year - these are then discussed, debated, argued.

Much more was discussed - please feel free to add if you were there...

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 039*

Issue: Ways to make risk popular

Convener(s): Jessica Wilson

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Sue Giles, Simon Abrahams, Dave Brown,*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Do you have to be provocative in order to be creative?
Does creativity in itself require thinking outside of a square – which implies always rule breaking?

We discussed the difference between theatre and the visual arts in their relationship to audience. We felt that visual arts was in a better position to take risks because their relationship with their audience does not require them to be 'captive' in time. As we ask our audiences to be captive for a period of time we, as theatre makers, have a responsibility to be more aware of the journey that they go on in relation to our work. And this CAN lead to the artform being more conservative and less risk taking (than the visual arts or music or e-media for example).

This led us to a discussion about ways of taking risks with work where the audience is not 'captive' and have not paid money to see the work. Is this a better context to play with risk without alienating the audience and

without having to create work for a select educated audience who are comfortable with risk? We talked about the increase in theatre experience types of work – where the audience is taken on a physical journey to an unusual place. Audiences do like to take a risk if they are not trapped in a static space.

The conversation also covered risk taking in the process of making work. We talked about the real risk in theatre occurring here. And, as directors, the risk is in how long you can hold out before beginning to ‘package’ your work for the audience.

We discussed the notion of ‘packaging’ risk into subscription seasons and accessible marketing (including, in the theatre for young people market, titles that are easy to digest). Is it easier to take ‘risk’ to a broad audience, if you can lure them in first? There is a feeling that audiences are not afraid of risk once they are experiencing it, but it is just difficult to attract them to attend a work that is perceived as risky.

And lastly, we discussed a work that is particularly risky (a performer who shits on stage), and had diverse responses to this. Some felt that there is an important place for this work, and it is an important expression of that artist. Others that it was an intentional alienation of the audience – an example of intellectual ‘snobbery’ in a sense. I felt that risk is important, but that’s it is important that the intention is important – is it to shock, to challenge, to educate, or to have a conversation with the audience. Risk does not have to be alienating.

Issue number: 40

Issue: Engaging with government and politicians: our failure and our future

Convener(s): Rachel Healy

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Fiona Winning, Libby Christie, Jo Coventry, Janine Peacock, Bronwyn Edinger, Katherine Hoeppe, Liz Burcham, Lindy Hume, Marcus Schuenko, Chris Mead, Fiona de Garis, Lucy Evans, Bruce Gladwin, Geoffrey Williams, Chris Tooher, Catherine Jones, Sue Donnelly, Joanne Kee, Chris Mead, Robyn Archer, David Berthold and lots of latecomers!

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- The premise of this discussion came as a consequence of (ex Shadow Minister for the Arts) Chris Puplick's recent 'Platform Paper' in which he examined the history of arts funding and advocacy and argues that the big wins have been as a result of individual politicians and those close to government taking an interest in the arts ('the kindness of strangers'). He also gives a range of examples in which he shows that the arts (in the main) have a very immature relationship with

government and politicians, do not corral community engagement for their work and promote self-interest over sectoral advancement. It is very unlike social services and sport in this regard. While many companies (Bell, Aus Ballet, Company B to name but three) have had significant wins in arguing their individual cause to government how might the arts as a whole better build its relationships with politicians and their minders and advance whole-of-sector wins?

- There are a range of existing peak bodies that have a responsibility to advocate and lobby for support for the arts, but most have either focused their energies elsewhere (LPA) or promoted sectoral interests (AMPAG). There is a need for a cohesive and united lobby as the current messaging to government is often diffuse; competing, contradictory and unfocused
- It was recognised that lobbying is a specialist skill, that many arts and arts workers do not have the time to do exhaustively, though informal engagement with politicians on opening nights is usually positive and helps build relationships with local MPs. (Regional Australia outer metropolitan areas are often better at relationship building with local MPs than their inner-city counterparts. This is sometimes because the arts product has a range of community capacity building outcomes that are attractive to government.)

- For any lobbying to be successful, there has to be 'party unity' and discipline by all members of the sector to drive home one key, specific message. AAPAC (and others) successful and comprehensive lobbying to increase Playing Australia's funding pool by \$2million was the result of many urban and regional companies, artists, peak bodies, bureaucrats and venues all staying 'on message' throughout the campaign. Other examples include the recent wins in relation to arts on the national curriculum.
- Should there be a meeting 3 times a year (or even once) in which the key message to government can be discussed and agreed for the next 12-18 months? Leaving aside the difficulties faced by a sector with different, sometimes competing interests, what role might the Australia Council play in helping develop the research that backs up the 'ask' to government?
- Can we build a database of information, which records and codifies all politicians (and their families) interests in the arts? Information that could be updated whenever anyone has an interaction with an MP or minister, that builds a longitudinal profile of the key influencers in government and then develops strategies to engage those politicians in arts issues and events? (Such data is regularly compiled by major companies in developing a profile on sponsors and donors but no comprehensive database exists for state and federal politicians.)

- The opposition should not be neglected in any of these processes. If a company or artist is seen as partisan it will be very difficult to build credibility with the new government when the wheel turns.
- There is much to be learned from the efforts of other sectors (sport, social services) in developing effective strategies for advocacy.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes)*

Issue: 041

Convener(s): Duncan Graham

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Cate Fowler, Leah Shelton, Kylie Trounson, Kylie Morrison, Xan Colman, Katherine McLean, Carl Nilsson-Polias, Nicki Pittorino, Leanne Gunnulson, Gail Cork, Daniel Schlusser, Chris Drummond, Sarah Greentree Kate Sulan, Stephen Armstrong

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Does imagination have a moral responsibility?

The initial impulse for asking the question and the reason why people were interested in discussing it was addressed.

The initial impulse for asking the question can be summarised as such -

As a theatre maker do I have a responsibility to consider the moral implications of the work that I imagine?

Is the theatre a place where we can feel free to break our normal moral restrictions to explore the limits of human action?

E.g. Can the theatre maker/poet give themselves the license to be the murderer in order to explore taboo subjects or states of mind?

Do we have a moral responsibility to keep testing the boundaries through acts of imagination?

Is there ever a direct moral link between an act of imagination and the so-called 'real world'? Or is the real world shaped by acts of imagination?

The group consisted mainly of theatre makers and artistic directors (of both adult and children's theatre), all of whom spoke about the way in which the interplay between morality and imagination influences what they do in the theatre. There were several key points around which the conversation revolved. It is important to note that the conversation opened questions rather than solved problems. It also delved into the heart of what comprises the creative act? However, paradoxically, it gave some participants a way of approaching and framing specific and acute moral dilemmas in their work. The key points of discussion were as follows and some are best framed as questions -

What is morality? It was agreed that the word morality was a nexus for several forces - the way we want to world to be; the way we see the world to be; the way we physically respond in pleasant and unpleasant sensations to the world; one's individual

morality is a reaction to these things and shapes our conscience and hence our ability to act.

It was also discussed that there was a great disparity between the world we were capable of imagining and the world we lived in. This was both a positive and negative thing.

The world we imagine for ourselves, or the way our desire shapes our imagination can sometimes open the possibility for violent and harmful action as well as great acts of compassion and courage.

How do we decide what is morally offensive? And how do we arrive at an understanding of integrity in practice around this issue.

What issues if any should be censored from the theatre?

Do we have a moral responsibility to inform our audience of the content of a work?

-Some programmers said yes they did but not specifically; rather a general notification that the work might cause offence.

Does provocative work compromise our future audience or do we have a responsibility to provoke the audience?

Does the explicit representation of violence on stage weaken an argument against a violent world by creating another act of violence?

Is it important for the theatre to imagine and reflect back the world in all its violence?

Is it the consequences of violence that are more horrifying than the act itself?

Do we run the risk of art becoming banal and gratuitous if it does not have a moral sensibility when it comes to representing violence?

Do we have a moral imperative to deal with 'dark material' in a certain way as not to just exploit it for the purpose of shock? In other words if the representation of violence and dark themes does not enhance our understanding of them is it just exploitation?

Do we censor our own imagination on the basis of a perceived offence we might cause an audience? And should we monitor our work in terms of any perceived offence?

Does the aesthetic of a piece of work reflect a moral sensibility? And do we need to try and broaden our moral sensibility to broaden the range of experiences that we see on stage?

Even if we respond with moral outrage to a work it can broaden our sensibility and desire to see different works which are equally challenging.

Do we have moral obligation as an audience to leave a show that outrages us for fear of contributing and endorsing the very world that outrages?

Is the moral centre of the work the responsibility of the authors or the audience of any work?

Do we have an obligation to save ourselves from ourselves? In other words can theatre be redemptive?

Should we censor the world we imagine in a work of art just in case we become what we imagine?

Can the moral sensibility of an audience or theatre programmers exclude very important and potentially innovative works for reasons of misunderstanding? And will these works be rediscovered or speak differently when the moral compass shifts?

Is there an implicit moral centre to any act of creation?

Would we imagine if did not desire and does what we desire (sexual, social, motional and physical) govern the world we imagine?

When does this cause offence to other people?

Does well-performed or created work naturally mean that the artist has a good moral intention?

The work of Bill Henson was discussed and that artists defend him on the grounds that his artistic

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practice is so strong. But no one has any way of knowing the true intentions behind a work.

The session ended very suddenly and clearly with one unanimous in breath - after which everyone laughed and immediately stood up.

Many people commented after that it was great to reconnect with the reason why they make work not how they are hindered from doing it.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes)* 042

Issue: How can we talk about our artistic “failures” with ourselves, each other and funders?

Convener(s): Jackie

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Just me – I think this topic has been covered elsewhere, especially in the self-assessment topic, which Chris Kohn convened in Savu in Session 2.

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

A few additional thoughts:

How can frank and open discussion with funders be possible?

This leads to the question: how do we talk about failures even to ourselves? Individual practices are critical to being able to continue and grow as an artist.

What works with yourself might include respect, being gentle, trusting and positive in self-feedback

The question of whether you need to change comes at the end of the discussion, not at the beginning.

Self-feedback has to come from a place accepting that there is no "perfect," and every work / career is in development, in progress.

It doesn't have to be an all or nothing conversation with yourself.

The way this self-feedback operates at the personal level is also the way it should operate at the level of the conversation with funders and others. The same principles have to apply (respect, trust, gentleness etc)

How do we talk about failures with funders without becoming defensive, and without them going on the offensive?

Build from the ground up an accepted style, culture, space in which it's ok to admit failures as not failures, but as development. Funders have to give their word that they will respect this process, and have to be part of the discussion themselves and allowed to admit to failure too.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 043*

Issue: Risk: is it a buzz word

Convener(s): Margi Brown Ash

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Natalie Jenkins

Vyvian Wilson

Matt Lutton

Dan Evans

Clair Korobacz

Leticia Cacere

John Baylis

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

WARMING UP THE CONVERSATION:

- Is the synonym for risk 'failure'?
- Do we need to change the language around 'risk': rather than failure or success?
- Can we focus on the strengths of the process? Then perhaps the 'problems' will look after themselves.

Definitions of Risk:

1. Risk is courage to experiment; to try something different that may succeed or fail

2. Risk is doing what you don't know what the outcome is going to be

3. Risk is energy: without the notion that I am not taking a risk, I would not be energized. It is a motivation to me.

4. Risk is embracing the unknown...that space that cannot be predetermined...that can only emerge on the floor in collaboration.

Some major points that emerged:

- In the science and business world, risk is embraced as the way forward, and entrepreneurial ventures are encouraged by funding. Because arts organizations receive funding that is 'drip-fed' ('not a sustainable industry'), we are unable to embrace huge risks: we simply do not have the funds to cover it.
- When a risk results in 'failure' it is important to 'walk right up to it': engage in the conversations with significant people including the funding bodies so that the experience can be deconstructed with rigor.
- We can be our own worst enemy. We need to, as a community learn how to use constructive language to engage in critical and useful discourse.
- Change our language: remove the word failure: is it relevant, or should we be using words such as "transformative"?

- To embrace risk, we need to we need to manage risk by having mechanisms in place such as:
 - Critical friends;
 - Creative developments;
 - Supporting remounts of work so that you can constantly refine;
- RISK IS PART OF THE PROCESS TO SUCCESS
- WE CAN MANAGE RISK WITH CARE AND STRATEGY

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 044*

Issue: Should you Risk Fucking up your family/personal life to make what you think is good art?

Convener(s): Frank Newman

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Unfortunately the answer was yes. Even though it was recognised that this was a ridiculous response.

The finer details of the discussion focused on a need for the family structures to reflect and accommodate the atypical lifestyles that accompany a life in theatre.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 045*

Issue: Artistic Director or Creative Producer or Both?

Convener(s): Dan Clarke

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Dan, Kay Jamieson, Geoffrey Williams, Alison Heilit

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Do people know what a Creative Producer is?

Although titled EP Kay says that she feels like a Creative Producer

Don't lose "Artistic"

What about Artistic Producer (Opera Director was called Producer)

Roles, definitions vary between organisations

What is the difference between Executive Producer and Creative Producer?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 046*

Issue: Stop Look Listen: start a new conversation

Convener(s): Alison Richards

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Alison Richards, Stephen Nicolazzo*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Mind the gaps - are we losing sight of things that are in between?

(The pre-emerging, the post-established, the rude, the uninvited)

This conversation is so ordered and well mannered.

What about the theatre and the flesh:

Is this the new Puritanism? Where is the raw energy, where is the queer in this conversation?

Don't forget the sensuous and the sensual.

Own up to the madness in us and in our worlds, own your own pain and hysteria, embrace ambiguities

EAT YOUR FEARS

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 047*

Issue: Risk being unprofessional

Convener(s): John Baylis

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Victoria Spence, Sophie Travers, Janine Peacock, Ian Pidd, Sue Giles, Vivien Wilson, Nicole Beyer, Stephen Champion, Dave Brown, Clare Watson, Katrina Gill, Deb Pollard,
Others:

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

What use does the term 'professional' have in the phrase 'professional artist'? Do we fetishise professionalism, creating this class of people who do art and relegating everyone else to the role of passive consumer?

'Amateur' means someone who loves what they do – does that mean professionals don't love what *they* do? What are we trying to achieve with word?

It is a way of giving ourselves a value when we don't feel that value is being given to us by society at large. In some other countries (France, Poland, Java were cited), artists are seen as giving to the community. Too often in

Australia they are positioned as people who take. Did artists earn that place in those countries because they took an active role in resistance to occupiers, revolution etc? They took real risks.

Amateur artists take pleasure in what they do, but do they explore? Do they challenge themselves? Do they create original work? Are they prepared to commit a significant portion of their time to their art?

But then, do professionals always challenge, explore? And what's the difference between an amateur company doing *Annie Get Your Gun* and MSO's doing Beethoven – doesn't that make the MSO just another cover band?

Everyone has creative potential. There is resurgence in the idea of learning craft lately. Big Brother and Rimini Protocol show that non-artist can also be interesting to watch. And Web 2.0 gives everyone the tools to make their own movies, make their own encyclopedia – why do we need professionals?

We enjoy celebrity chefs and acknowledge their skill, but this doesn't stop us making our own creations in the kitchen.

There is a specialised skill that makes an artist (whether we use the p word or not). They create the frame, they make the truck drivers in Rimini Protocol interesting by creating the context for the audience to see it.

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Or: artists are those who care beyond their own practice.

But claiming professional status is claiming otherness, and exacerbated the gap between artist and community.

Recommendation:

- Drop the word professional
- Put the emphasis on truth, virtuosity and enquiry

And by the way, where are all the artists at this forum?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 048*

Issue: Take Real Time

Convener(s): Daniel Schlusser

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Victoria Spence, Chris Kohn, Leanne Gunnulson

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Early thoughts about the notion of time, in terms of stories, audiences, events, the rhythm of performances and the meaning implicit in rhythm superseded by broader structural applications of the provocation.

"Real" time was discussed as - the time things need, making less work over longer times, making work in the time it needs means some ideas need fast execution, in and of themselves. Ideas have different durational value.

Funding time-lines are not sympatico with a variety of durational pressures/requirements. Frustration that the ease of administration (for funders) dictates artistic practice.

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As a response to funding frustration: Ignore arts funding, risk artistic identity amongst your peers and in relation to society by making one project/decade. The value placed on time (\$/hour). Art generates less \$/hour than many other, sustainable activities. Convert artistic skills to other, socially necessary applications (for eg: real uses of ritual in grieving processes, counseling, major life events). Risk misunderstanding.

As a counter to above model: the dangers of alternate careers/models in relation to excellence and the continuum required to attain mastery.

As a separate proposal, spend time making less work and instead ensure that it reaches broader audiences (size, geography).

As an observation: existing models of the use of time (rehearsal strategies, bump-in strategies, funding strategies, life strategies) need to be forcibly adapted by artists to ensure that needs of both artist and work are being met.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 049*

Issue: Distrust Consensus

Convener(s): Daniel Schlusser

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Katt Osborne, Gita Bezard, Emilie Collyer, Peta Hanrahan, Caroline Lee

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Paradox: that we agree that consensus is overrated as a requirement of creation, even interferes with the possibility of art. Attempt to broaden the observation to include funding structures.

Understanding that public funds need to be allocated in a manner that is perceived as "fair" or democratic.
Understanding that fairness does not necessarily result in/is possibly antithetical to, excellence.

Observing that excitement is generated by "curatorial" models and considering the possibility that the new system could be adapted, i.e.: producing hubs given a mandate to provide exciting short term curatorial bias and that this exercise of taste is not considered negatively.

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Artists could use the "how will you evaluate this work?" question in the acquittal process to lead a shift in thinking on this issue.

While understanding that the small quantity of money involved reduces the impact, observing that a variety of methods of distributing money (random allocation, short-term periods of highly specific ideological focus, to take two "non-consensual" suggestions) would make the system healthier.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 050*

Issue: The use and abuse of the term ‘Australian’ in reference to the theatre we make

Convener(s): Paul Monaghan

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Paul Monaghan, Caroline Lee

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Starting point: has it been/it is useful to retain the adjective 'Australian' in reference to the theatre we make?

There has been an unhealthy obsession with national identity, which has fed into theatre. The overuse of the term '*Australian theatre*', '*new Australian play*' etc carries with it the baggage of both a lack of confidence and an overconfidence.

Can we not do without the obsessive navel-gazing?

Perhaps this tendency has been diminished over the past 15 years or so, and it is simply time to let it go, to make the work within contexts local, national and global without bothering with the label?

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On the other hand, there is value in resisting the influence of generalised Western theatre forms that could be from anywhere, and do not seem to have been sifted through the creative juices of artists in their own contexts, to structure in 'local content'.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 051*

Issue: Engaging audiences through new technologies (e.g. Web 2.0)

Convener(s): Shane Colquhoun

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Jennifer Barry, Joanne Kee, Nyujnkia Tauris, Yolanda Blair, Kyle Morrison, Alex Hurford, Chris Summers, Pee Plumley, Mark Fitzpatrick

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Strengthen relationships with current and new audiences - engagement, enriches the experience.
- It can't be just mass marketing tool, has been genuine engagement
- Must be a 2 way dialogue or communication, there must be a response or it will be seen as a cynical exercise
- Requires commitment, resources including staff time and expertise
- Issues of censorship, requires guidelines and protocols, copyright/ownership issues
- Blogs, online communities, video uploads.

- Don't replicate or lose the live performance - provide enhancement or insight on development of work to help the live experience
- Find a culture of constructive criticism if you have a blog and are concerned about negative comments
- It can reach a point of overload
- Research shows greatest users of web 2.0 are stay at home Mums!
- Now web 3.0 which brings in a live meeting aspect, eg 'bar camps'
- Viral marketing - immediate feedback or comment or input to a performance
- Cross fertilisation of different sites
- There are cultural challenges for communities that are not technology literate or do not have access to computers.
- Theatre companies could use web 2.0 for post-show feedback from subscribers
- Public could curate shows, provide choices to narrative etc
- Create content that is suitable for each medium
- Australia Council has appointed a new Digital Officer
- Need web2.0 officers embedded in arts orgs for short-term to build capacity, upskill staff.
- Provide case studies to demonstrate successful use of web2.0
- Check out: laurelpapworth.com, furtherfield.org,

Issue number: 052

Issue: I DO IT FOR THE AUDIENCE – is that a risk?

Convener: Jeremy Rice

Participants: *Simon Abrahams, Susan Ficher, Sarah Miller, Vera Ding, Jeremy Rice, Ingrid, Kyle Morrison, man with a beard who came and went without saying anything.*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

OK, we had a vigorous discussion with differences of opinion, philosophy, ideology; no agreed conclusions or recommendations.

- Theatre artists and this forum are obsessed with the supply side of theatre, not demand.
- If you want to please the masses, you can go and put on a rock concert.
- Audience response is the primary measure of the success or failure of my work.
- Speak honestly about a work and you will get audiences.
- This forum assumes the value of certain artistic ideologies and practices. Although there's a lot of talk

about diversity, there's little diversity of ideology or practices.

- A company won't be killed if it's engaged with its audience.
- Care factor: stress-test subsidised companies: if they are axed, would people care?
- Holden and Joss talk about the “irritable conversation” between government and theatre: get audiences to speak directly to government.
- Where / how do audiences have their say in peer-review? Why is peer review and assessment of quality privileged over audience response?
- Why can't audiences have a say in programming?
- I dispute the statement “art begins with risk”. Theatre begins with performers and audience together but this forum assumes a shared political ideology and privileges artistic practice over audience engagement.
- Subsidy is needed as a small counterbalance to the mainstream.
- I prefer ABC television to Channel Ten – content and advertising.
- A respondent at this forum stated in another forum that audiences need to be educated: that riles.

- I dispute the argument that “if the work is artistically good or best practice, audiences will like it.”
Audiences know what they want to see.
- Is the issue of audience a youth-arts thing, because we always have to go out and find our audience?
- Subsidised theatre is good at engaging with the “other”, marginalised communities, but we’re not very good at engaging with “the the” “them”.
- Is there demand for your theatre?

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 053*

Issue: We need to engage with 'the other' as artists and audiences.

Convener(s): David Everist

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Opps forgot

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Discussion about who is the 'other'. Some times as artists we are the other - we sit outside the mainstream. Some times we work with the other - we represent the mainstream.

Some times we find the other or witness the other in our work -the dark side, the hidden. Many times it is about language.

It is a difficult concept to define. There is a paradox that as artists we are the other often dealing with the other. We probably deal with the other better than most sectors but we can still do more.

Maybe funding has made us less likely to work with the other because it is risky.

The discussion then moved to ways of engaging people in arts practice. Auskick is a great model for engaging

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young people and then involving them in AFL football. Suburban ballet schools and drama schools don't work in the same way. On the whole they are not interested in the creative process. Is it possible to engage with them, should we?

The other can be something bigger than the individual. What we do together - the sum of the parts.

Recommendations: We need facilitators (people) who help bring 'the others' and non others together using different models. Who are these people? Where do they sit?

Issue number: 54

Issue: Cross-Racial Casting: Diversifying Our Main Stages

Convener(s): Sonya Soares

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Sue Broadway
Tom Wright
Vallejo Gontner
Malissa Gough
Nina Bonaeu
Ralph Myers

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The whiteness of Australian mainstage production was discussed with respect to:

- The concept of plausibility in casting and why this is heavily racialised – is this legitimate?
- The dramaturgy of race as presented on our stages, whereby the white body is privileged as transformable whereas Otherness is interchangeable within set parameters
- The concept of colour blind casting and whether this is tantamount to assimilation

- The segregation of non-white actors in 'culturally specific' work, the fringe or productions in which they are cast on the basis of their race
- The selection/ training of non-white actors in our institutions and the merits of positive discrimination
- The ongoing development of non-white actors' craft which is legislated against in an industry that compartmentalises them into token roles or excludes them entirely – and conscious strategies for resisting this trend
- The powerful role of the director in making decisions that impact casting, design and writing
- The identity playwrights that are programmed and the imperative of satisfying audience expectation
- Engaging/ enlisting major theatre companies in the project of conscious strategies to promote diversity on stages and audience development – thereby broadening Australian theatre to the point where it becomes relevant to our entire community not just a certain demographic
- Chris Mead and Lee Lewis' platform papers on this subject
- Public policy being the quickest promoter of change cf. the UK

We referenced specific works, actors and programs in this discussion including Baghdad Wedding, MTC's Realism, STC's Romeo & Juliet, Bell's Othello, Young Jean Lee, Deborah Mailman, Wayne Blair, Paula Arundell, The Actors Company and Julian Meyrick.

Issue number: 055

Issue: Adapting to Change – Continuing Professional Development

Convener(s): Lynne Williams –Director/CEO NIDA

Participants: Tim Joss, Rosalba Clemente, Katherine McLean, Kim Durban, Tamara Searle, Lynne Williams
(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Summary

Refreshing artistic practice is a lifelong undertaking.

To maintain a career in a constantly evolving arts sector, artists need to acquire new skills to be able to respond to new challenges and accept new career directions.

Adapting to change can be frightening and frustrating and mentoring is crucial.

Volunteering is a practical way of testing out new environments and proving you have transferable skills

Self-identification of training needs can be supplemented by others assessing your skills base.

Exploring opportunities to go into non-arts organisations to learn about the possibilities of different performance contexts can open up new performance contexts e.g. criminal justice, health.

Learning to be connected to the world and open to 'off-the-wall' possibilities leads to important re-evaluation of practice and skill base. Non-arts organisations need to recognise creative skills as crucial to the success of their organisations.

Arts companies need to put aside funds for CPD to enable identification of training needs. Some great European models available.

NIDA is planning for a Centre for Contemporary Performance Practice, which will offer postgraduate courses, short immersive courses and opportunities for practitioners to work together to explore specific performance issues. Currently consulting with industry and other training partners to develop courses, which meet needs of mid-career artists, including Cultural Leadership.

Many artists work in theatre for children and young people as a stepping-stone to career development. They do not train for this initially and need to acquire relevant skills. This is about adapting to demand. This work offers huge opportunities and needs to be validated by training institutions through undergraduate course work and mid-career training packages.

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Recommendation:

National support for Continuing Professional Development schemes, which will harvest the investment made in initial training. Training institutions, the industry and the government need to be partnering in this to provide continuing training for a changing arts environment, especially outside of city centres.

Issue number: 056

Issue: NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

Convener(s): ROB BROOKMAN

Participants: ANN TONKS, DAVID BERTHOLD, TEENA MUNN, CARL NILSSON-POLIAS, SALLY RICHARDSON, HARLEY STUMM, SARAH STEWART, SARAH GREENTREE, HANNAH DURACK, MARKUS MICHALOWSKI, MARCUS SCHURENKO, KATHERINE HOEPPER, PAUL MCGILL, STEVE SHAW, PAUL MCPHAIL, JO DYER, CHRIS KOHN, CARIN MISTRY, DANIEL BRINE, DAN KOOP, ANGELA SALOMAN, CRAD SPALDING, JO DUFFY, ROBINA BURTON, PAMELA CREED,

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- The group strongly supported the idea of a National Theatre Festival
- Why Would We Do It?
 - To act as a space for dialogue between theatre practitioners and inspiration through the exchange of work
 - To act as an expansive promotion of theatre to both the theatre-interested and the broader community

- To provide a festival focus on Australian work outside the environment of multi-arts international festivals
 - To act as showcase and market-place for national and international venues, festivals, presenters and producers
 - To provide an opportunity for connections to be forged - potential co-productions, creative collaborations and other relationships
 - To provide a context for an ongoing National Theatre Forum
 - To enable movement of work around the country outside the Playing Australia process
-
- What would it look like?
 - Two weeks/three weekends
 - Multi-venue
 - 20 - 30 events - enough to create critical mass
 - Range in scale
 - Professional + best of independent (but everyone gets paid)
 - Encourages the idea of theatre as a broad church - text-based, physical, Indigenous, visual, theatre for young people, outdoor, contemporary performance practice, hybrid etc
 - Strong sense of precinct & a great bar!
 - Performance program augmented by seminars, forums, workshops, showings of works-in-progress

- Where Would It Be & When
 - Peripatetic a la Theatertreffen in Germany.
 - Capital City based (possible regional bolt-on?)
 - Biennial - alternate years to Australian Performing Arts Market
 - First one - 2011!

- Possible Synergies
 - National Play Festival to coincide?
 - Mobile States touring festival - NTF acts as launching pad?
 - Stand-alone - not part of existing major multi-arts festival

- How Would We Do It
 - Who owns it? National peak body if created?
 - Management convened on city-by-city basis between consortia of theatre organisations and venues - eg QTC + La Boite + Powerhouse + QPAC + Circa etc
 - Curated program

- What Would It Cost & Where's The Budget Coming From?
 - Imagined at \$4 - \$5 million
 - Box office

- Federal - new money ex DEWHA (not competing with existing OzCo funding) but channeled through Theatre Board of OzCo
 - State Ministries - either in supporting work to travel or in presentation of NTF if Ministry of State in which festival held
 - Events corporation of State which hosts NTF
 - City Council of city which hosts NTF
 - Corporate partnership
 - Philanthropy
 - Programming funding from arts centres/venues in city hosting NTF
 - Project funding - e.g. access to Major Festivals Initiative, New Work With Festivals etc
-
- Next Steps
 - Steering group to be formed - STC has volunteered. They must be freakin' CRAZY!!!!

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 057*

Issue: Can we handle criticism?

Convener(s): Lynno Wallis

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Caroline Stacey, Matthew Lutton, Adam Mitchell, Brenna Hobson, Gail Cork, Clair Korobacz, Melissa Cantwell, Patrick Nolan, Eamon Flack, Dave Brown, Chris Kohn, Sophie Travis ... and many, many more ...

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Background: Are we able to offer and accept criticism, and be tough and 'non-personal' about it the way some other industries are? Does our passion, commitment, investment, expertise, vulnerability and survival instincts, prevent us from responding to and offering to each other the transformative power/agent that criticism can be? Encompassing criticism:

- From our audience
- From our peers
- The media
- 'Outsiders'
- Funders – from our artists
- Artists – from our funders
- Etcetera, etcetera

This is a big question, and the discussion changed directions with great speed, a number of times. If documentation appears a little erratic/lacking in narrative at times, I'd just like to say that it's 'them', not 'me'. I have short legs and can't go as fast as other people.

The beginning - general discussion/comments:

- The difficulty we have offering criticism – it's much harder when you know the person
- Oz is unlike Europe – there is generally no infrastructure to criticize work – there are rigorous processes in other countries (such as Norway), and as a result, artists are more resilient.
- There is a cultural reticence with audience (too polite) – they don't boo or rave wildly
- How do we develop a framework and language for criticism? – Sport has this framework
- Difference between criticism and critiquing – gut level response and feedback is different from informed, confident understanding of mechanics of work
- AD discussed critical framework for her work over the years, explained the rigors of this – key to this is the 'invitation' to trusted stakeholders to offer feedback
- There is difficulty in smaller environments like Perth

There was then a subtle segue to 'reviewing':

- A bad review of a young company can undermine the progress of the company
- Should we promote our bad reviews (like Chaser) and de-sensitise ourselves?
- We need to develop/practice language around criticism
- Is the worst criticism we get 'the truth' or is it the best?

A question: Why is it taboo to be openly critical/honest about a show on opening night?

An eloquent answer is provided: opening night is a celebration of the fact the show was created – the fact that it exists. If there are 30 performances, we should celebrate its existence on the first and there are 29 other opportunities to be critical.

- Criticism is about timeliness – we need to find the moment when someone is most receptive and capable of hearing criticism.
- Sometimes as a peer, responding immediately is hard
- Preference for dialogues rather than written criticism – better engagement
- Is it better to be slammed or ignored – some say slammed
- Are advocacy and criticism linked?

We start to get into a feisty conversation about reviewing – there is strong disagreement within the circle. It is exciting, but I hope it won't get physical. I am armed only with a pen.

A: We should take media reviews on the chin – if we are going to invite criticism, then we should just open ourselves to it and not take it personally. They hated the show – so what?

B: We need to care about the quality of reviews/reviewers – reviewers can misguide audience. We want intelligent reviewers who can contextualise. Expertise in the reviewer is vital.

A: Can there not just be an authentic response to a work? Do we have to set conditions about how we are criticised?

Strong disagreement from some. Again, there is a call to understand the difference between a gut response to work and intellectual critique.

A question: if God exists, and as God we get to build a 'reviewer' from the ground up – what would they look like? What would that person do?

Group answer: they would have:

- Writing skill
- Broad knowledge base
- Be rigorous
- Have a deep knowledge of work
- They would recognise trends – understand history and linkages/connections
- Forced to defend their own intellect (within their peer group)
- They would have to engage with work and contextualise the work for their audience

Dave Brown joins the group and is asked to talk about Patch Theatre's model for self-assessment. It is a rigorous and authentic model, and I won't do it a disservice here – grab him, buy him a beer, and get him to tell you about it.

More comments:

- There's not enough intelligent reviewing (e.g. real time). We must remind ourselves that newspapers are reviewing for readers, they are not employed to service the industry
- A new twist on the topic - is there damage done by inviting peers into creative development to 'criticise'? Is this about gathering data? Reporting? Is this real criticism or lip service?
- If directors get honest criticism, the less actors will have to live with their mistakes in future shows.
- To give and receive criticism, there must be a generous environment

We disbanded, limbs intact.

Issue number: 058

Issue: **Lucrative Partnerships & Sponsorships Vs getting to sleep at night**

Convener(s): Jennifer Greer Holmes

Participants: *Jennifer Greer Holmes*
Angela Salamon
Fiona Maxwell

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Questions we asked:

- If/when it is a case of an arts company going under OR accepting money from a business which has questionable environmental / social / economic practices, what should we do?
- Rationalize it and take the money; if we don't, it may go to another organization, which doesn't care or is unaware. Is it better that it's used by a company which has awareness and feels a sense of responsibility?
- Refuse the money and go under, reducing the number of opportunities for artists and arts workers.
- What has been the motivator for these companies to develop Corporate Social Responsibility funds?
 - Tokenism?
 - Transparency?
 - Good PR?

- Do artists care? Are we being used?
- How does it affect a theatre company's reputation and credibility? E.g. Kids arts festivals sponsored by mining company, festivals being offered cigarette company's money and refusing, a theatre company talking to a construction company who has built on sacred sites...
- What is the compromise? Logo changes? Naming rights? What do the funding bodies then think of these compromises?
- What can be reasonably asked of the corporation to compromise and change their dodgy practice or compensate for that practice?
- Ask the evil corporation to put back into the community in addition to funding.
- Ask the community affected by the corporation's behavior how they would feel about it.
- Get advice from a marketing and PR company about how to manage public perception.

Summary – this question led to more questions but the general feeling was to take the money first and then try to negotiate a better outcome from the corporation later.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 059*

Issue:

If I give a woman director/artist a “leg up” am I creating a culture of mediocrity? – Single male (wunderkind) star in the sky wanted

Convener(s): Katerina Kokkinos-Kennedy

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Tamara Searle, Olivia Allen, Suzanne Kersten, Xan Colman, Kate Cherry, Richard Murphet, Kim Durban, Ilbijeri artist, Kate Sulan, Sue Giles, Leticia Caceres, et al*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

A broad-ranging discussion that in part came out of Tom Wright's provocation on Thursday afternoon that theatre leadership roles within major theatre organisations are almost exclusively aimed at / geared for and given over to; over-privileged/educated, young, white, males. And in part supported by the small 'l' liberal woman who does not identify as a feminist;

The group discussion began by looking at some of the issues that seem to continue (despite decades of effort by various individuals/informal & formal groups) to dog the project of creating pathways for woman theatre directors and performance makers to make the transition into working in mainstream theatre. Issues that arose and were discussed included the following: regarding the paucity of opportunity for women to be mentored and to gain experience as artists working in larger venues within medium - large companies. A number of people in the group noted that the ideal context would in fact require both longitudinal mentoring and the opportunity to make work for larger venues- and preferably, simultaneously. Kate Cherry and Kim Durban (both past associate AD's of Playbox Theatre confirmed? the value of this model in their own career development as artists and leaders within their field.)

Other questions/issues that arose include:

1. The need to overcome our cringe/fear/ of sounding like feminists (yes, it's a dirty word).
2. Is the fear of creating a "culture of mediocrity" just an excuse to continue to fail women artists, to deny them main stage opportunities and to avoid the continuing inequality that surrounds the theatre's glass ceilings?
3. The majority of theatre director graduates are women, but that is not reflected in "professional" industry roles.

4. Many women work and/or are forced to the margins in terms of their professional working lives; teaching, independent theatre work, academia etc.
5. Many women are unprepared and unsupported even if they are given a main stage opportunity; and failure is a likely and consequently the end of that opportunity.
6. Male theatre figures such as Sharman, Armfield, Kosky and Andrews have been mentored extensively and have had their careers nurtured from a very young age by older male directors and AD's.
7. How do women artists create and sustain working relationships with medium to large companies long enough to create work opportunities?
8. What structures could be put in place to support the inclusion and integration of women into the mainstream?
9. We need to re-introduce scholarships, bursaries, and mentorship schemes and company initiatives that positively discriminate for women to be included as artists, directors, artistic associates and artistic directors. The funding bodies (Oz Co, Arts Vic) and the main stage companies need to be our partners in this project until we reach a 50/50 ratio of women to men. Maybe then we can relax - a little.
10. The discussion also addressed issues of class, colour and ethnic diversity; but it was noted that women are

not a minority, and therefore should remain a major focus in terms of the equity debate.

11. A Canadian artist noted that despite a 50/50 representation of women to men at graduate school; within 5 years of graduation the majority of women went into academic teaching, & men into the majority of artistic director roles;

12. White, male ADs could experience mirroring with young white male boys, & make the moves to make a career path for them

13. White, female ADs could experience some frisson with young white male boys, & make the moves to make a career path for them

14. White, female ADs could experience that a young white female girls is better looking than she is, & wont make the moves to make a career path for them

15. Despite the talent and skill of emerging and mid-career women directors there has been no marked change in employment rates in the last fifteen years; in fact opportunities in many sectors have diminished; especially in the mainstream;

16. Someone commented that most of the really interesting festival directors were in fact women.

17. The issue was also raised that many women work in the heavy workload areas of theatre such as the writing, devising and making of new works; and that this may yet

prove to be the change (in world terms) of women being in the vanguard of innovative and sustainable theatre in the future;

18. Wunderkind required; a joke was made that many directorial roles are assigned, given, handed down to - "the next single white male star in the sky "

19. According to the women in leadership forum - men need to be 35% confident to do a job and women need to be 90% confident to do a job;

20. How to ask for changes to be made? Letters, requests, profiling of issue, requests for transparency in decisions/choices made, accountability of companies re tax payer's funds allocation, reviving debate about lack of changing work opportunities for women and the addition of humour;

21. Difficulties in defining ways of working; do women and men work differently?

22. The male 'expert' model; i know what I'm doing so give me what I want; the alpha male phenomenon;

23. The female collaborative model; different voice, concerns;

24. Simplistic but perhaps this needs to be considered in the discussion/mix;

25. The ghetto of women theatre workers;

26. Recent roles at a major theatre co not even advertised;

27. Could women program differently and better?
Given that most theatre audiences are women? Might women create more innovative programmes?

Recommendations and Actions;

Write letters,

Profile the issues

Request reasons from companies about lack of women directors

ask funding bodies to factor in these deficits and to create responsive programmes and opportunities;
a sense of humour- is feminism funny?

**South Australia now has a 50/50 government minister policy; women must be 50%.

everything that is said from hereon is true (quotes from male & female ADs of major co.s):

"you're really good at the emotional stuff

"I don't give women a leg-up because it creates a culture of mediocrity.

"If she doesn't have the alpha energy to get herself into the top jobs then I'm not going to help."

"Women just don't have it in them to direct, they cant handle the stress"

On the other hand encouraging comments from a female AD: "I really want to employ women & younger women in theatre."

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 060*

Issue: As a manager, by job is never to say 'no' to the artist.

Convener(s): **Alice Nash, Back to Back Theatre**

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Jennifer Barry, Kay Jamieson; Ulanda Blair; Mark Fitzpatrick; Chris Tooher (sp?); Pippa Bainbridge; Fiona de Garis (sp?); Simon Abrahams, Sue Giles, Vernon Guest, Cathcart Weatherley; Nathan Bennett; Alison Halit; Katherine McEan (sp?); Brad Spolding; Kevin O'Loughlin; Parl MacPhai (sp?); Vyvian Wilson; Geoffrey Williams; Robina Burton; Erin Milne; Lucy Evans; Jasmine Waterson

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

By manager, we mean: General Managers, Producers, and Administrators...

The group AFFIRMED that a good working relationship between an artist and an arts administrator is:

Symbiotic; a conversation; collaborative; a partnership;
honest;
Respectful; and trusting

This group NOTED too that:

- It is important that, as managers, we not be relegated or relegate ourselves to a lesser role within the process of making a work and bringing that work to an audience.
- The best managers understand artistic practice.
- It's important to be in the room for creative developments, rehearsals and production weeks, so that we know what is happening.
- It is not about the managers' ego; but it is about the audience.
- We always want to say 'yes'.
- It is about challenging, in a legitimate way.
- We want artists to dream as much as possible.
- It's important and fruitful to engage in artistic tension *and* business tension.
- We need sometimes to protect others and sometimes the artist themselves from ideas that will make it difficult for all.
- Independent artists may of course perceive that there are a lot of managers – gobbling up wages – that should go to artists. We understand that these artists might feel excluded. Independent artists can be excluded from managerial support.
- Artists sometimes run away – understandably – from the tasks that we, as managers, do.

- We need to believe in the art that is being made or we are in a very untenable professional predicament.
- What is important to the artist may not always serve the company.

- It should never really get to the point where it's impossible to agree. But then again, sometimes a shake up is good for a company.
- Artists don't always want to do what managers do.
- The arts are one of the only sectors where there is often dual ownership / leadership of an organisation.
- If you don't have the \$, you sometimes have to say 'no'
- 'No' is never just a 'no': it will be a series of choices.
- It is unusual for a single person to have all the skills needed to lead an organisation.

We also ASKED

- What do you do when you think an artistic idea proposed is crap? Answers included: That's what research and development is for. Need to work out strong ways to engage in critical dialogue, the structures for critical dialogue will enable production conversations about work that may be difficult to say 'yes' to.
- Are artists always the last to be paid? Are managers always the last to be paid? Answer: it depends on the context. Independent producers sometimes get paid last.

Art begins with risk – what risks should we be taking now?
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We also talked a lot about

- The merits and dangers of various company structures: Joint CEOs; Artist as CEO; Manager as CEO.

We noted that there was only 1 artist in our circle and that this was fine, absolutely fine.

Art begins with risk – what risks should we be taking now?
The Australian Theatre Forum
Friday 15th May 2009

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 061*

Issue: **Am I allowed to be middle-aged, stupid and fuck it up?**

Convener(s): **Merophie Carr**

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Various

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

No, you can't be all three.
Choose two.

Issue number: 062

Issue: do we risk it? An arts policy for work with children and young people.

Convener(s): Leticia Caceres, Lenine Bourke,

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Ben Ladden, Sarah Austin, Glen R Johns, Jane Gronow, Dave Everist, Jeremy Rice

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Context is everything,
- Discussion around funding connection to policy
- Does it really limit the possibilities? Because that's not what's happening in South Australia and Qld
- Industry development initiatives e.g. South Australia
- Impact State Arts Funding
- Look at other national policy e.g., arts and disability and the role of the cultural minister's council

- Why have governments resisted?
- The creative capacity around multiple art forms
- Theatre WITH young people goes under the radar
- National Policy should cover ALL parts of the sector
- Overall engagement frameworks e.g., Workshop participants, audiences, young and emerging, regional, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Positioning Indigenous Youth Arts as growing young artists
- Look Back at Australia Council Youth Arts Framework
- What would be the benefits to the sector?
- Who would do the consultation? And could Gmt be involved in that job?
- Ensuring Children's arts and cultural practice are included
- A focus on practitioners and not be too descriptive
- Look at Young People and the Arts Statement being released by Australia Council

- Action: YPAA to develop a discussion paper and disseminate amongst the sector.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 063*

Issue: National Theatre Peak Body?

Convener(s): Chris Kohn

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Chris Kohn, Rose Godde, Nicole Beyer, Peter Hanrahan, Frank? – Terrapin Tas.*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

We have a range of other bodies: i.e. AMPAG, YPAA, TNV (Theatre Network Victoria). Do we need a national peak body?

What could be the work of a National Peak Body... advocacy, information sharing, networking, technology bank, trend identification, facilitating discussions around issues such as succession planning - supporting informal networking models i.e. 'informal European theatre meeting'. Advocacy across states and territories.

Questions - is there another way - do we need to do this?

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Note: no one from the major orgs felt the need to come to this group meeting.

Issue number: 64

Issue: It's all over. Must we still be friends?

Convener(s):

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Sarah Stewart, Fiona Winning, Harley Strumm, Marg Brown Ash, Fiona Maxwell, Dan Evans, Janine Peacock, Nicole Lauder, Stephen Champion, Simon Hinton

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Beginning and endings.

A surprisingly amenable discussion about how to survive the pitfalls of trading in ego, aspiration and uncertainty.

Issue number: 065

Issue: Art and the media. Are we content with the media/a small group of reviewers being the main source of communication between the art and the audience?

Convener(s): Annette Madden

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Andrew Cory (Backbon), Ann Tonks (MTC), Sarah Miller (UOW), Dan Koop (Brisbane Powerhouse), Deb Pollard (artist), Kyle (Yirri Yarkin), Frank Newman (Terrapin)

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- The notion of critics v reviewers.
- MTC surveyed 3 years of reviews; there were 3 good reviews from The Age - what can be done when a reviewer seems to have a vendetta?
- Sometime interconnectivity of networks can be a problem - no objectivity because of personal connections.
- How do we protect artists being brutalised in the media?
- Social media - more communication, everyone can be a critic.
- Acknowledgement of context important in reviews
- Participatory media v print media

- Should we elect our reviewers?
- Reviews being relegated to the social pages. Grrr.
- Importance of street mags
- The question of history - if nothing else survives from a production the review is the only remaining piece of history
- Reviewing across genres - reviewers not equipped for this
- Not enough perspectives
- Media name and shaming i.e. Herald Sun tirade about emerging artists being funded in climate of GFC
- Malice not criticism
- Fight back
- Arts ranked about 29th on newspapers news priority list
- Extend the invitation for critics to learn more about the sector
- Demise of newspapers - if theatre arts/critics go first, do we care?
- Is blogging the new form?
- How do we record history, documentation of work, collective archive?
- Good examples - Realtime - gives artists a context, Currency Press Platform Papers.
- Journals - would the sector support it e.g. Ignite in Brisbane didn't work
- The embedded critic?
- Are reviews critical appraisal or promotion?
- There can be no real dialogue in a 400 word review.
- What happens when reviewers get reviewed?

- Interested in the quality of the writing - where are the dedicated, detailed, attentive reviews that are engaging even if you don't agree
- Spoilers - reviews that just tell you what happens
- Who's making the decisions about who gets to review?
- Is it a lost cause?
- Function in a parallel universe - do your own thing, don't rely on the media
- Opportunity to nominate a reviewer you think is appropriate
- More detailed programs - catalogue
- There is no trust between the artists and the media
- Where is the Michael Billington of Australia?
- Will the newspaper survive? Online better format?
- More interested in being "clever" than providing a service to readers
- Newspapers starting to give away free copies at Arts Centres, they see their audience as being culturally engaged
- Papers love controversy so if someone is offensive, they thrive on that

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 066*

Issue: Stronger Gateways for Emerging Artists - bridging the gap between being young and hopeful and actually pulling a wage from your artform.

Convener(s): Stephen Nicolazzo & Nyunkia Tauss

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

Gita Bezard (Duck Theatre) Melissa Gough
(Monash Uni) Adam Mitchell (Black Swan Theatre
Co – Hot Bed)
David Bethold (La Boite) Kat (Duck Theatre) Chris
Summers (Platform Youth Theatre) Ulanda Blair
(Next Wave Festival) Jo Duffy (Darwin Festival) TJ
Eckburg (Shopfront)

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Major theatre companies seem to have opportunities available in a perceived “Open Door” opportunities (from their p.o.v) but from the artist’s p.o.v it can be hard to know about who to

approach, what opportunities exist, and which door to knock on.

Example of the above working well:

- Malthouse Theatre and the new Tower Residency, providing rehearsal and perf venue, support, wage, promotion, and space in their program for groups to create work. Malthouse finds their participants is by watching the scene and being engaged with what's around at the time. Problem #1: they can't be everywhere at all times and see every show. Problem #2: this doesn't really foster individuals.
- Perth example: Black Swan Theatre Company's Hot Bed opportunity auspices (?) young individuals (not companies) in giving them a floor for their work. BSTC is funded by corporate sponsor allowing this work. This opportunity to work at a state level has launched many a career.
- Singapore example cited by Melissa Gough: arts centre that provides opportunities to individuals across artforms, across disciplines, in whatever time is needed by the participant.

Other support available?

- In WA (and other states), government reps can assist artists in applying for grants etc, but this is very case-by-case, and quite context based.
- There is also perception that incubator projects are for organisations only, not for individuals (> is this correct?)

Issue of moving from youth demographic into emerging demographic (in the industry for 3+ years) –

what do artists do in the interim? How do you establish yourself?

- You might tread the boards as a volunteer, do assistant directorships, mentorships etc to capacity, how do you move on to paid work, increased networks etc?
- Doesn't seem much "inter rung" partnership, companies/individuals who have just been there supporting those that are not quite there. Why is this?
- Perth: seems more supportive for interlevel support – e.g. the Blue Room? But perhaps this is also about perception? Perth being small vs. professionals and organisations never being as you think they will be.
- Good news: %age of applications granted in new work categories from recent Theatre Board round seems much higher than in other categories. Moving away from funding established to fresher opportunities.

In an ideal world

- Mainstay companies might take on a bigger panel of paid artistic associates (including more young and emerging artists).
- Could give more paid opportunities to young artists in the window before they get artistic directorships... give chance to ground themselves and create work. So much more could come from this than immediate benefits to Individual/ Company.

- Duck House Theatre (WA) – would be great if a big company would put them up, giving them room to breathe, and to create (and pay rent).

Perhaps it's lack of awareness of opportunities, not lack of opportunities as such?

- Opportunities might be out there, but how do people engage with them? How is the information about these opportunities disseminated? Do all relevant people always engage with relevant opps?
- Shopfront example : through ArtsLab providing 6 month paid development residency across any artform, with weekly mentoring and development. Variety of showings, artform based product.
- TJ: What about people who are offered the opportunity to be involved, but don't take it up? Or people not taking advantage of the opportunities that ARE out there? Who is the target group? Each time a network or target group is identified, is someone else missing out? How to establish a cohesive presence?
- Platform Youth Theatre e.g.: paid writing opportunity had 47 applicants, took 1. PYT had no idea what advice to offer to the other 46 about where they should go now? Point being: even organisations lack awareness of these opps.

David Berthold suggests there are two ideas coming out of this: 1. That there are opportunities that come from large organisations and 2. That there are actually great chances for orgs to support themselves and their own work.

- Chris Summers: There is a real difficulty in networking for young people. As a writer it's hard to find like-minded directors – seems like there are ample opportunities for groups to be supported, but as an individual it can be hard to find others to work with.
- People need to get out there and make their own networks and create their own opportunities.
- Or there is the speed dating model, perhaps outcome based – such as speed dating to find people to work on a particular project or festival?
- Next Wave (and Kick Start) provide opportunities for ongoing mentorships, workshops, group and individual networking, as well as one off projects for people to be involved.

Success Stories:

- Hayloft Project, and the WOW factor. When Hayloft arrived in Sydney there was a big buzz around who they were, what they were doing – advantage to being foreign. Challenge is maybe for other groups to find ways to harness this for themselves?
- Another example: My Darling Patricia, members approached a variety of organisations and individuals about their practice and ideas... so by funding time (or performance time), people were aware of their work and interested.

Stephen wondering how long do you keep knocking on doors?

- Consensus: as long as you like, as long as you can, as long as you need to.

- However, there does seem to be a bit of a myth about exactly how many jobs there are out there, and how many PAID opps there are – really, we are probably always negotiating the next gateway. But what is this a gateway to?

Maybe gateways is not the best way to conceptualise this problem?

Maybe it's more about pathways than gateways?
Make your own.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 067*

Issue: do we applaud more loudly for foreigners?

Convener(s): eamon flack

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)*

David brine, marcus michalowski, emilie collyer, matt lutton and others

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The question is basically do we applaud not great work just because it's international? ...Cultural cringe...

Marcus v surprised at how little Australian audiences applaud anything

Parochialism is a similar phenomenon - interstate shows and artists can be greeted with hostility

Is it about insecurity? Not knowing if the bar is higher or lower? Lacking context?

Art begins with risk – what risks should we be taking now?
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Do foreigners living and working in Australia get judged differently - either for or against?

Do we focus too much on "new Australian theatre" instead of just "new good theatre"?

Do Australians more readily applaud foreign work in general - film, lit? Not sport...

But we don't want to have nationalism about our work either...

Cross-pollination is a form of sex

Are we thanking them for coming (to our shores, I mean)? Are we thanking them for coming all that way?

Or do we think the work is better? It's come all this way, it's been selected, and it MUST be better...

We pride ourselves on our friendliness

Sometimes just seeing new actors is enough to enthuse us

Arts coverage in the press favours the international over the local

Go to the NIDA grad show and ask objectively what country you must be in and you'll probably answer America - because what you're seeing on stage sounds and looks American

Art begins with risk – what risks should we be taking now?
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The great Australian myth: that it's better overseas

The formative Australian experience in your twenties is often sought overseas. Going overseas is about growing up.

A brain drain.

Assumption: if you want money and success, you've got to go overseas

Does too much government money go towards presenting international work that's not good enough?
Who says?

Do we applaud more because we pay more?

Are we applauding because we got through it?
Because we came?

Issue number: 68

Issue: Tight budgets: cut programmes/activities or go for broke?

Convener(s): Chris Mead

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants)* Chris Bendall (Deckchair), Maggie Armstrong (Vitals), Erin Milne (Arena), Kat Osbourne (Duck House), Champion Decent (Hothouse), Chris Pidd (Flying Fruit Fly), Jess (Old Fitz), Kevin (Terrapin).

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

What should one do when faced with a potentially large deficit, whether it's temporary or long-term, does one start trimming at the big events, or do the opposite and commit to more big events? And as a supplementary question: how does one manage this conversation with one's Board?

Comments from the group:

- Staring bankruptcy in the face is scary and seems to demand caution?

- We used to feel that all the effort one puts into reporting and compliance that actually meant death by 1000 cuts – but are we now doing it to ourselves?
- Deficits are crucial and need only be temporary and planned.
- Isn't a deficit a creative investment? It's an investment in the creative life of the arts organisation?
- Reserves are there to keep company programmes alive. Go for broke, always continue to make-work. Though it is a little more challenging of course if you don't have much by way of reserves.
- Never cut programmes – are you a theatre company or not?
- Bankruptcy is a genuine risk – companies can and have been closed.
- Has a theatre company ever really chosen to close itself down?
- Fight for the vision of your company – what is your core programme?
- Sometimes, with the increased visibility of a continued programming, one can attract a benefactor.
- Many fingers are crossed for many once key orgs that may yet re-emerge. Discussion hovered for a while on the task ahead for a number of orgs that lost substantial incomes but are nevertheless persisting with theatre-making. Some of the companies have reduced their programmes, but none closed their doors. There was general agreement that limiting cutting programmes would ultimately destroy them. Go hard or go home.

Better to burn out than fade away, as Kurt Cobain once says.

- One has to really carefully model what a company looks like with, and without, dollars?
- Most boards are entirely supportive of the artistic direction of a company and will back risk-taking and continued pursuit of an artistic programme.
- Where deep imbalances often arise is around the issue of change of key personnel – but again work still needs to happen. New Artistic Directors need to be backed!
- We're encouraged to find money from new sources – and where it was once corporate, now its philanthropy – but in the small-to-medium sector the servicing of this is extremely difficult. Indeed is it really possible that this sort of need can ever really be properly serviced? Is there too much expectation one turning up money from other sources for the small-to-mediums? Is there a successful model here or is it mostly just luck?
- It was noted that here Board composition is crucial.
- But does money really beget money???
- Is it the time to be entrepreneurial? What kind of a \$\$ spend is justified on entrepreneurial speculation outside core business? How might research help?
- If you are in your own venue, does one simply work it harder for income?? Hires, amateur groups and so on? Upside here is the capture of tailored marketing data.
- How does staggering your season help?
- How much depends on your Board for satisfactory resolution of these issues? What if the Board is inherited? What about a Board of only two or

three? Is there enough education as to other Board options, or other governance/company law options?

- How useful is a Board of 10? Can't their functions be fulfilled by an accountant, some generous rich people and a rubber stamp?
- Many independent artists genuinely happy to avoid forming companies limited by guarantee just to avoid having a board and having to comply in this way??

As for next steps the advice is clearly:

- Spend, spend, spend!
- Trade through the tough times – visibility is key!
- It's the time to be Bold – commit to a vision!
- If you have to fail, fail gloriously.

And one final comment from a participant – I've got a great desire to bankrupt a company and still survive! Is this the ultimate liberation? The massive artistic statement??

Issue number: 69

Issue: Dramaturgy is the enemy of
playwriting/playwriting is the enemy of dramaturgy

Convener(s): Ralph Myers and Chris Mead

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Judith Anderson, David Lander, Paul Moynaghan, Jo Duffy, Nick Marchand, Gail Cork, Richard Murphet, Annette Vieusseux, Antonietta Morgillo, Chris Drummond, Sally Richardson, Kylie Trounson, Chris Sommers, Liz Jones, Chris Bendall, Wesley Enoch, Olivia Allen, Duncan Graham, Annette Downs, Chris Tooher, Olivia Allen, Saffron Benner, Brenna Hobson, Charles Parkinson, Fraser Corfield.*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Some comments:

- Dramaturgy as a condition of production within a production house can be abusive.
- Aren't people's first ideas often the most interesting?
- There was a perception that the play-doctor model was bad for good art.
- Isn't dramaturgy about a lack of faith in the work?

- Isn't dramaturgy about bullying the playwright?
- Who owns this work??
- Does a company dramaturg guarantee homogeneity? Is the role more than a gatekeeper but a censor?
- The dramaturg just needs to work only for the playwright.
- What of the dramaturgy of performance??
- Dramaturgy is a process not a person and all performances involve dramaturgy but not always a dramaturg.
- Doesn't dramaturgy carry the can when new works fail when it's usually a systemic failure?
- Bad dramaturgy and bad dramaturges are as common as bad art and bad artists.
- If the roles/functions are clarified at the outset, the utility of dramaturgy can be worked much harder and with more success.
- Dramaturgy is critical to realising excellent new work – it can and must guarantee rigor and specificity.
- It's endgaming and rushing a new play that is the problem, partly because it evades the long-term rigor of good dramaturgy.
- In Germany there is always a dramaturg and they are often more senior than the director.
- Trust is crucial.
- Long-term collaboration is crucial.
- Where do dramaturges come from? Should they be trained? Should there be any more???

Everyone ultimately agreed that long-term, detailed work by artists is always the ideal and new work needs all the brains they can get.

Issue number: 70

Issue: Can we “develop” independent companies without destroying what makes them interesting?

Convener(s): Christian Leavesley

Participants:

Clare Watson, Kat Gill, Catherine Jones, Liz Buchanan, Todd MacDonald, Joanne Uee

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The topic was introduced in the frame of whether we are considering what constitutes “development” of independent companies in a way that most benefits their artistic practice. How does the “development” of independent companies as we know it influence the art they make?

Initially we tried to define what it is to “develop” an independent company. This was provoked by the proposition that there is a dominant understanding of “development” that is defined by working with the major companies or venues, and that this is an artistically limiting understanding. Some of the responses included;

- “Development” means giving an independent company resources to focus on their artwork rather than on the business side of what it takes to get

work up. Removing some of the burdens, writing applications, making partnership deals, providing mentoring.

- “development” means not having to ask yourself (the company) ‘Do we exist or do we not?’
- “development” is the opportunity to see an outcome.

We discussed the question of whether the focus on “development” was placed too much on the very early years of a career at universities and colleges, and not enough on the how artists and companies “develop” through a career. After these early years it is presumed that an artist and/or company will “develop” by their own processes.

Some responses and suggestions to this thought included;-

- the need to generate more mentoring opportunities.
- the need for independent companies to continually move between funded and non-funded opportunities. This helps to protect the company from the ‘perceived need’ to continually do funded work, and guards against feeling that moving back to unfunded work is a devolution of the company’s development.
- it is valid to presume that ‘independent’ companies will develop their art independently if given the space, and they don’t need any much other assistance.

The discussion moved onto what types of things might be useful in “developing” the work of independent companies. Some suggestions included;

- forums and interconnectivity with other artists.
- Identifying what it is that an artist or company ‘craves’ and assisting directly with this.
- Time to reflect on their own work and their own practice.

Some other key thoughts;

-that a shambolic structure or total lack of structure can be essential to the work of independent artists, thus “development” of this kind can be death for these companies.

-that business structures are essential for artists to work in an environment that provides resources and salaries, but that they also mourn for the time when they could act on their creative instincts more immediately when there weren't structures or business plans

-partnerships between major companies and independents work best when there is a genuine synergy between the respective needs of the companies.

-reflection that there are plenty of really strong examples of how majors and independents have worked together.

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 071*

Issue:

Artists as Shape Shifters- how do we articulate and apply our skills in non-arts sectors and industries?

Convener(s):

Victoria Spence

Participants

Xan Coleman A is for Atlas

Dan?

Hannah Durack Aus Co

Pauline Cady Back to Back

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Discussion was around the social and cultural role of artists beyond our discrete practices and art-forms. How artists catalyse and activate discussion by Working locally and getting into conversations at the big end of town.

Artists as agents of change - what skills do we need?

Practicing being an artist in the world without being attached to particular outcomes
Having conversations within this sector that have longer arms out into making lateral connections with allied industries that we want to engage in a dialogue with.
Finding a place in the social landscapes for what we do

Taking a broader sense of responsibility and engagement with issues in our communities, society
How do we cross-pollinate arts practices and skills with current issues- climate change, conservation, ecological and sustainable practices within our sector
Artists becoming an important partner in creating our futures

Begin working locally -

What structures and models can we create in our communities that seem relevant to them?

Continue to discuss what the place of the artist is in community?

4 ideas emerged-

Provocation

Observation

Facilitation

Invitation

We need to value our capacity to contribute to a dialogue in other sectors

What if everyone in this room went out and joined a committee, action group or board in their broader community and began to contribute to the creation of our own social and cultural capital.

Making our presence felt in unexpected places and ways

Art begins with risk – what risks should we be taking now?
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Friday 15th May 2009

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 072*

Issue:

Letter to The Hon Julia Gillard

Convener(s):

David Pidd

Participants

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

**Australian Theatre Forum
Delegates
C/O David Pidd**

**75 Little Oxford Street
Collingwood
Vic 3066**

**The Hon Julia Gillard MP
Minister for Education
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ATC 2600**

Dear Julia Gillard,

We endorse your Government's decision to move the Arts to the second phase of your World Class National Curriculum.

The foundation of a comprehensive K-12 classroom Arts Education, together with quality extra curricular experiences across the creative arts, is essential to the success of the Rudd Government's Education Revolution.

As artists participating in a national gathering of two hundred and forty theatre professionals, we know that the arts are absolutely central to a National Curriculum. We know, from our direct experience of working in the arts with hundreds of thousands of children over many years, that school children benefit from involvement in the arts. These outcomes have been extensively documented in research from many countries.

In a world which needs fresh solutions to some very big issues, it is important that we enhance our creative capacity as a nation, to be problem solvers and lateral thinkers. Those with a rich creative arts background are familiar with re-imagining, with seeing things from different perspectives. A tolerant, inclusive society is a cultured and enlightened one with the capacity to empathise with others.

Learning about the history, diversity and achievements of the arts should rightly be at the core of the 21 century curriculum. This is foundational knowledge that tells us where we have been, where we are and what lies in the future for our young people as they move through education and participate in the world.

We acknowledge that ten years of conservative government has seen a massive reduction in the placement of arts specialists within the school system. We look forward to supporting the Labor government's commitment to an education revolution.

We urge your strong support for placing the arts as a primary priority in education, and we stand ready to offer our expertise to assist in creating the next generation of creative thinkers and Australian storytellers.

David Pidd looks forward to disseminating your response to this letter to the undersigned.

Cc

**The Hon Peter Garrett AM, MP
Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts**

Issue number: 073

Issue: Finding Alternate Methods for Training New Theatre Workers

Convener(s): Kyle Morrison

Participants: *Rachael Maza Kim Durban Pauline Cady
Paul Monaghan Richard Murphet*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

As a new Artistic Director in Indigenous theatre I was immediately aware of the lack of theatre designers (Set, Lighting, Sound etc) there was in the Indigenous community. I then began to question why that was so.

I took a look at my own training in the arts; the highest level of education that I have ever received in my artistic career is a "Certificate III in indigenous theatre" through WAAPA. The thought of then spending three years at the academy was not very appealing to me, and I think that I was not alone in the indigenous community.

I then asked the forum for advice and ideas on how I might be able to help produce new designers that don't necessarily want to go to the major academies or arts colleges and still have the skills to work in professional theatre.

Here were some of the suggestions offered to me and conclusions reached.

- Using workshop events to train people on the job
- Making a choice as a company to actively pursue a training program and finding the funding to do so.
- Talking to school drama teachers about students who are interested in the theatre and encourage them to pursue a career theatre production.
- Encouraging young artist to volunteer for productions and giving them to a chance to see what jobs are available in the theatre.
- Creating new pathways to enter the academy system, some examples are -
Having apprentices at theatre companies
A certificate 3 or 4 in specific design areas.

I don't know if I should already be aware of these options (maybe a rookie mistake), But I do think that Australian theatre as a whole would benefit from having indigenous designers.

I know I surely will..

Issue number: *(get an issue number when you go to the newsroom to type your notes) 074*

Issue: Developing a policy for a small and accessible grants structure (up to \$5,000) for independent artists.

Convener(s): Katerina Kokkinos-Kennedy

Participants: *(pass this sheet around to collect names of participants) Suzanne Kersten, John-Paul Feurbach, Tamara Searle, Xan Coleman, Lucy Freeman, Olivia Allen;*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Discussion centred around the difficulty of accessing small/modest amounts of funding in a timely, speedy and/or relatively straightforward manner;

1. Setting up a specific pool of funds that would enable Oz Co, Arts Vic etc to respond to the projects and initiatives of independent artists/small companies in the short term and for small amounts which would enable projects to be initiated, supplemented and/or completed outside the major funding rounds;

2. Some of the main considerations were - allowing for a quick response/turn-around, multiple application dates, the seeding of smaller developments and facilitating

ease in terms of applying and supplying information & support material;

3. The Ian Potter grant application format was mentioned as a potential model that could be adapted/developed; some of its positive features include - a 2-3 page application format that can be written and submitted in a week; and the requirement of very specific but minimal support materials;

4. There was some discussion about the frustration associated with the increasingly prolonged processes of making funding submissions and the inflexibility, and potential unresponsiveness of current funding models;

5. It was also noted/recommended that we could initiate a national audit of current funding models - to be managed by both organisations and the artistic community. And how this might enable us to expand, develop and improve our thinking and the structures we currently work within,

6. There was also some discussion of funding models in Canada and the EU - in terms of how the specific needs and issues of independent artists and small companies are responded to within those structures and their active development of more flexible/responsive forms of thinking around funding arrangements

ACTION:

How to get some discussion, advocacy and change in relation to an important issue that seems entrenched in habit/stasis.

Issue number: 075

Issue: How to lift the significant of theatre in the Australian psyche: remaining the value of the Arts.

Convener: Rachael Maza Long

Participants:

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Actions

1/. National Campaign to promote the Arts

I.e.

Art is it

OR

Art is everywhere

(It works for Sport)

2/. Performing Arts as a substantial component of EDUCATION both in teacher training and curriculum.
(Due respect for the Arts)

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3/. ARTISTS as ACTIVISTS

Advocacy / lobbying on all levels of Government, in policy development through to funding allocation – ensuring the Arts are given a voice in these critical dialogues.

Issue number: 076

Issue: Is it “theatre” if there are no performers? Is this distinction important?

Convener: Dan Koop

Participants: *Georgie Davill, Suzanne Kersten, Clair Korbobacz, Leah Shelton, Fee Plumey, Vallejo Gantner, Katerina Kokkinos-Kennedy*

Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

- Yes, it is theatre
- Perhaps the distinction/classification is important.
- Companies to explore include: Berlin; Kassys; Gob Squad; Blast Theory; Richard Maxwell; Coney / Rabbit;
- Some new terms/language/definitions: Not called ‘audience’, but ‘participants’; experiments with participants to discover, not showings of findings that are complete and no longer up for discussion/debate/discovery;
- “Good theatre is always created in the mind and body of an audience”
- We are interested in the active agency of audience members, without a sense of fear or trepidation about participating

- This work often exists on the edges of live art; Visual arts are linked to this (with live art)
- Many of the people in this discussion had an interest in DIY aesthetics
- When creating this work there is often a requirement, and perhaps a requirement to enjoy, being resourceful
- One of the key elements of this work is a focus on audience – an actual interaction rather than the assumption that an interaction between artists and audience occurs automatically because a work is 'theatre'
- This work can still have a structure and an experience of art – one of the key elements to attend to in creation is framing the experience
- Experience is a quality of this work
- Time is a quality of this work
- Space (environmental/physical) is a quality of this work
- This work may not preference the community of geographical location as the 1st most important community
- The 'art' in this work can be invisible – did anything happen? – However there is an experience that is generated that is not concerned with a product that can be often about an economic transaction.
- Performances that are not 'live' can still be considered 'theatre' i.e. light shows, films that are presented (deceptively) as live, etc. Companies as examples may be Berlin, Kassys, Gob Squad, etc.
- Are we denying the role of actors/performers artistically or economically? Actors/performers will have several skills and instincts that are essential to

the development of these works; Actors/performers may be hired/remain involved in the execution of performances as facilitators, box office, stage managers, etc; Royalty payments for works that we've created with actors/performers may in fact mean that they are making money by not doing anything each time a piece is executed by others; when casting a 'traditional' work you cast to the circumstances and requirements of the work in question – deciding not to cast actors/performers remains a right of the creator of this work and work should not be created simply to give work to actors/performers;

- This work may travel long geographical distances from the point of origin and originating creators quickly and with little environmental impact; this quality can also offer the opportunity to collaborate across cultures and time zones; this may address the sometimes problematic geographically immense size
- Counter point to benefits of movement is that perhaps there is too much movement in the EU/UK and USA which makes it hard for families, collaborations, etc that may not be a good thing in a big picture way
- This work can often focus on experience rather than meaning – applications/proposals about meaning are often flawed
- Nike or Smirnoff, for example, are far more advanced in the total user experience than most theatre venues, companies or festivals and many 'artists'

- Can I still apply to the theatre board for funding for this kind of work? TRY IT!
- This may be better described as an event
- In an event, things may change, go wrong, not be proscribed, but can then be unique to each different event and special as a result. Mistakes and problems are encouraged and celebrated; this work may never be finished or perfectly executed.
- Or this work may be better described as a game – an active invitation of the form for people to joyfully get involved. Examples may include Second Life, Sandpit rulesets (a collective who have a blog and also run Hide & Seek festival in London),
- There is a potential for the exploration of these ideas to go beyond ‘art’ into areas of scientific/technological research and development
- An audience is required to complete the ‘electrical circuit’ and get the light bulb to turn on, linking the artists and participants to create a new thing

Action Number: 001

Action: Specific: research models for long service leave for theatre workers

Champion: Ann Tonks (MTC) and Nicole Beyer (Theatre Network Victoria)

Immediate 1st Step:

Specific:

- Do the research
- Share with interested parties

General:

- Collect info on good employment practices
- Talk to LPA about creating code of conduct for employers

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Action Number: 002

Action: Reconvene Blak Stage and look at supporters / partners to help move towards Indigenous Theatre Strategy

Champion: Paul Macphail

Immediate 1st Step: Get money for Blak Stage to meet Theatre Board

Action Number: 003

Action: Empty Space: circus / physical theatre / site specific / outdoor hub and laboratory

Champion: Sue Broadway

Immediate 1st Step:

AIM: To encourage and resource the development of network in the circus/physical theatre/outdoor and site – specific sector.

Map creative development opportunities across the country.

- Develop a networking strategy to share resources and maximize impact
- Create showcases

Name: Major physical theatre initiative.

Empty Space

Action Number: 004

Action: To find pathways for collaboration among small theatre companies

Champion: Margi Brown Ash, Metroarts Brisbane.
www.4change.com.au / 4change@iinet.net

Immediate 1st Step:

1. To build on Melbourne Artists pattern of bringing together AD's and GM on a regular basis to talk together about issues of relevance. First meeting last week in June (on my return to Brisbane).
2. To tap into Theatre Alive, a website run by Ruth Gormay.
3. To investigate Auspicious Arts initiative regarding On-Line Ticketing that could become nation-wide.
4. To keep in contact with Theatre Network Victoria.

Action Number: 005

Action: National Theatre Festival

Champion: Rob Brookman

Immediate 1st Step:

Create steering committee and convene

Volunteers:

Rob Brookman (NSW)
Nathan Bennett (NSW)
Harley Stumm (NSW)

Stephen Armstrong (VIC)
Wesley Enoch (VIC)
Sarah Greentree (VIC)
Peta Hanrahan (VIC)
Emily Sexton (VIC)
David Pledger (VIC)

Robyn Archer (NATIONAL)

Hannah Durack
Jo Duffy (NT)

Pip Madgwick (ACT)

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Katherine Hoepfer (QLD)

David Berthold (QLD)
Sarah Neal (QLD)

Duncan Graham (SA)
Tenna Munn (SA)
Kay Jamieson (SA)
Dan Clarke (SA)

Shane Colquhoun (LA)

Sally Richardson (WA)
Elizabeth Walsh (TAS)

Action Number: 006

Action: Find partners to deliver local outreach for new writing across Australia

Champion: Chris Mead

Immediate 1st Step:

Continue conversation (with a view to instituting 18 month programme)

Liz @ La Mama

Jeremy and Catherine @ Barking Gecko

Kate @ Black Swan

Erin @ Arena

Rachael @ Ilbijerri

Chris @ Deckchair

Ralph, Eamon and Brenna @ Belvoir

Sarah @ Uni of W'Gong

Jude Anderson @ Punctum

Rosemary @ Asialink

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Jennifer Barry @ Footscray

Jess @ Old Fitz

Annette D @ Tas Performs

Action Number: 007

Action: To address culture diversity in MPAB Theatre companies as a matter of urgency

Champion: Rosalba Clemente and Daniel Clark

Immediate 1st Step:

- Research Leiestor Haymarket Theatre (Daniel)
- Rosalba to actively encourage MPAB
- To find a key person in MPAB Theatre company to champion the cause
- Set up / facilitate a program for small companies that engage with cultural diversity to mentor MPAB theatre companies
- 'The Group' to write a letter to MPAB asking it to articulate its engagement with cultural diversity issues.

Action Number: 008

Action: To consider different ways to share risk

Champion: Jo Duffy, Chris Bendall, Pippa Bainbridge

Immediate 1st Step:

- Link into the Peer to Peer network for medium to small companies/venues/presenters
- Collaborating to share risk early
- Pooling our respective resources to achieve or at least start something we can't do on our own
- Investigate the support that peers can offer (philanthropic funds, in-kind air-fares, accommodation, space, admin, expertise) and look at our sponsors and other ways to support projects before we rely on funding.
- The co-pro model but on a micro scale
- Discussion included: La Mama, Deckchair, Metro Arts, Darwin Festival, and Sidetrack etc.

Action Number: 009

Action: Create informal Peer-to-Peer network for small/mediums

Champion: Jeremy Gaden

Immediate 1st Step:

- Informal sharing
- Resource Sharing
- Network Sharing
- Cairis Bendale to open 'Pointy End'
- Closed Facebook for small to medium
- Virtual space – create it

Clair Korobacz

Jeremy Gaden

Jennifer Barry

Chris Bendall

Nathan Bennett

Talya Chalef

Todd MacDonald

Pip Buining

Frank Newman

Natalie Jenkins

Simon Abrahams

Chris Drummond

Fraser Corfield

Saffron Benner

Geoffery Williams

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Brad Spalding

Jo Duffy

Andrew Cory

Pippa Bainbridge

Anne-Louise Sarks

Nic Dorward

John Baylis

Paul Macphail

Action Number: 010

Action: Develop organization Indigenous strategy

Champion: Jeremy Gaden

Immediate 1st Step:

Develop indigenous strategy and check among other organisations to ensure that they are in development and feed this to black stage

Jeremy Gaden
Jennifer Barry
Maryanne Lynch
Liz Jones
Alicia Talbot
Ahmarnya Price
Kate Sulan
Todd MacDonald
Pauline Cady
Jane Fuller
Katrina Gill
Lyn Wallis
TJ Eckleberg

Action Number: 011

Action: Implementing \$1000 stencil project

Champion: Melissa Cantwell

Immediate 1st Step:

Create start date

- Creating stencils (vitalstatistix)
- Research impermanent paints (Steve Shaw)
- Create paint and stencil 'stations' in each state
- Talk to Fi create webpage to document the project: participants can upload photos and download stencils
- Artists interested can be stationed at signs to engage onlookers with the question: Theatre?
- Establish guidelines and project vision (9Mel)
- Draft budget
- Choose font
- Slogan: Start seeing theatre

Action Number: 012

Action: Develop a women directors professional development mentorship initiative

Champion: Leticia Caceres and Lucy Freeman

Immediate 1st Step:

1. Create a Facebook to connect all women artists, leaders and directors at the conference. It will be called 'WIT": Women in Theatre
2. Regular meetings will take place. The first meeting will take place Monday 25th May at the Meat Market at 7pm
3. Bring ideas for what you want this forum to be
4. Write a platform paper for currency

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Action Number: 013

Action: Establish a forum of theatre training institutions with a view to furthering co-operation in creating training programs relevant for 21st Century Australian theatre / dramatic arts

Champion:

Pam Creed
Richard Murphet
Paul Monaghan
Kim Durban
Lynne Williams
Olivia Allen
Sarah Miller

Immediate 1st Step:

Early September 2009 meeting NIDA will host

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Action Number: 014

Action: To explore potential for regional MLBG as Arts drillers

Champion: Stephen Champion / Ian Pidd

Immediate 1st Step:

Steve to prepare paper for Ian

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Action Number: 015

Action: A project to explore the place where metropolitan stops and regional begins and monitor how this affects Arts practice for regional artists

Champion: Jude Anderson / Ian Pidd

Immediate 1st Step:

Jude to develop project idea for National Conference in August 2010

Action Number: 016

Action: Form an action group around the issue of climate change and the Arts

Co-Champions: Angharad Wynne – Jones and Alice Nash

Immediate 1st Step:

1. Lisa Haebartner will convene a meeting on Sunday 12th July, including facility to participate remotely
2. Jennifer Hamilton will talk about these ideas at an ANSW Conference 09 and report back
3. Angharad Wynne-Jones will meet and talk to UK Tipping Point this week and report back
4. David Pledger will suggest posting all letters to government on ATF website (planned letter from this group...)
5. In preparation for July meeting, ALL will do independent research and report back.

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Action Number: 017

Action: For every Australian person aged 8-14 to go to the theatre at least once each year

Champion: YPAA

Immediate 1st Step:

- A number of studies made by various companies will be collated and posted on the YPAA site
- Sharing documentation of soft data
- National Theatre Showcase – partnership formed between YPAA and Theatre Network Victoria

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Action Number: 018

Action: Regional Arts Conference to engage regional arts centres

Champion: Ian Pidd

Immediate 1st Step:

Ian to commence regional committees team with PACA

Action Number: 019

Action: National Theatre Forum 2

Champion: Chris Kohn and Annette Downs

Immediate 1st Step:

1. Take a breath
2. Curator to document the learnings from this forum
3. All participants need the circulated / online documentation
4. Facilitate another forum in 2 – 3 years
 - a. same model as this forum – appoint a steering committee which will appoint Director **OR**
 - b. National Theatre Festival (if established) co-ordinate next forum **OR**
 - c. National Theatre Body (if established) co – ordinate new forum

And if b) and c) not established then time to revert to plan a)

Action Number: 020

Action: Identify issues for further debate and advocacy through the TNV vote / activity over the next 18 months

Champion: Rose Godde

Immediate 1st Step:

Nyunkia: will champion the return of an emerging theatre liaison officer to TNV.

Issue: Training New Theatre Workers

Issue: Facilitate forums and interconnectivity between artists and independent sector

Action: Review the structure within / that effects restructured notions of casual work force

Action: Dialogue and dinner events – a soft place to discuss the hard topics more i.e. tight budgets, reviews, criticism, media, critical dialogue etc.

TNV to actively pursue leadership position in forming National Peak body for theatre mindful of discussion regarding National Theatre Festival.

Action: re-continuing professional development. TNV liaise. Appointed EO of the National Scope Project.

Scope addresses career enhancement and transition needs of performing Artists.

Managing creative risk and developing effective feedback strategy audience and risk taking

Issue of debate and recommendations - engaging with Government and politicians i.e. lobbying / models: how other sectors do it i.e. Social sector

- TNV: to continue to gather opinion and advocate around issues that are seen by those at this gathering to affect the operation of and development of theatre practice.
- Devolved funding models
- A leadership role in facilitating discussion
- Sustaining independent artists
- Facilitating the creation of forums and other discussion groups that allow artists to develop strategies

Action Number: 021

Action: Smaller more often (?)

Champion: Dan Koop

Immediate 1st Step:

Art as pervasive in social experience. Part of larger ecology.

This changes the structure of putting on a show:

- Marketing – focus more easily on the audience we want
- Rehearsal – be ‘shit hot’
- Touring audience can be cheaper (viral is almost free)
- Writing ‘small’ things is a skill that’s not strong in Aus
- Focus of time
- Focus of energy, intellectual and physical
- Detail of accomplishment
- May actually need more time to get small right
- Acknowledge and requiring a longer time scale
- Small investigations into different ideas over time
- Festivals are opportunity, but not an only context ‘it will sell more because there is a larger critical mass of audience doesn’t ring true’.

Venue / Spaces

- Adaptable
- Flexible
- Education circuit
- Bundle the shows (as in publishing)

Perception shift / create something for that space

Commissions

Definitions

- Smaller – duration, scale, ambition, intimacy
- Why does big have a pull?

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If you require this report in an alternative format please email:

office@improbable.co.uk

If you have any amendments, comments etc. to add to this report please email:

melanie@improbable.co.uk