

**AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET, 27 February – 3 March 2006**

**Forum : International Touring  
Tuesday 28 February 2006  
Piano Bar, Adelaide Festival Centre  
Adelaide**

**Kristy Edmunds, facilitator (Director, Melbourne International Arts Festival)**

**Jennifer Barry (Director, Keep Breathing)**

**Daryl Buckley (Artistic Director, Elision Ensemble)**

**Sandra Collins (Business Manager, Bangarra Dance Theatre)**

**Lee-Anne Donnelly (International Touring Manager, Australian Dance Theatre)**

**Rosie Hinde (Managing Director, Hirano Productions)**

**Debra King (Program Manager, Undergrowth)**

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival]:** Good morning everyone. I wanted to welcome you to the International Touring Panel. My name is Kristy Edmunds. I'm the Artistic Director for the Melbourne International Arts Festival. My role is really to facilitate and moderate this discussion with a very illustrious group of Australian professionals that do astonishing work. I'm just going to go through and briefly introduce the panel.

When we were speaking yesterday, we had a meeting to talk through how we were going to organise the panel and the content. I mean, obviously we've only got an hour and these people have a great amount of expertise and experience but I think all up everyone was much more comfortable with the idea of sharing a kind of, rather than being cast as experts on any given region of the world, to really share some of the kind of challenges, opportunities and experiences that they've had touring abroad.

And so, I've asked them to each prepare a little bit of what the company is that work with and what their touring experience has been in relation to it. And then we're going to engage in a discussion and then turn it over the questions.

So, please help me welcome the illustrious panel that we have here: Debra King is the project manager of Undergrowth from the Australia Council which is doing a lot of astonishing work inside of the UK and exchange projects; Rosemary Hinde who runs Hirano Productions, a lot of exchange work from Japan and different parts of Asia; Lee-Anne Donnelly who's working with Australian Dance Theatre doing their international touring; Daryl Buckley from ELISION Ensemble – I pronounce it sometimes El-ee-sian; Jennifer Berry from Keep Breathing and Sandra (Collins) from Bangarra Dance Company. So please welcome the panel.

[Applause]

So, I wanted to start with Debra because I think you have a pretty interesting relationship to this dual role of exchange. So, if you could talk a little bit about the Undergrowth project and tee it up that way, that would be great.

**Debra King [Program Manager, Undergrowth]** : I'm a freelance producer and arts manager based in the UK, and I thought that my contribution to this forum on international touring today, really, is to share with you my own experiences and reflections of working internationally and within the UK, both as an independent creative producer and as someone who has worked strategically within the arts previously, with the Arts Council of England, and currently as program manager of Undergrowth, as Kristy just mentioned, which is a program of Australian contemporary arts in the UK.

So I just wanted to first just talk a bit about my history: I started off as a singer in New Wave bands in the 80s in London and then moved into arts programming and management as director of Women in Music where I programmed two international music festivals across London. I then became music officer at the Arts Council North West, working strategically across the sector. And then 2000 I moved out of that role and back into presenting and producing work with Tanya Farman when we worked together as joint creative producers of the Commonwealth Games culture program, culminating in 2002.

And since I've become freelance and as well as working on a number of different contracts, Tanya and I formed FKUK, which is a partnership that produces innovative international work. And I've also recently taken on a contract with the Australia Arts Council as the program manager of Undergrowth.

So, I think as an independent creative producer both with the Commonwealth Games and with FKUK, I've always been keen to produce contemporary and diverse international work and to develop international reciprocal collaborative projects involving exchanges and residencies. And also I think we've been particularly interested in working with young and emerging artists. And also looking at the dynamic of the local and international and how that embraces identity and difference and helps develop a greater global cultural understanding.

And I think that kind of focus of the work that I've been doing with Tanya came from programming the Commonwealth Games program where it was really, really important to reflect contemporary understandings of the Commonwealth within the program, rather than purely a celebratory approach and that's due to our own indigenous Commonwealth communities in the UK and also the integrity of working with artists from Commonwealth countries. So, those themes of displacement and identity were strong in the programming at that time.

Just some reflections that I think for me have been key in working internationally, and I suppose the key thing really is forming both strong and sustainable relationships and partnerships that have integrity. And so that's relationships with international artists and companies through research, through

meeting artists, seeing work at markets like this, and developing a partnership that's based on enthusiasm and commitment to the work. And also, from the artist's perspective, a genuine interest in working within the cultural context that I think, as a producer, I had to offer.

The other key thing is working with venues and other presenters and promoters. And that's to ensure that the work is placed within an appropriate cultural context. And also to ensure the work can then be toured on once reaching the UK. And as independent creative producers I think we do have, I suppose, an advantage in that we work across a number of venues and with a number of promoters and presenters. We're not completely contained into one venue and I think that helps us in terms of placing that work appropriately.

But even so I think it's difficult to develop audiences for international work even if the company's really well known, for instance, if it's an Australian company and really well known here, it's still quite hard to encourage audiences to take risks and especially outside of a festival context where I think audiences do take more risks than they do in different contexts. And it's also I think therefore about a commitment and real interest from the developers in developing audiences for international work and developing those long term relationships with the artists and companies.

I think the other key partnership and relationship is with funders and I say relationship/partnership rather than just applying for funding. I think that has been very key especially working independently because we work on a project-by-project basis; we don't have any regular funding and so those relationships are really, really important.

And we just completed an international collaborative project, a reciprocal two year project, called Aftershock, which was between emerging musicians from Australia and emerging musicians from the UK, and was artistically directed by Nitin Sawhney. And that project involved eight days of workshops with young and emerging musicians from both countries, creating new work, and then showcasing it as the International Arts Festival in Melbourne, and then bringing these Australian artists to the UK to the stage in Newcastle, Gateshead.

It was quite a major project really but right at the first stage of the research and development, we took our main funder, the Performing Rights Society Foundation, with us to Australia, to meet up with key partners and that, in a sense, ensured the sustainability of that project, because in fact we've just heard that the PRS is going to continue funding that project for the next three years. So that's really, really key.

Also working with artists in that collaborative reciprocal way has also sustained those relationships with those artists and developed them professionally, and they're now working, most of them are working internationally across Australia and the UK.

I just also wanted to mention the context that we work in. We work in a regional context. We work outside of London, and although there's a huge advantage to

working in London as a cultural centre and obviously as a cultural centre for the media as well, I think there's still a great advantage to working in a region, and I think that's quite important to sort of talk about. And that's primarily because I think the UK is still quite London-centric and so that means that regions have to look outwards. And they've more recently, I think, looked outwards internationally as a way of gaining a greater sense of identity by placing themselves in an international context.

This has often been driven with factors outside the arts like economics and regeneration but I think it's true to say that we now have significant international festivals and developments in the region, you know for example, the Liverpool Capital of Culture, with Robyn Archer directing that. And Stella Hall, the Creative Director of the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, the fantastic work that Helen Cole is doing in the Old Athene and so on. I think that regions have a dynamic on an international front and I think that's worth considering when thinking about touring in the UK.

And have I got time to briefly talk about Undergrowth? Key points? Okay, for those of you who don't know, Undergrowth is a program with an aim to develop initiatives and strategies to promote Australian contemporary arts in the UK and to develop and sustain international markets and audiences for international work. My role is represent and manage and develop the program with key UK partners building long term relationships and developing key ambassadors across the arts sector.

I suppose I see Undergrowth as a catalyst to stimulate the presentation and production of contemporary and diverse Australian work and hope that it will continue to provide new opportunities for new and emerging artists and companies, as well as those who are more established.

And again, going back to forging those relationships, that's what Undergrowth hopefully will do and will continue to do which is to forge relationships with venues and independent creative producers and curators across the UK and looking at ways of making those sustainable connections between arts, new work and audiences.

I think it's pretty timely in the UK now in that international work is increasingly seen as more of a priority for funding bodies in the UK. For example, in the last year, the Arts Council of England has developed an international policy and is keen on developing the role of independent creative producers internationally, and also encouraging, or further encouraging venues and regularly funded organisations to develop international work. So, in a sense, the UK I think is becoming more outward looking than it has been.

And I just wanted to say a bit about Australian work and how that, from my perspective, is perceived in the UK from working as a creative producer, but also from working with Undergrowth for the last four or five months. I mean, my sense of it is that there's a real interest and enthusiasm for Australian work, it's freshness and energy and a sense of it being of a different quality really, and there's a sort of a cultural interest as well in indigenous work and how that

reflects in Australian arts practices, and how that compares and contrasts with diverse work within the UK.

There's also an increased number of excellent Australian arts directors and presenters in the UK, quite a huge number actually and I think that adds to the interest, you know, and also that kind of intrigue about what Australia has to offer. And just talking to funders and presenters generally over the last five months, I think that there is a genuine interest in international work that is unique, distinctive and most importantly that brings value to the UK market.,

That's it.

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival]:** Thank you. I was going to in a straight little linear line but I'm actually thinking Jennifer it would be great to hear from you, not only the context of Keep Breathing and what you do and also following on, because you've been working extensively on building long term relationships across for contemporary dance, Australian choreographers in the US. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Jennifer Barry [Keep Breathing]:** Okay, yes. So my experience in the US is what I wanted to talk about and it's very much impressions, happy observer that I have been for the last six years in working with US colleagues and I know that there are some here who threaten to shout me down with everything I said so feel free. Bring it on!

Anyway, so profound insight Number 1: It's big, it's really big and it's kind of like, as Homer Simpson says, 'Duh'. It has 295 million people and we have 20 million people. It's probably best typified at the Annual Association of Performing Arts Presenters' Conference in New York which is the APAM of the US: it has 4000 delegates, 600 exhibitors, it has 1200 showcases across Manhattan, Brooklyn, up town downtown, East Side, West Side, and it has every art form from the Magic Spencers through to the Bolshoi Ballet and through to contemporary dance.

I mention the size because I think, for an Australian, it is an overwhelming experience, or it can be an overwhelming experience. We've taken a couple of delegations over the last three years to the US, as part of a Dance Down Under project, which is, like Debra's project, an Australia Council initiative aimed at promoting contemporary dance to the US market. Very much it has been a learning process for us. Our whole approach to that project has been go there, learn as much as you can, talk to as many presenters, producers, artists, working in the dance field as possible, and then try and find a way to navigate through that very, very big white noise which is the annual conference, to find those meaningful relationships and connections that Debra was talking about.

And that does take time. It's probably taken the last four years for us to feel like we have found some path through the US market. And that, I have to say, is just the beginning. It doesn't really feel like we've gone too deep. We've pretty much scratched the surface.

The size of the US is not a problem geographically for Australians because I think Australians are very used to large continents or islands and travelling across the US. But what is difficult when you go into the US is learning the networks and the systems of circuits and presenting circuits that actually exist there.

So that's profound insight Number 2: even though it's big it's not homogenous in any way so there are networks within networks of presenters who have different interests in work. So some are attached to universities. Many are subscription based, you know? They have a large subscription base and they have a diverse multidisciplinary program. There are others who are art form specific. There are flagship presenters like the Brooklyn Academy of Music and there are boutique presenters like Kathy Edwards from DTW who's here.

So it actually takes time to navigate your way through those circuits but when you do navigate your way through those circuits, I found that was the way to feel less overwhelmed by the US market. The way to do it was to meet the people who could actually then give you the understanding of those circles within circles within circles.

So, those things are formal and informal. For a country that is all about the individual they love having convenings and groups and affiliation and associations, and everyone's a vice-president or a president so change your name tag when you go to those conferences.

And so basically what we've tried to do is crack the code by forming partnerships. One of those partnerships for example, was with an organisation called the New England Foundation for the Arts. They run a program called the National Dance Project and the National Dance Project is a great example, if you like, of one of these circuits or networks of people. It's a network of arts presenters across the US who are interested in the production, the commissioning, the touring and the supporting of contemporary dance as an art form. That's first and foremost. But they engage domestically with their own artists in the US and increasingly they engage in an international context as well.

So, by forming partnerships with the National Dance Project, it's a way for us to go in there and not pretend like we know everything but actually tap in to the knowledge that's already there, and an extensive knowledge that is.

Networking in the US is a bit of an art form in itself, not in a cheesy, 80s, kind of way, although that does exist. It's in a very practical and constructive way. That's what I have found. And for the size of the country, and we're a relatively small country, the networks and the groups and the people that have come together to form interests about a particular art form or whatever that particular interest is, are very constructive, very pro-active and very practical about their discussions about the landscape, the artistic landscape, how they can work collaboratively to commission, co-commission, to present, and I found that quite inspiring.

And it's quite different to the Australian marketplace where often you feel, even in this small country, that you're working in isolation. And I know that there are touring circuits in Australia but I feel that the touring circuits are focused on the touring whereas some of the circuits that are in the US are focussed on the industry and the sector, and the artist and developing those sectors and the best ways to do that. And I think that that's an admirable model and one that the Australians can actually learn quite a lot from.

So, as an outsider, I think you need to hook into those personal networks because once you do you can be recommended to other people. Now that comes to Profound Insight No. 4: it's highly competitive. And so if you have built a relationship with a particular presenter who knows you and trusts you and then knows that the type of work that you do is something that they can talk about confidently to their colleagues, or they can at least contextualise what it is that you're doing, then you're half way there in the US, I feel.

So you are competing against a domestic market in the US which is very, very active. So you're not just – and a lot of the US presenters are new to international presenting. A lot of them do focus on the domestic marketplace which is a natural thing to do, but it can sometimes feel, as an international, that that focus on domestic looks inwards, and references itself against itself within the US, in terms of the work that's being created in the US. And I think there are increasingly a number of brave and adventurous curators from different venues across the States - and we have a great delegation from the States here this week – who are really keen to break that kind of insular, domestic culture and to kind of look outwards and to create meaningful connections with international partners.

And they're very good at touring, They're very good at coming to see the work. They travel extensively to see the work and that of course is easier to do if you're going in the UK or Europe, but they are increasingly coming down to the Southern hemisphere, braving that 24 hour flight and doing it. So that's something that is an opportunity for us as well, to learn more about the US marketplace and more about these people.

I think that's pretty much all I wanted to say. These are just my initial impressions. There's many, many more things to learn and it takes time and there's a lot of great US colleagues here. I'd be happy to broker an introduction and you can ask them questions directly.

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival]:** Thanks Jennifer. And that leads me over to Rosemary and I think it would be great if you could talk a little bit about Hirano and what you do and sort of your navigation of a lot of the infrastructure throughout Asian.

**Rosemary Hinde [Hirano]:** I'm an independent agent and producer and my company's been going for about twelve years now. We've toured Australian productions to probably about eight different countries in Asia, to about 19 different cities. Some of those countries we've only toured to once or twice, some of them we've toured to many times. We've probably toured about 100

productions all up I guess. The span of my work is quite diverse and it reflects actually the demands of the market in a sense. I work with totally commercial outdoor performance in contexts that are wholly commercial. I work with quite avant garde contemporary dance and so they are, within each market I work, quite separate submarkets I guess.

How did I get to do something so obscure? Well, I actually approached international touring originally as a presenter of international work in Australia. I worked for the Melbourne Festival and it was during that time that I became very interested in does contextualise work that is unfamiliar to an audience with work that you're bringing into Australia? And my interest at that time was work from Asia because there's a whole rich culture of dance, music, whatever within the region and there was a lot of emerging interest in contemporary work. But, because those names are known, it's always harder to get an audience for them.

So it was initially through my interest in the work of the markets that I'm now touring to, that I developed the connection. From that, I moved to developing I guess what was my own training program which was both formal and informal. I was lucky enough to get a fellowship from the Mobil Oil company to do a research tour of touring networks within Asia. I also as a result of that that increased my curiosity not only about the work from the countries but about the economies, the societies, the business systems of those countries. I subsequently lived in Japan and worked in the performing arts there and I also did my Masters in international Asian business systems. So those things sort of all fitted together to shape how I approach things I guess.

But, yes, originally it was as a presenter of asking the question of, 'How do I present work and build a context for work that is unfamiliar to an Australian audiences?'

In the process of this research I guess it suddenly occurred to me, well, what does Australia have that might work in this context? And I'd already developed networks with a number of presenting organisations I guess, with a view I've got to say – and this is like 15 years ago – with looking at how an Australian presenting organisation might amortise costs of bringing companies from Europe and America, was one of my starting points actually from which I moved quite a long way away.

So I guess the first approach was to use these contacts that I had developed to sort of trial and ask their opinions of what might work in their markets, and the answer quite frankly was, 'Not very much'. While Asia's an enormous place it's an enormous number of submarkets. Markets in places like Tokyo are huge cities like the cities in America where you can get basically any kind of art, the best kind of art in the world, that you want. The concept of Australian art was not very well recognised.

This is the sort of paradox, it seems to me, in the reality of Australia and the perception from a tourist's point of view of Australia, which is that Australia is in fact one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world so most of our

artwork is in fact produced in cities and urban environments. The perception of Australia from people from Asia was largely of Australia as a holiday destination so their perception was the Outback, the countryside, a whole set of associations that bore no relationship to the kind of work that was being produced. That disjunction produced, it seemed to me, a particular kind of resistance on the part of presenters.

So, going down the normal path seemed to me not a good way to go. The approach that is used essentially was to build a series of strategic alliances, of partnerships of relationships with people who I shared common views. And I mean those partnerships still form the basis of some of the projects that I do today. They're enduring. They're long conversations that happen over time.

I thought I'd just give you a couple of examples of how the role of dialogue and ongoing discussion about work that, in the beginning doesn't have the objective of 'I want to sell a show to you. I want to present a show from you.' It's simply a dialogue about art, about audiences, about what you're doing in a way. And there's three projects that have had an important function, that have had many spin-offs I guess. And I'll talk about dance primarily because in a way outdoor performances is a totally commercial sector.

One of the first was small program of solo dance works that we put together with a partnership of six different presenters in Asia. And we would put together a program every year and tour that solo program to each of the home countries of the choreographers who were in the program. Through that obviously there was a benefit to the artist in that their work got exposed, they developed experience of the cultures they were touring to through friendships that they developed within the touring structure of the program but there were also other spin-offs.

As a direct outcome of that we developed, we presented five Australian contemporary dance companies at a dance festival in Tokyo with our partner/producer from Tokyo. And there's a reciprocal things because we all wanted to get audiences for our work in the different countries. I mean so a reciprocal thing of that was I presented a Japanese contemporary dance company – it's a comedy company - as part of the company festival, right? And if I can find presenters in Australia to do it, great. If not I've really got to make the effort and somehow make it happen myself because it's the reciprocity that enables us to expand our own markets. It's never a one-way street.

It works pretty much the same way in the commercial partnerships where it's kind of an exchange of know-how. The producers I work with within Asia contact me wanting particular things because they know I will know those sort of things here and they don't want to go and investigate them all themselves. So, we get the companies presented. They get the kind of research which is much easier for me to do I suppose.

The third one was actually – and it was the first co-production strategy that we had - and it was for a whole lot of reasons it was actually a drama project and I don't normally work in test based work but it was an occasion generated event

and it was done for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Pacific War. And it was done in partnership with the Melbourne Tokyo festivals and also then Playbox Theatre where we presented an Australian play in Japanese by a Japanese company, which was about the war, and a Japanese play about the war by an Australian company. Now, one of the things that obviously occurs with drama is it's got to be translated. At that stage there were no Australian plays that had been translated and published in Japan. As a direct result of this project there was a translator who was very interested in Australia and he was primarily interested in Australian film. He ran a small publishing company in Tokyo, very small. He developed an ongoing interest in Australian drama and that publishing company has now published a whole series of about fifteen titles of Australian plays. So that was a spin off of partnerships really that were not focussed on me going out and finding a publisher for Australian scripts. It was a process.

The fourth one I'd like to talk about which is a project that I'm working on now which is an initiative of the Australia Council and the Japan Foundation and we are working in partnership with the Japan Contemporary Dance Network on a year long program of presentations of performances, co-productions and commissions by Australian and Japanese choreographers. The director of JCDN – the Japan Contemporary Dance Network – was one of the very first Japanese artists I engaged with when I was a presenter, and we invited his company to the Melbourne Festival. So, that relationship now spans twenty years and the roles of kind of changed. It's gone from me being the festival dragon to him presenting my artists' work in Japan.

So, I guess it's part of a continuum really and those sort of strategic alliances and partnerships have been crucial for me.

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival]:** I'm going to shift it because all of you now are all practitioners that are on the road often or you're working directly with a company, artistic director or choreographer or whatnot. And I think it would be great to have you shift some of your comments around the experiences that you've had that reflect in some way back to you on what the presenters and other countries think of in relation to Australia: what is Australia? What is Australianness in relation to your projects and work. If that exists or not. I'm going to start with you Sandra.

**Sandra Collins [Bangarra Dance Company]:** Hi, I work at Bangarra Dance Theatre which is an Australian indigenous dance company, so that's a point of difference for a lot of presenters from overseas. I was going to try and start off with something very esoteric and pithy but the best I could come up with was a quote from a supermodel.

[laughter]

I think it was Linda Evangelista who said, 'I'm not getting out of bed for less than \$10,000 a day.' And in a way that's kind of my fiscal policy in terms of Bangarra.

[laughter]

We have a lot of relationships with people from all around the world and there's a lot of interest in Bangarra Dance Theatre Company for a variety of reasons, because of it's Australianness and because of Stephen's work of melding the two – very, very traditional dance and music from over 40,000 years with the contemporary feel. He is known for his high social and quite in-you-face presentation of work.

Basically my feeling is there is no point in having the most prestigious international venue on your CV if it's the last gig you ever get. If you sent your company broke going there then what's the point.

It's very good to have – and we look at every tour from a commercial sense first – if I can't afford to send the company there, we're just not going, and I know that sounds blatantly horrific but in the times that we're in and if you peg your whole bottom line on a tour that suddenly goes a bit west, you know, a couple of venues get cold feet, they've lost some money on some contemporary dance shows before, your tour suddenly contracts and you're looking at a board that's just about to take your head off. And I hate that, coz I'm short enough as it is and without a head it's just not going to work for me.

I believe that one of the greatest things that we have at the moment is fantastic representation in the US and that's a relationship that I've been working on and the company's been working on for a long time. There was a lot of talk for years and years before we all signed on the dotted line. And that's the building trust that we were talking about before and the exchange and what have you, and to know that you've got someone in your court, standing at a venue presenter saying, 'Godammit! Take those Aborigines. You're not getting the Bolshoi!' is great.

So I find good representation has worked for us in the past and with proven tour managing experience basically because let's face it, with all the will in the world you get on a plane and you're just crossing your fingers that the bus is going to be at the airport at the end of 25 hours. You're hoping there's going to be a friendly face saying, 'Hi', or a sign at least. And they know where your hotel is. You hope that your freight hasn't got sunk in the Bermuda triangle. You hope that you don't get a call from US Customs saying, 'We're going to X-ray your freight and it will be about 8 weeks,' and you're opening the next night.

That's when another good relationship comes into play and that's called the Australian Embassy. If you are about to tour anywhere, know your embassy rep and talk to them a lot. Make friends with them because chances are they've smoodged somebody else where your going and they're going to get a result for you, which is exactly what happened to us when our freight was stuck in a dock and they were going to x-ray it, and we were opening at BAM in 48, and they're saying, 'No, you're not.' And so lots of late night phone calls from Australia to the Embassy saying 'Boo hoo, boo hoo, Ron!' and that helped. Tears I find, and threatening does also work. It's the government Godammit!

So, in the spirit of everyone getting along with each other and of course they were only too happy to help.

And then you get into, on the road, a dance company, the injuries, we've got twelve dancers and they're all very unique and they bring their own, certainly with a lot of our guest or cultural consultants, you can't replace them. You can't get on the blower and get another one, you know. There's not a lot of phones up there and it's got a cultural significance usually, with a lot of our dancers. So someone else can't do that dance, someone else can't sing that song, someone else can't play that music. So, if there's an injury, well, we hate that too.

Last time I was at APAM, in 2002, and this is the only time it has ever happened but it was fantastic, I sat here – well, not here but over the thousands of cups of coffee that you have – with some presenters from Guangdong, Beijing and Hong Kong and we basically nipped out a deal, with a couple of translators, for that year. And I thought that was what this market was all about. Instead of saying, 'We'll catch up later,' or 'Look, I'll email you' or 'I'll fax you', 'I'll send you a kit'. If you can sit down with someone face to face and say, 'Okay, well my dates are. What are you looking at? Where would you like us to be?' and they can also tell you what they're expecting from your company, 'Oh, you've only got 12 dancers. We would like to see 70. and could you incorporate a bit of a love story into it as well.'

[laughter]

..and if you get some grimacing happening as well that would also be good.' So, I bridge a bit of a line with artistic content as well, 'No we don't have that show,' and whilst we try and be audience-friendly we don't have a lot of room to move being an indigenous dance company. It is what it is. It's brilliant and we get some of the best responses internationally that we get anywhere in Australia basically.

Good market positioning: you know, trusting the market that you're in and the people you're working with as well. We're sort of known for our imagery and a great image might be really confronting say in Washington, but they love it say in Hong Kong, or vice versa. I let that market do their marketing and that's what they want to do. You're not going to teach someone how to suck eggs, and go, 'No, I think this one will work better,' because they know what their audiences want. In Washington the Kennedy Centre did a fantastic targeted marketing campaign and we sold out two shows at the Kennedy Centre which was like, 'Whoa'. We sold out in BAM, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and I was telling the story – I was boring someone on the plane over – we had a man in Brooklyn Academy of Music with tears running down his face saying, 'I've seen the best dance all over the world, the best technical expertise of dancers here in New York but I've never been moved so much as I have by watching your company.' Now, that was great. So, that's the product.

I just want to feed into the Undergrowth thing. It's also brilliant if you have the underpinning, in this case that we do of the upcoming UK tour of Undergrowth,

the Australian Arts Council initiative. That also feels like safe ground as well because you've got a bit of a net if things go haywire.

Thanks very much.

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival Kristy Edmunds]:**

I'm thinking that the Q&A with the audience is going to be very short. I think I'm going to have Lee-Anne, you move on from that because with ADT you have a different kind of dynamic as well.

**Lee-Anne Donnelley [Australian Dance Theatre]:** Yes, very different.

Australian Dance Theatre is based in Adelaide, Australia, 41 years old this year, a contemporary dance company with a show opening this Friday night at Her Majesty's Theatre, a major new work, Devolution, so you shouldn't miss it.

We've experienced the freight issue in the States where two days before we left Adelaide we got a call to say our freight was caught in a lockout on the West Coast, and there didn't seem to be a lot we could do about it. And indeed there wasn't. There were US senators doing their best to find out where it might be, 70 ships out to sea, stacked 14 containers below deck. We did I think it was an eight venue tour and I think we've got bits of the set for the sixth venue. We opened the back door of that sixth venue in Alaska to see the most incredible fog and the local freight people arrived and said, 'No planes leaving tonight I'm afraid.' So the next day in Anchorage we didn't have our set yet again.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about how we've developed our international touring schedule. In the hope that it may help some of the Australian companies here. I think one of the very key points is that Louise Fox and Gary Stewart and the board decided that they should take on a person dedicated to developing the touring, and that was initially Marguerite Pepper and then me, and I think that that's really worked for us.

Why do we tour? We live in Adelaide. Our seasons here are generally one week with perhaps a little bit of regional touring. We need to extend the life of the work that's been rehearsed sometimes over a period of up to six months. We have used APAM mercilessly from the beginning of Garry Stewart's leadership of the company. In 2000 we presented a workshop version of Birdbrain in the old Gouger Street studios, and really that was our springboard. Since then we've used APAM as building blocks within our strategies and planning, along with hooking into all of the strategies and initiatives of the Australia Council, ArtsSA that we could possibly hook into. So, Undergrowth, the Dance Down Under initiative, wherever we can, we're there.

We essentially took up what offers were generated, whatever was on offer, any opportunities in key venues we leapt upon them, and then made sure that we had lots and lots of presenters along to see us at those showcase tours. And that's worked fabulously well for us. We worked with Julia Carruthers at the Southbank Centre, and Aziz Carrero, Ian Snape to do our first little tour of the UK, and then Suzanne Walker came along, from Dance Touring Partnerships, saw the show, could see it was a great fit for the work she was trying to do for

the mid-scale venues in the UK and picked us up then for a further tour. So, this small step begat the next tour which indeed has now leapt on, we're now working with the Dance Consortium in the UK, the large scale venues, for a tour, a two month tour held in February March 07.

So, I suppose the reason that those showcase tours worked really well was because they were a critical success, the show was very good, the work was great, people hooked into the vitality, the energy, the athleticism of the dancers, and then it was obvious that there was something, there was an energy in the air, that could be capitalised upon.

So, moving on, we then decided that the next stage we needed to seize the day. The offers that were on the board at this moment for a particular period of time may not be there in a year's time so we undertook a massive tour over five months in 44 venues across Europe, the UK and the United States, and we considered that we should try and break the tours down into more logical units but realised that really, this is a chance. And I'd have to say it was hard, it was fabulous. There's something in the air about Australian Dance Theatre, people being able to hook in to the notion of a take on Swan Lake and the sort of humour inherent in the name, *Birdbrain*. So, now a lot of people have seen us, I think they're keen to see us again.

So, yes, we decided that we wouldn't risk losing those bookings. From this point on of course, we're going to be much more logical blocks of a couple of months max. We'll retain our dancers who can then retain their families.

I suppose one of the really important things is probably finding a way as accompany to judge what your leverage might be at any given moment. How much power do you have in the situation against the acknowledgement that the demand dictates almost everything. So it's almost the tension between what you want, what you're planning and then the opportunities that arise, and then that's the result is what you end up doing, I guess.

So, we've always tried to retain a degree of flexibility in our planning and that again has worked really well for us.

Again working with agents obviously or producers in various markets who know their markets has been absolutely key. There's just no way that we could have dealt with the volume. It's difficult enough as it is but the volume would be absolutely impossible and I think that we would be at a very different stage had we not decided to work with agents in the key areas, including Rosie, and Julia Glawe who's here from IMG in New York.

So, beyond that, we've tried to work in each region on it's own terms. Having learned a little over those initial showcase tours you realise that you really can't go in expecting that the touring networks in different countries work the same way as here. They absolutely don't. So we've absolutely tried to take on the working model, the touring model of the country we've been in. Now, we're modifying that as we speak but it's worked fairly well with some exceptions.

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival Kristy Edmunds:**

So in the traditional of ladies going first, I'd like to turn it over to Daryl, and Daryl you said something yesterday and I think everyone has echoed this idea of the longer term relationship, or kind of the key ballast relationships that other things can spoke around from. You talked about this idea with ELISION, and as an artist, creating an artistic history in that community, as distinct from simply creating an Australian moment in that country, but really that artistic history. So how does that relationship work for the company in relation to foreign touring?

**Darryl Buckley [ELISION]:** I think more about internationalising our activities rather than international touring per se and that to me is about how do you invite other creative people in who live elsewhere whose work has an authority, whose work has an attraction, so that you become part of the conservation and so that their work and your work joins in such a way that you actually widen the pool of resources. And so that you develop a momentum that your work is their work and their work is your work so that in a funny way when those people return to live in Europe or Japan or the States, they actually become your advocates.

To give some examples, when the group first began in the late 80s, very early on we commissioned a very brilliantly contentious English composer called Richard Barrett. We secured that commission through the Arts Council of England, the British Council supported his travel to Australia for the performance, a British philanthropic fund supported the recording which then went on to a Dutch boutique label, which then got us rave reviews in some very fantastic magazines in France and Belgium and the Netherlands, which then secured us a gig at the Vienna Concert Hall several years later.

And so there's a whole chain – Lee-Anne used the word 'leverage' – there's a whole chain of associations there that over a period of time empower you and it's about how we've deployed our domestic budget. We're now almost 20 years in our history: we have had something like 140 conductors, visual artists, musicians of varying kinds, other creative people from probably something like about 80 countries have worked with us. And that leads you out, and then you start to find, as I think one of the speakers was referring to earlier, that really serendipitous moment where somebody is in Paris and they meet somebody who has just seen you perform a few weeks earlier and they say, 'Have you heard these guys, they're fantastic.' And one event actually reinforces the other.

And so to go back to Richard Barrett for instance, the Vienna performance helped us secure an engagement with the Festival of Perth. That installation performance, which was a very large project, then went to Melbourne and after that I was talking to a Norwegian conductor and he said, 'Well, why don't we do a collaboration between our ensemble,' which is *Cicada*, yet again.

So you find that cycle and that history developing over a period of 20 years where you have an authority and a recognition among festival directors for what you do, how you do it and an interest on the basis of that. Also there's a factor of branding operating there as well.

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival]:** So we probably have time for one quick banal question that's easy to answer.

[laughter]

I am going to turn it over for questions. If you do have one you need to come for the mike for it to be recorded for the tape or whatever we're recording on. Does anybody have a question? Thought? Okay, I have one.

One of the things that I think, I mean coming from the US and working with Australian artists and bringing work over to America previously, now here working in the Festival, it's an interesting thing and I think it would be good if you guys could talk a little bit about the ballast and role that the funding bodies, and in this case the Australia Council, or the state funding bodies as well. What is the kind of chain reaction that happens from the point of a curator from abroad or an Artistic Director saying, 'I'm really keen. Now what?' What is that chain reaction in relation to some of the undergirding that you get from the Australian government?

**Sandra Collins [Bangarra Dance Company]:** Well, because we're a major performing arts company, there's not. We can't say, 'Oh, we really want to go there. Can you pay for us to go there?' if you can't budget it, you're not going, unless there's a bolt out of the blue, you get a phone call that says, 'We might be able to help you get there.' But that's it.

**Jennifer Barry [Keep Breathing]:** And I was just going to say for the independent sector, the smaller scale end of things it's always a difficult juggling act because the Australia Government provides support for touring internationally in terms of freight and airfares which covers the tyranny of distance situation but those rounds of funding might only happen a couple of times a year, and so the cycles of planning a tour, and you usually need, well, you need more than one presenter in that country, at least two, three, preferably more. So, if you've got a planning cycle, say in the US they might have a planning cycle of two years to 18 months before they would present the company you need to be thinking a long way ahead to have all of those pins lined up.

If you're dealing with Europe of course the time frame can be much shorter. You can get an invitation, 'Hey, we'd like your company to come in three months.' And that's difficult, as an independent, because you don't have the resources behind you to necessarily make that happen. So, a kind quick response capacity in that regard is just recognising that thing about different market places having different planning and timing cycles. And so I think it is difficult for the small and medium sector in that regard.

**Rick from Buzz:** Sandy, you say you came to APAM and you managed to kind of land the deal whereas everybody else is working on these long-term relationships. And I'm just wondering whether that deal was based on a relationship to start with.

**Sandra Collins [Bangarra Dance Company]:** No, it wasn't, apart from the fact that they just contacted me and said, 'We're going to be there. Do you want to meet up?' but this particular person had already, I think she'd made up her mind that we were the company that she wanted, but she introduced me to the other presenters. So they already had their strategy worked out and I just ..

**Rick from Buzz:** And is that, I suppose to the other panellists, do they think that that's because Bangarra is such a unique product?

**Sandra Collins [Bangarra Dance Company]:** In this particular instance, yes. That's what they were looking for. And also because we're really good.

**Kristy Edmunds [Melbourne International Arts Festival Kristy Edmunds]:** That being said, I remember Ian Scobie invited me, when I was working in America, to come to APAM in 1998, and it was the first time that I'd been here and I remember at the time being struck, quite intensely, by the use of term 'market' and 'product' and things like that. And I just want to say to the colleagues that are in the room that although those terms are used by the professionals here, it is absolutely interconnected to the integrity of the authenticity of voice and the capacity and depth of their performing arts practice, and so I wanted to help on that translation a little because I was reflecting back on it, making me go, 'It's not a product! It's magic!' and then you've got to sell tickets.

So I just wanted to acknowledge that and also thank every single one of the panellists for not only your work but your commitment to each other and the field that's working here in Australia, and your relationships abroad. I think you're tremendous bridge builders, and I thank you all very much.

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