

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET, 27 February – 3 March
The Role of Arts Centres in Supporting Arts Development Forum

Thursday 1 March
Piano Bar, Adelaide Festival Centre
Adelaide

David Pledger, facilitator (Artistic Director/Executive Producer not yet it's difficult [nyid])
Sue Hunt (Director Performing Arts Sydney Opera House)
Lane Czaplinski (Artistic Director, On the Boards)
Tina Rasmussen (Director Performing Arts, Harbourfront Centre)
Julia Carruthers (Head of Dance and Performance, Royal Festival Hall)

David Pledger [nyid]: Just a little bit of housekeeping: we're going to have questions during the course of the forum so we've been asked if you do have a question if you could go to the microphone which is just over to my left and to my right up the front.

Okay, so this forum is the role of arts centres in performing arts development and just a little bit of background: really it's something of the brainchild of Philip Rolfe, from the Sydney Opera House, who's very curious to talk about the ways in which arts centres might support arts development across a variety of programs, and Sue Hunt, who's the Director of Performing Arts at the Sydney Opera House is going to talk to the program that's been developing at the Sydney Opera House, over the last five to seven years I guess.

Also joining us on the panel from my left is Lane Czaplinski, and Lane is the Artistic Director of On Board Seattle, which is also called Behnke Contemporary Performing Arts Centre. Is that correct?

Lane Czaplinski [On the Boards]: Yes, that was a funder when we built the building.

David Pledger [nyid]: Okay, Tina Rasmussen is from the Harbourfront Centre. She's the Director of Theatre Programs..

Tina Rasmussen [Harbourfront Centre]: Performing Arts.

David Pledger [nyid]: And Julia Carruthers who is the head of Performance and Dance at the .. tell me.

Julia Carruthers [Royal Festival Hall]: The Southbank Centre.

David Pledger [nyid]: Okay, we're going to just chat a little bit specifically from the points of view of each of the speakers. And I'm kind of interested in starting off with you, Tina, in terms of what's going on at the Harbourfront Centre, and how the programs that exist, under your leadership there, and

how they relate to the ways in which artists from small to medium sized companies can engage with the arts centre, and how the arts centre engages with them, and how that engagement relates to the audiences that exist and that you're trying to attract.

Tina Rasmussen [Harbourfront Centre]: Thank you. Good morning. I'd like to just tell you a little bit about our arts centre and about where it's situated, locally and within the context of Canada.

Canada has a population of over 25 million people. We're the second largest country in the world and we have a great simpatico with Australia as we are hindered by geography somewhat as it takes about the same amount of time to traverse the country. We're neighbours to the looming powers of the south. We have a new conservative government who are reopening discussions, among others, on victories over same sex marriages and women's right to choose, so we're a country in transition. Toronto, Canada's largest city, 5 million plus people, we're nestled along Belle Province, Province de Quebec, Canada's cultural hotbed with an entirely separate cultural funding stream. We are according to the United Nations the most multicultural city in the world, and Harbourfront Centre is Canada's foremost centre for contemporary art.

We have a ten-acre site. We operate multiple venues. We are plural disciplinary and we engage over 300 employees. We have 12 million visitors a year and we program community and educational programs, the performing arts, literary arts, visual arts, camps and education, marine – believe it or not. We operate a site and we're engaged with waterfront redevelopment. We also have an entrepreneurial wing which runs parking lots and marinas to fund the cultural program.

So we are a true culture port. We produce over 4000 single events a year and we have multiple vehicles for artist development and commissions and I'd like to just talk to you about a few of them today.

We have a program called Hatch which is emerging performance projects where we bring in mostly performance creators in the community, and we give them a venue free of charge and we give them production support, cash, we run their box office, and we mentor them in marketing and media relations, and we give them access to all of our ticket buyers that have previously bought for our World Stage Festival.

We also have a new program called Circulate which are companies or creators in residence that have access to all the colleagues, all the spaces and all of the dialogues with other artists that are working within the centre. We have an international dance series and our recent commissions have included projects with the Candance Network. We have a new commissioning project called Fresh Ground, and we're currently commissioning a new opera by George Elliott Clarke, called 'Trudeau, A New Opera', and 'Static', a site specific work. We also engage artists in other disciplines to design gardens to animate the site.

We have community cultural engagement plan which is a consultation process to bring community and arts and cultural groups into the organisation and mentor them. It's important to note that we are equally as mentored by them as we mentor them. For example, next week we have the Persian New Year celebration happening with the possible engagement for them to have an entire summer weekend, a multidisciplinary weekend at the site.

Through our World Stage International Performance Festival, for example in the past we've partnered with the Festivale de Theatre Des Amerique with Marie Brassard. We also have an ideas based program where we select a theme or an idea and we've engaged artists to engage in the topic. Our recent engagement was with two performance creators to work on a commission for, 'He' which is an exploration of masculinity in our current time.

And also we do work within the organisation. We're looking to have a nester fellow actually coming and working on developing the skills of the employees within the organisation to engage in a dialogue about how one sees the work, to exercise muscles of curiosity.

And all of that starts with really one relationship at a time. We look for artists that are like-minded and share the same sensibility and that they are obviously operating within the context of contemporary practice. We talk to our networks and find out who's doing what, where, when and if we're interested. We see as much work as possible locally and abroad. We engage with people that we like and that we trust and hopefully they like and trust us. We give them opportunities to play and to be curious and we also hold forgiveness. We engage in a dialogue and we embrace a capacity for failure.

I'm a little hesitant talking about commissions. It's interesting because I asked several of you over the course of the time being here, and everyone has a different answer about exactly how they engage in commissions and I guess it's going to be part of the discussion here is about aligning the vocabulary, what we mean. In terms of the visual arts a commission, like the De Medicis, there's a finished project, and for the performing arts we live with the living document. And also in the context of commissions for the centre, usually there's an agenda like, 'We'd like you to celebrate the 30th anniversary,' or 'We need to animate this site', and it's really seemingly counterintuitive to engage artists with a specific agenda, so we're looking at new avenues to develop artists from the outset.

We're really trying to enter into a less presenting model as opposed to a dramaturgical and curatorial investor, and this is really about a creative partnership and we do assessment of needs and values, and do an inventory of what we have and what artists need and maybe come up with something that is more than cash and will have more long-term value. For example, we've helped companies with cash flow situations in the front-end; we've helped post bond for equity; we offer up our venues and our box office services or offices and resources, our archives and our video libraries. We offer advice on strategies for international touring because we have expertise in this front.

We offer technical direction and production coordination. We assist them with piggyback marketing and mentor them in media and marketing relations, and we offer a commitment to present the work, if not now, then in the long-term track and the arc of the company's work.

And I'm certainly open to discuss models of presenting international work as a less formal, fee, accommodation, travel based structure where we are willing to share the risk.

David Pledger [nyid]: Thanks. I'm imagining that rather impressive mix of strategies has evolved over a fairly long period of time, and has come about through some changes within the organisation responding to the community. At Sydney Opera House over the last five, six years, there's been quite a - I mean, from the outside I would think it's been quite a profound cultural shift actually, in terms of the ways in which that organisation deals with independent arts community, deals with small to medium-sized companies, deals with potential presenters and producers. And, as a result of which, I think there's been quite a lot of interest elsewhere. I know at the Arts Centre there, in Melbourne, there are moves to look at other ways of negotiating engaging with communities, professional and audience communities.

So, what's been the major philosophical push through to these changes at the Opera House?

Sue Hunt [Sydney Opera House]: Sure, thanks David. Good morning everybody. Thanks for coming. David is absolutely right. The Opera House took a decision, about six years ago the Opera House Trust decided that it did want to make decision to go in a slightly different direction. I don't probably need to introduce the Opera House to anybody given that we have two out of three people in the entire world have a recognition factor of the building, at least.

Until very recently though the Opera House was certainly seen as opera, ballet, symphony, music, drama and that was kind of it. And we are one of the busiest arts centres in the world. So, when the Trust got to the position of thinking, well, what can we do that actually adds to that, it made what I think is really fundamental shift and that is that it saw itself, and decided to see itself as a creative organisation.

And that's something I wouldn't mind talking a little bit about during the morning, is that the Trust made this decision not to see itself as a programmer, not to see itself any longer as a venue for hire only, but as a creative organisation, and that was the kind of major shift.

And having done that, it started to think, 'Well, what was that all about?' So it brought together a group of people who could think about what being a creative organisation was. And I think once you start to think about that you start to understand that that means you have to reach out to artists. And so the approach that we took in the first instance was to look to emerging artists

and senior artists who were working in a project context, not in a company context.

So the notion was to really look at who we could partner up with that would diversify the program offer and would diversify the audiences. So, if you can imagine, with quite a narrow program in the first instance: the idea was to diversify within the context of that busy arts centre.

So, the people that were brought together were really people who were artist focused, who once again didn't see themselves as programmers but rather as producers, as people who saw things and made them happen and could bring ideas together. And we reached out to, in the same way that Tina was talking about, we reached out to people to say, 'Well, what is it that you want to do? How do you see it working? How could you help the Opera House become that creative organisation?' And that led us to working, as I say, with independent artists, both emerging and senior.

We focused really on that from an artistic presentation point of view rather than audience point of view in the first instance because we saw that audience development as really the result of an amazing and transformational experience for them when they came here. So once again, rather than taking a programming point of view and 'let's look for a gap in the program, and let's look for a gap in the audience and let's plug those together', it was let's create a transformational, an amazing experience for the audiences and that would help them come back. That will deepen their understanding of the art form, whichever art form it might be, and that will help them come back.

So we had to find artists who were of a similar kind of bent and who had the same ideas. Through our studio program, through our contemporary dance program, through our education programs, we've reached out and we've said, 'Okay, who is out there? Who is doing different things? Let's try to blur the boundaries of performing arts. Let's try and get away from all mainstream things.

In that we had to look at commissions and commissions were very important. They'd been a really small thing to date. They could be \$2000 or \$3000 or \$5,000 for someone to think about making a work for the studio. They can go all the way up to \$150,000 to help make a new work with the Australian Ballet for example, or with Opera Australia. Right now, and for the first five years, they were really quite small.

And what we are attempting to do now, having done that for five years, and become more mature, when I started with the organisation, it seemed to me that one of the important things we needed to do was to articulate the kind of process that we were going through, and so we undertook a process to actually articulate an artistic vision, which was an artistic vision focused very much on our role within the city and within the nation, our role with our partners being our presenting partners, and our role with artists and audiences.

And so in that articulation of the artistic vision will be able to make a statement and to galvanise where we wanted to go to next. And where we've decided to go to next is to explore, whilst keeping the emerging and senior artists going while keeping the local and national leadership role going, we want to really explore major commissions and in an international context. And our next part of the vision is to say, well, the Opera House is known internationally as a building but is it known internationally as a creative organisation? And our view is that the only way to make it known as a creative organisation is to start making work that partners internationally as well locally. So, that is the next part of it, to actually explore what the international context is.

I suppose in terms of how we have reached out to artists: a very similar philosophy to what I've heard before which is we're not the experts, and we're not a producing company, we're a venue. The experts are those people that work, that actually make the work. So it was really a case of, 'How do you want to come and play with us, what can we do to help you?' We work in very fixed constraints where because of the throughput in the main theatres we're not a very exploratory organisation within the organisation, other than this producers unit which makes the work, so we actually have to fit in with a lot of strictures.

So the artists learn something by coming in with us. They don't get to play without any parameters. They have some fairly strict parameters and they get to learn those things when they come in as well.

And I'll finish off by saying, in terms of the senior artists that we work with, we're very much focused on the independent and project based individuals because we don't see ourselves as competing with major companies as well. So people who actually don't fit into any mainstream environment, it's been very important for us to try help them grow.

David Pledger [nyid]: Thanks Sue. I'm interested in that idea that it didn't arise out of a programming shift. It came out of a desire to be a creative organisation. I suppose, in that way, we were having a conversation the other day, and looking at this idea I proposed of cultural dramaturgy that organisations or artists or companies might have. And by that I was meaning that the way in which you operate actually provides meaning to the culture in which you're working, in which you're actually doing of stuff.

So, whether it is artistic practices or management practices or producing practices, the way that you go about those activities actually changes the way in which the culture sees you, and changes the way in which you see the culture.

And, Sydney Opera House and I think Harbourfront Centre are very similar, in terms of their organisational capacity. I'm kind of curious about how and organisation like On The Boards - I think the personnel in the producers' unit is probably greater than all your staff numbers at On The Boards - and I'm curious about how you do that that with that sized staff but also - Tina raised it before - the kind of conservative agency you have to deal with in the States at

the moment. From the outside it does appear to be that it's quite introverted and to a degree seems to be becoming more isolated in a way, and I'm curious as to how, within that larger framework, does an organisation develop strategies which might seek to provide another kind of view about the life in which both the artistic community and the audience that come to the centre actually live.

Lane Czaplinski [On the Boards]: Good morning. I think it's important, in talking to a group of international colleagues, to pick up on that point you just raised, David, which is that our government sucks. There's no question about it. And the wafting conservatism that is happening in the United States, it's disheartening to see how that's happening in other parts of the world. The theatre director, Ann Bogard, was in Seattle last year and I can't remember if she was talking about Bernstein or Stravinsky, but she quoted a composer saying, 'What do you do in the time of war, what kind of art do you make?' And the composer responded, 'Well, you make the music louder'. And I think it's never been more important to do what we are all doing.

I move to Seattle, Washington about four years ago from the Brooklyn Academy of Music. On the Boards is a 28-year-old organisation. It's about a million-dollar budget. We have seven full-time staff and about half of what we do is presenting artists from outside of the Pacific Northwest.

The other half of what we do is we help produce artists in the region and this is somewhat of a new direction for us, though working with artists in our region has always been very important to what we do as an organisation, as we were founded by local artists 28 years ago. But when I first started, the dynamic between working with local artists was such that they basically would have to rent our space do a production. We were essentially landlords and we focused our energy on presentation.

And I think this notion of presentation is kind of interesting to me, presentation versus producing. Again, I'm very mindful, when I'm sitting before an international audience because of always had envy looking around the rest of the world, seeing the way that the international community I think supports, generally, the development of work. But I think for a lot of Americans who call themselves presenters - we find work and we bring it in and we show it, and I think that that's a noble mission - I think there is starting to be a little bit of a shift and that's certainly what we've certainly experienced at On the Boards.

In working with our local artists what we've basically tried to do is figure out how can we create an infrastructure to help them develop their work and how can we create a different kind of way of framing that work and what kind of strategies can we utilise? Well, it's interesting because my background has been as a presenter and yet I find myself acting more and more as a producer.

We started with no budget and creating a series of evening length work and one way to sweeten that deal was to give creative residencies. We absolutely stopped renting our facility to outside users and what we started to do was to

take that space and give it to artists as they were making work. And I found myself in rehearsals, sitting there, almost like a dramaturge, even though I have no training like that. I'm just a wayward literature major, but I find myself in that kind of situation. And then it gets into things like, 'Well, how do you frame the work for a community that cares, seemingly, not that much about performance?' You know, they'd rather go to see the Seahawks or the Superbowl, or watch television or all the things that we have as competition in our world.

I'm from the land of Starbucks and I happen to believe that art and ideas is actually what coffee used to be before Starbucks, and I actually think that we are potentially at the beginning of a shift where art and ideas will start to mean a lot more, but we have to frame it in much more interesting ways.

So we've begun doing things like having our audience come in, we'll select five people per show, and actually ask them to review the show and posted on our web site, for better or worse. We really encourage them to write anything they want. Again, everything and I'm talking about I would never submit as new ideas but they are ideas that we're acting on and they're happening now, and kind of strange when you look around. You don't see as many people doing them as you might think. So we're kind of employing these kinds of strategies. We're thinking a lot about archiving and dissemination. We don't want archiving to be a passive one camera at back of the house kind of proposition especially when popular culture is creating situations where you can go see a concert and walk out with a DVD at the end of the concert and so we're trying to think of ways that we can be increasingly competitive with framing the work that happens in our space in more exciting ways.

I think I'm going to stop there so I don't ramble and we can into more of a conversation but I will come back to you, this idea of new versus old, and who in the United States has actually been producing because I think there are a lot of interesting networks of people and as lot of interesting examples where, despite the fact that in the United States we do not invest in culture in the way what we should, a lot of dynamic work is happening nonetheless and it's because of a lot of individuals who've been really creative in finding out ways to support the generation of new projects and the touring of projects.

David Pledger [nyid]: Okay. Thanks Lane. I'm kind of interested to get to maybe a little bit later if it comes up in one of the questions to talk about the way in which centres actually use technology to develop audience but also to develop relationships with the artistic community.

I guess, going from the States to the UK, going from the NEA to the Arts Council, probably from the outside Lane probably thinks, 'Wow, that would be great to get my hands on some cash like that.' And I guess there's also a level of regional infrastructure within the UK that you can tap into. I know with Lane, there's a lot of brokerage and partnership deals that you do across the country.

So, is it so much better off in the UK. I mean one of the main programs that you've got, which is the Artist In Residency programs, actually gives to an artist or to a company a sum of money, you know, they write a cheque every year, for over maybe a period of two or three years. So it's a direct cash contribution and I'm kind of curious whether or not, as you take us through that, is that indicative of the environment in the UK at the moment?

Julia Carruthers [Royal Festival Hall]: Yes, I'm going to talk about companies in residence, just a bit of background on where I work. The Southbank Centre is a big central London arts centre, very high profile, major exposure for the companies and artists that perform there. We're right on the River Thames opposite the Houses of Parliament, sort of near the National Theatre, Tate Modern, the London Eye. We're the place that everyone comes in to use the toilet on their trip between the London Eye and Tate Modern as they walk along the River.

It's lots of art forms: music, literature, visual arts. I cover the dance program. We also do circus. We have a 27-acre site so we also do outdoor work when we can afford it. And if I say to Lane that we get sixteen million pounds a year from the Australia Council of England then that probably sounds like an awful lot of money, but I have to operate my own little spreadsheet for dance which sometimes feels like I haven't got much elbowroom. And often I find within the arts centre context that dance does have to fight its corner in the kind of hierarchy of the artforms and the carve up of the budget and sometimes I'm known as Bitter and Twisted of Dance in the programming meetings.

So, choosing a company in residence is a very important decision because that company has to be my ally and my chums within this major operation that internally we call The Oil Tanker, you know it steams on, nobody quite knows where the control room is, and I'm very proud that the Southbank Centre's Artists In Residence Program seems to have become a model of good practice.

I first observed Artists in Residence at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin and I was very curious about how they made the artists almost like members of the staff who knew everyone around the building and one of the things that we constantly talk about in my big organisation is how we hang on to the ethos of small arts organisations within our 250 members of staff, how you keep that energy, the commitment, the level of communication within a big organisation.

So why do you choose particular artists to be in residence with you? Because actually what's going to happen at the Southbank Centre is we are going to bring those artists into the mainstream. And the first choice is obviously because you love the work and feel very strongly behind what those artists are producing. So when I arrived at the Southbank Centre just over five years ago, the first company in residence that I chose was Akram Kahn company and at that time Akram Kahn was in a bit of backwater of kind of south Asian dance controlled by a lot of elderly ladies in saris but the dance people knew that Akram had fantastic potential and needed to be given a different kind of platform.

When choosing an artist in residence you have to really like the people involved on quite a personal level. They've got to become your friends because you're going to be spending an awful lot of time with them and you're going to be on the phone to them every day maybe. And you have to like their dancers, the technical people they work with, the collaborators they involve. The potential of the work of your company in residence has to be enormous. You have to sense that there will be an international market for it. And you can help out with that because obviously as someone working at Southbank Centre I've got a kind of massive address book of international contacts that I can share with them.

Another important angle for us is that we have a fabulous education team working there on access programs and with the local community, and the artist that comes in to be in residence has to be enthusiastic about engaging with that program and working with sulky adolescents in the local borough and doing projects with what I'll tactfully refer to as older ladies.

And actually with Akram what happened was he used work with our education team as tryouts for works that then ended up on the main stage. You first saw bits of the material from Mar in a foyer space in our main venue where you had Hanif Kureishi writing on a text and the singer kind of wailing in the foyer. The guy you saw hanging upside down in Mar was first working with these older ladies in a foyer space.

As mentioned before you need to choose someone who's going to engage with your box office staff, your front of house guys, the technicians and very importantly with your press and marketing office. And I feel very pleased about the way we sort of launched Akram with the press in Britain. And Tim McKeough, who's actually here at the conference, working on the Undergrowth program, was working on the dance press at the time, and one of his big triumphs was to get a half page article in the Financial Times on Akram Kahn, written by one of the campest and stuffiest arts critics in the UK, Clement Crisp, and this felt like a huge breakthrough for an artist that wasn't white, you know, because Akram's from an Indian family, and one of the complaints from the black and Asian dance communities in the UK is that they never get any decent press coverage. So we felt really pleased about this FT article at the start of what we were doing.

You have to choose an artist who's going to say yes, who's not one of these fussy, precious types who's going to sit on their pedestal and not get busy and not get their hands dirty. So Akram was willing to work with the London Symphonietta and a Finnish composer when we proposed that. I seem to recall that one of the only things that was vetoed by him was my idea of having an Akram Kahn T-shirt on sale in our shop and he said no to that.

As David mentioned, we give our artists in residence ten thousands pounds a year with no strings attached. That's just the cheque that gets written, and then in addition to that they will be paid really nice fees for every show, every education project, every seminar they do, every piece of work. So potentially

it's quite a good earner to have the hook in with us. And I, as an individual, I provide them with a lot of kind managerial advice, having previously worked with companies and artists on managerial and administrative stuff as well. So I feel like I'm a bit of big sister to the office of the companies.

So what are they providing for me? Well, I would say they are a kind of trump card. You can imagine what a trump card Akram Kahn was for me when he ends up as this fantastic international ambassador. And it meant I had a lot of cred with our management and board. What Akram and his company also did which was fantastic for me was they were travelling all over the world, going to various festivals and seeing tons of works and they would recommend things to me that they had seen that would subsequently appear in my program. So I felt they were terrific scouts for me and of course Akram does have exquisite taste when he's watching things.

He also gave me a lot of advice about Indian dance and which khattak artists to put on in the program because he knows his stuff. One of his dancers did a weekly staff yoga class - I mean all kinds of spin offs. And we also programmed Akram's dancers doing their own work in little mixed bills in our small space. And also I felt that I had a terrific network of new contacts through him and the dancers in his company.

And then just to wrap it up I would say one of things that's very important for arts centres that are very mainstream like ours, and have a tendency to become a bit repetitive in what they're doing is that you have to let these residencies come to a natural end. And, as David said, a year's residency is often not long enough, you need to let these run a kind of natural course. And so it's what I began to call 'the end of the affair', is that you have to let the artist move on. Maybe they need to show their work in a bigger venue or they want to be seen in a different context by different audiences. And of course I was semi-heart broken when Akram moves on to the stage at Saddlers Wells and gets adopted by all the ladies with posh handbags who book their box office tickets on their American Express cards. He's really been slightly eaten up by those kind of ladies now.

And then of course it's quite stressful because you have to move on to the next one and you feel like there is, I remember there was an article in the Guardian newspaper that said, 'Well, we had Michael Clarke in the UK and now 20 years later we've got Akram Kahn and it's all marvellous.' And I'm thinking well, maybe we have to wait another twenty years for something of equal calibre. But actually our next company in residence is and currently is Stan Won't Dance which fortunately has also proved to be a very interesting engagement for us.

And just to wrap it up, I want to say that sometimes with these things you feel that you're following your instincts and you don't quite know what you're doing until after you've done it. So it's the thing that Sue was starting to mention, you have to articulate the work and have strategies and policies, but actually sometimes your policy is just kind of who you work with and you can't be very articulate about it, and you have to kind of rationalise it afterwards.

David Pledger [nyid]: All right, thanks Julia. We'll open up for questions now so if you do have a question please go to a microphone just to kind of start it off a little bit, thematically there seems to be an intention from all of you to bring into your centres artists, so to actually take them from where they are, which they may be quite happily, but because you need them and probably because they need you at various stages, you are actually bringing them in to the centres.

By doing that you change the culture of their organisation but also you inflect upon their own practices. It's an interesting case study that you went through there because it's over a long, long period of time and there are obviously a number of points along the way where the parameters might, to other artists, appear to be quite prescriptive. But to Akram Khan it's a matter of coincidence as well as timing as well as personality and disposition. I'm curious, in an international environment here in Australia, how do you do that over oceans> can you transpose those kinds of processes in an international context?

Lane Czaplinski [On the Boards]: Okay, so one of the examples I wanted to give you, one of our colleagues who's here is Cathy Edwards from Dance Theatre Workshop in New York, and I would begin my comment by saying that one of the conversations that people are having in the United States is because we at times feel so underresourced, we're questioning whether we should be investing internationally in the creation of work instead of in our own artists who are in the United States, which I think is kind of ridiculous – we could just build a wall and not let anybody in, so it's that kind of thinking.

But Cathy, and Dance Theatre Workshop have an exchange program with Vietnam, I think it's called the Mekong Project, and this is an exchange project that's happened over the course of about three years. And in that time, they've unearthed – they've got to know a young choreographer by the name of Le Vu Long [ph sp]. So, he works at the Vietnamese Opera Ballet. It's a really strange set of circumstances, there's a kind of residual censorship runs through the organisation and yet he's making really vital new dance.

And Dance Theatre Workshop basically championed this artist in such a way that the knowledge of this artist was put together in different kinds of proposals that came back to the United States and one was ultimately funded by the National Dance Project. It was a production grant and money basically went to the development and the creation of a new project, and now, two years later, is going to be touring the United States, and a network of people who support dance through the National Dance Project.

And that's just a quick example of I think where what you're suggesting can happen and it's good for you as an international community to be aware of how that happens. But you also should be aware there is increasing pressure not to even act that way, and yet that's how we're trying to function and I think as many of us feel.

Tina Rasmussen [Harbourfront Centre]: In my case, in Canada, as Toronto is the most multicultural city in the world, and as it relates to the Community Cultural Engagement Plan, we have a serious dilemma in that we are worried about bums in seats in 20 years and developing properties that's going to speak to the audiences of tomorrow, but that is really reflective of the contemporary arts centre. So contemporary practice as opposed to being folkloric representation, so how does one develop artists.

And if there's other templates in other countries where this has been successful, I think this is an opportunity where we could bring over the artists, or the artistic directors that are working in those capacities to do the slow burn relationships within the communities so that we're not cherry picking artists out of certain communities and presenting them without any infrastructure of audience, that we have to grow the artist, grow their sensibilities, and bring with them their knowledge and resources and contacts and that we grow together a dialogue of understanding how to reach out to communicate to them. And also then we strengthen our muscles of how to communicate with them, not only in the local and national context but the international context.

Julia Carruthers [Royal Festival Hall]: I just want to say that particularly in dance in London what I always say to the politicians is that we are an international relations miracle because a lot of the artists that end up settling in London and working in London are not thoroughbred English. Our Arts Council is funding people who studied in Britain, who've then settled in London, they might be German, they might be Brazilian. Actually we've got quite a lot of Australians in London mopping up Australia Council funding.

Sue Hunt [Sydney Opera House]: And doing a fantastic job of it.

Julia Carruthers [Royal Festival Hall]: And doing a fantastic job. We love them dearly. So although we do have the same conversation as Lane, like should we be looking after the Brits rather than welcoming the world with open arms, when the budgets are shrinking, it's just sort of what evolves naturally, certainly in dance.

Sue Hunt [Sydney Opera House]: It's really interesting to look at it from an Australian point of view: we're an incredibly long way away and we're an island, and I think that's made us really isolatory and we haven't necessarily looked outwards before and just to decide that you're going to be involved in an international relational or development of anything doesn't make it so, with the sort of constraints that you've got going on there. From our point of view at the Opera House we've just started to say that, 'Well, we should get involved in and international context,' but we don't know what that is yet. And I certainly know that it is about relationships in the first place, and it does have to be a slow burn as you say, it does have to be something that you really take on slowly. And from our point of view it's going to need money as well, so it doesn't just happen because people aren't in your backyard. So, you've got to actually think about all those things in the first instance, 'Who would want to come and play with us?' and 'Who would want to hear from our artists as well?'

We've also got to understand that we're going to have to develop the money to put on the table and I suppose the Opera House thinks that that's an important thing that we can actually play a role in because so many of the companies and the independent artists in this country are not in a position to be able to develop those relationships because they don't have that money.

So what we're trying to get the board to start to understand is to 'Let's put some real money beyond our current day-to-day investment. Let's put some money away into a commissions fund where we can actually get enough money there to be able to say, right we want to be on the international stage and now what can it actually be?'

So I suppose that's kind of important, and then beyond that for me, it's about sticking true to your core values around who you want to work with and what's the sort of work that you want to create. But I think the first thing is understanding that because of those constraints you've got to be able to invest in it. And I suppose it's interesting finally, from the Opera House's point of view that everything the board set up and did has been self-generated, so none of these ideas for us come from funding, so it's all a constant thing about, well, is that the right thing to do next?

David Pledger [nyid]: Just a little coda to that: I would say a lot of that cultural intelligence about international networks probably resides with artists because in Australia, over the last ten or fifteen years, necessarily and historically, we've had to travel, in order to make a living. There's been that history there so the networks are there.

But the gentleman who has been waiting extremely patiently:

Floor: Hello, my name is Eduardo [Bonito], I'm the Director of a dance festival in Brazil and we see for international export of artists it's very crucial in the relationship between the amount of international residence and the amount of residence we have in the country, so that we make artist to artist relationships stronger. And then we have advocates for these Brazilian artists which have been collaborating with the people coming from other countries, in Europe for instance.

And this is a way that we have, over the past eight years maybe, supported a lot the market for Brazilian contemporary dance in Europe and outside Brazil. And I see that you guys are all from Anglo-Saxon countries that have not very strong policies for residencies and commissioning comparing to the European countries. I don't know if you guys are aware that maybe there are 80 or 100 venues or festivals in mainland Europe that give residences for companies where they pay maybe €100,000 to €150,000 a year for the company to be there, and they commission quite a lot of work with substantial amounts of money. And this is maybe a high percentage of their programming money that they put into that and if you see, at least in the dance environment, there is quite a lot of companies that are very successful worldwide because they

have this strong support from the arts centres and the theatres what receive funding in Europe.

So, I don't know, I would like to ask if you guys are kind of researching what's being done with the European, the French, the Swiss, the German, the way that they're operating, the way that they're working with their artists, and how much percent of your programming is spent on artistic development. This ratio I think in mainland Europe is much higher than in your countries.

David Pledger [nyid]: We did talk about that the other day, that there's certainly a different environment over in Europe, and a company like Bruno Beltrao, is that sort of basically – who basically worked out of Kunsten Arts Festival and went on a commissioning program with them over a long period of time. Is that the kind of model that you're referring to?

Eduardo: That's a good example. That's a company that started presenting their first works in our festival and I think they've been running for five or six years. In the beginning, in Brazil the funding system is really terrible so they have to rely on festivals paying mainly fees because the festivals are also very poor in terms of what we can do for commissioning. Commissioning for example is a few new thing we just started last year, but we usually just try to work very closely with the artists and Bruno, for instance, is an artist that has been receiving residencies and had all his pieces shown in the festival, and because of the amount of European curators that come to the festival, his work got known and this year I think he had a co-production between five or six big European festivals, and he managed to..

Julia Carruthers [Royal Festival Hall]: He is everywhere but the thing is what can happen with artists like that is that they are fashionable for about three years and a lot of money is invested, and then they go up in smoke and disappear. It's a danger for them that it all happens and then...

Eduardo: I think the artist must be able to create their own network of support and curators and places where they can go and have working periods and shift that from time to time because of course every festival or theatre cannot support an artist for their whole life. But I think he's very fashionable now because he was able to receive all this funding and create a fantastic new piece that otherwise wouldn't have been created and especially for a Brazilian company, it's really important, the support of international festival's commissioning work because otherwise this work wouldn't have been done.

Lane Czaplinski [On the Boards]: Just so we can get other perspectives I just simply want to say that I think we're all very aware of different models of how work is supported around the world. We're trying to work with Bruno actually next season. We're very aware of the differences. I think what's different for all of us is we each have our own context where we have to do this kind of work from, and it's all very, very different. I don't know what to say to you other than, yes, I totally understand, I travel a lot, I'm aware of the differences but we're still trying to do what we do.

Julia Carruthers [Royal Festival Hall]: And I'm telling my chief executive about the differences in terms of what I can..

Lane Czaplinski [On the Boards]: I think everyone in the room is aware of that.

Tina Rasmussen [Harbourfront Centre]: And we're not granting agencies, we have as much a relationship with our artists as we do with our audiences. And in Canada, in terms of contemporary practice, this is a very hard sell. It's a very different tradition, a long standing theatre tradition and dance tradition in Europe, and you can drive five miles and get to another large centre with a big festival, so there's networks of people that are talking constantly and making this work happen. When you're like down under or in Canada where you're the only game in town with a couple of other colleagues then it's a very difficult situation. And if you're going to put a percentage of programming money towards a long term relationship you need to also weight the balance, like Lane was saying, about what your audience requirements are as well. You have to speak to them.

David Pledger [nyid]: We've only got a few minutes left. I'd like to take a question from John.

Floor: Hi, John, First of all I'd like to complain about the height of the microphone..

[laughter]

As a person who's producing a new work, a new event at the Victorian Arts Centre, in partnership with the Victorian Arts Centre, a children's literature event which is on in May, I've come across two problems, and I'd like to throw them to the committee to work out how to solve them because I can't work out how to solve the problems.

Problem one is that there's legislation in place by the state government which prevents the Arts Centre offering a discounted rate to someone like us who is using the Arts Centre for children's events, where we've got a top ticket price of \$11, in order that they don't unnecessarily compete with the commercial theatres in town, this is an anti competitive thing to do with the arts and the siphoning off of commercial product. Therefore we have to pay full price which severely disadvantages us.

Second problem is that the accounting system for the arts industry is full price allocation, therefore, as we all know, when you're developing a new project you scrimp and you pinch and you save and you connive and you try to pull it together but there is a value placed on scrimping, pinching, conniving and there's a price paid for everything.

And therefore the dilemma that I'm facing as an independent producer in working with an arts centre is that the full cost allocation model is squeezing us out of the game.

Tina Rasmussen [Harbourfront Centre]: I'd say change art centres..

[laughter]

..but first of all the value of children's work should be used foremost in developing audiences so you could certainly rally a lot of colleagues to make that case. But also we have a performing arts rate which is – we also hire our venues as well – but we actually want to get away from that and that's particularly of this whole curatorial discussion where we go out and develop relationships with companies and we work in association with them so that we're actually not losing revenue but that we're actually building the relationships.

But we do have a tiered system for the performing arts rate when we develop a dialogue with companies we want to bring in. I mean we want to bring them in under the rubric of Harbourfront Centre, because the brand is the brand and we need to make sure all the items under the brand are looked after by our area.

David Pledger [nyid]: Can I take one more question? Rachel?

Floor: Hi, I'm Rachel Swain. I'm Artistic Director of Stalker and also Marrugeku. Our company's received a number of commissions over the years from both festivals and arts centres and one of the things that I found very curious from an artists' perspective is I think in a sense where the rubber meets the road is something to do with the curatorial relationship between the commissioning presenter and the artist.

Of course we negotiate the money and in kind support we can have but I've had an incredible range of responses and I think a few of you have touched on it in terms of finding yourself in the position of dramaturge or curator. And sometimes I get an experience where they say, 'It's not my position to give you any feedback. I just don't like it. I'm not going to say anything about it.' If they come and see a development stage.

Or sometimes we get very, very detailed, useful, complex feedback and I'm personally very interested in the role of producers in a creative environment. I think in a way it's the model for the future and my sense is it comes down to individual's experience and ability to have that kind of dialogue. And of course as an artist there is a point where you want to say, 'Piss off, that's my job.' But there's another place where I think intelligent curatorial debate about a work that's been commissioned is really welcomed. And I'm interested to hear from your different perspectives about how that role is managed.

David Pledger [nyid]: Any takers?

Lane Czaplinski [On the Boards]: Sure, I would acknowledge in terms of what you said about curators and people who call themselves curators, programmers and all of that, not speaking frankly enough to artists about

programming and I do it to. I try to do it at lot less as I go on and try and have the courage to actually speak to artists about their work and try to learn myself so I can speak more articulately to artists about their work.

At the same time I think one thing I think a lot about in working with artists is that they're all different and I would never be prescriptive about how an artist would make their work, meaning that I think with each artist it's about defining a process, understanding who they are and understanding what their needs are. And really what I am as a producer is an advocate to try and get them the resources, the knowledge and whatnot that they need to make their work as good as it can be, and as dynamic as it can be. So I think it's really interesting to have the artist dictate the process and you almost hold the artist to that process, as a good friend, as a...

Sue Hunt [Sydney Opera House]: I think that's right. And it's about establishing that partnership in the first instance, that notion of we're actually all in this together, and this is something that we want to help you to make real, and so that you take a partnership approach. But I think it's also sometimes harder for an arts centre to understand what it's role as a creative organisation is and for people who are going to work with that arts centre say, 'Well, you've just got the money and you've got the facilities and you've come and asked us to do this so..' it's actually exploring and having that conversation as much as it is about anything else. It's about.. because I think it is an important thing for the future because we do have all of those resources and in falling government funding and all of those kinds of things there is a real role for us to play.

So it's about having that conversation, 'You haven't always seen us like this, but now you can see us like this.' And about being respectful in that conversation, exactly as Lane was saying.

David Pledger [nyid]: Okay, unfortunately I've been given the last windup but there are a number of questions that are still on the floor so if the panel are okay about it, then you can approach them at some stage and ask them the question that you haven't been able to ask here.

Thanks very much for coming today, and see you next time.

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