

8TH AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET

25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ADELAIDE BANK FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND THE ADELAIDE FRINGE



EDITED TRANSCRIPT

Forum 3: Arts in the Asian Region and the Australian Connection

*Tuesday 26 February, 1630-1730, 2008
Piano Bar, Adelaide Festival Centre*

FACILITATOR

Douglas Gautier, CEO & Artistic Director, Adelaide Festival Centre

SPEAKERS

S Kyu Choi, *Deputy Artistic Director/Director*, Chuncheon International Mime Festival/AsiaNow

Rosie Hinde, *Managing Director*, Hirano Productions

William Wong, *Chief Executive Officer*, Suzhou Science and Cultural Arts Centre

Nick Rongjun Yu, *Playwright/Producer/Director of Programming and Festival*, Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center

Douglas Gautier: Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to Forum 3. My name is Douglas Gautier from the Adelaide Festival Centre. The topic is Arts in the Asian Region and the Australian Connection and we are joined by some distinguished panellists.

From my left: Nick Yu, Playwright/ Producer/ Director of Programming at the Festival, Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center; Rosie Hinde, Managing Director, Hirano Productions. To my right: William Wong, CEO of the Suzhou Science and Cultural Arts Centre; and on my far right, S Kyu Choi, Deputy Artistic Director and Director of the Chuncheon International Mime Festival/AsiaNow. So would you please welcome them.

[Applause]

I thought I might just begin with a few opening remarks and then what we'll do is we'll hear from each of the speakers for about five minutes, and I've asked them, from my left through to my right to address the topic for five minutes each. And then I think we'll take questions at the end of that so we hear all the ideas and contribution from the table. And then we'll be very interested in your views or questions or comments from the floor.

It's an area in terms of Australia with Asia, or in Asia that many of us feel quite passionately about. And certainly, I think many of us feel that engagement, proper engagement with our region is a priority, a challenge, but also a great opportunity. And in some respects it's also a necessity because like it or no, it is our neck of the woods.

I think many of us also marvel at what has been happening in that region not only economically of course, but from a cultural point of view. In the last 20 or 30 years we've seen an explosion in the performing arts, great activity, an intensity of work and initiatives not only from artist-based level creations, but also on an institutional basis in terms of new venues, touring networks, government initiatives, all sorts of things which have really been quite remarkable.

And what we've also seen is tremendous new confidence in the cultural integrity and traditions of those countries and the region as a whole. And I think in the last 20 years particularly too, almost the Western influences has become less relevant perhaps - it's just a personal view - and not only do these cultures

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have many thousands of years of history to draw on in a very rich way, but these cultures are being reinterpreted for contemporary use and in very vigorous, interesting ways which break generic bounds, at least from a Western point of view.

And, indeed, I think we're also seeing some interesting sort of reverse flow. I know, having run cultural institutions in Asia that often one was on the end of an endless bombardment from artists' agents and organisations from the West to take work, of course all well-received, but of course the reverse flow was just a trickle, from Asia to the West. But I think that is beginning to be addressed and we are seeing some wonderful performances and interesting things happening in the West from this part of the world. But also, importantly, I think within the region we're seeing cooperative ventures where there is a lot of Asia to Asia.

So, I think, indeed, if you look at the list of delegates to APAM, this year, there are many countries from around the region and I guess it would probably not have been that richly attended by our friends from the region even 10 years ago. So, that's a real plus and I think it signals a shift in dynamics, not only in this market but in terms of our engagement with the region.

What's good here today I guess is that we have people who are from the festival side, from the venues side from two very big movers in what's happening in Asia, China obviously but Korea.

And I think Korea really has been remarkable in the way it has in the last 10 years marketed its very wonderful and vibrant culture. We can see institutionally that the Korean government and the Korean arts community has just really got their act together and taken it on the road. There's no question about that and what marvellous things we've seen.

And equally, China, a massive amount of venue building, creative work, companies coming together which I think we all find extremely interesting.

So, we have those people from Korea and China and also Rosie Hinde who has, like a number of distinguished Australians in the arts industry, has really made a career of engaging with arts organisations and artists across the region.

So, it's a good representation today and I think we should get some interesting opinions about what is a very broad topic. Now, some of the things that I threw at the panellists were questions for them to consider and perhaps deal with, were things like:

- Is there are a sense of Asian cultural identity emerging in the Asia-Pacific century or is it still national cultures that are dominant?;
- What are going to be the key to cultural developments in China and Korea over the next 20 years and how will they affect Australia, if at all?
- Do you see more Asian performing arts work being exported to the West and will be a growing trend?
- What about touring networks within Asia and Asia-Pacific?
- What is the overall visibility of Australian performing arts in Asia or, specifically, in your country?
- Is Australian culture or performing arts regarded essentially as Western culture or is something different from that of Europe or America?
- Culturally is Australia, in your opinion, part of Asia or could or should it be?
- Which are the areas of most fruitful cooperation and what are the barriers and opportunity?

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So I think you get a sense of the kind of areas we want to tackle but suffice to say that is not the end of it. I'm sure you all have plenty of views or questions or interest in this so, once we get to question time, please put in your two cents' worth.

Okay, so what we are going to do is hear from each of our speakers, and I would reiterate speakers just five minutes please, so we can move through it fairly quickly. I'm sure they will be very pithy five minutes so Nick, we'll kick off with you, if we could. Thank you.

Nick Rongjun Yu: I'm from Shanghai, from Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre. I remember the first time I attended the Arts Market like this I was in Edinburgh. This was almost 18 years ago. Why I wanted to attend it was because I managed venues in Shanghai but in almost one year I had nobody come here and no performance from abroad to come to our theatre.

At that time in China, just several agencies involving the government had the right to do this kind of things. We had no private companies. We have no private for dance, for music, for theatre. That is we are closed, we are not open. At that time I was supported by the British Consul so I had a chance to [unclear] work from Edinburgh. I started to know how big it was, arts marketing everywhere.

From that time I tried to talk to people to invite people to come to China, to tell them I have three venues, we have a very poor audience and we want to do some new things.

That is several years ago but now, in my theatre, we have three venues and each year we run around 20 to 30 projects from abroad. And we have around 700 performances each year. Last year our box office was two times that of 2006. You can see what happened because in China, for the marketing to start it's become huge and huge.

Last year for our theatre we had 14 plays to tour China. And also we had seven plays to go to other sites and also we had seven plays that were co-production from other companies abroad. We have from Canada, from UK, from Singapore, United States, from Japan. We do lots of things.

And not just in Shanghai. In Beijing they also have the productions like this.

Doug has asked me the question about the huge promotion for Asian culture outside. From my experience that happened also from Korea, from Japan, maybe Hong Kong and Taipei but from mainland China it's not too much.

And also I met many producers from international, and they don't know how to go to China, how to talk with the Chinese people, how to find the way to cooperation with the Chinese producer of venues, as Doug Gautier just said.

In fact in China, the big cities, the capital cities all have the Grand Theatre. They have the good venues, the good technicians but have no program so we really need these kind of things from abroad to go to China.

I think if you want to see where is the marketing you could always see the producer from the West End, from Broadway. If they go to China maybe soon they will have something happen, follow them.

In fact, for example, in Shanghai, for the Grand Theatre, in the past five years, each year they would do a big musical – Phantom of the Opera or Cats or something, always more than 100 performances, easy.

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25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

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But you will see, we have the audience. For our theatre, our audience is really young. The age is really young. Most of them is under 20, 25, something like that. They have the education. They want to watch new things but if you give the new thing to them it's really difficult because they're used to watching the classical things.

I have a friend from Beijing and he just fixed to invite the classic ballet from Russia, from the national ballet to the city, to the country, many kind of ballets, they just to show the Swan Lake. It will be easy to get the audience to go to see whatever kind of ballet.

But if you do the new works it is very difficult. For the theatres I think at the present.

And also government does not really understand how to support the new artist for the new project. If you commission something, and some things are easier to get support. For example for the Shanghai Grand Theatre they hosted Cats in Shanghai, they even got support from the Government.

But for our theatre, for me I run a small festival, Asia Contemporary Centre Festival each year, I get nothing from the government. I must get the money by myself. We just have the venues so we try to do that.

But I think we need to wait, step by step to get the government to understand us and then we can get a lot of things happening. I think some of you have been to China and you have experience, maybe much better than me, and first you need to make friends with China's people and then business.

Douglas Gautier: All right Nick. Well, that's a good start for sure. Okay, Rosie, you've invested a lot of time and career in Asia. You've spent time in Hong Kong and in Japan and Korea so what's your response to this topic.

Rosemary Hinde: First of all, thanks for giving those questions because they gave me some sort of thoughts and there's some I'd like to respond to and one is, is there an Asian identity or is there only differences.

And I for me there is only differences and I'm reminded of this conversation I had with this woman who works for UNESCO and she asked me what I did and I said, 'I tour Australian arts company in Asia and blah blah blah..' all the things that I do. And she said, 'Where do you go? And I said, 'You know, Korea, Japan, Shanghai', wherever I was going that year. And she looked at me blankly and said, 'Oh, we work in Asia a lot but we never go to those places. We go to Bangladesh, Laos, Cambodia, East Timor.'

So I think the first major difference that strikes you with Asia is there's a massive economic difference within Asia. And when we think about Asia in terms of touring the performing arts we're talking about a section of Asia really.

I think also within many of the countries we're talking about, particularly China because it's so huge, there are enormous differences between the big cities and regional towns and villages in those countries, in terms of income and audience, because obviously if people don't have money they can't buy tickets to shows.

So I think in some ways in Korea and Japan it strikes me there has been a kind of government intervention at the level of local government that has facilitated the input of arts into regional cities and towns. And local government in Korea and Japan can be quite important in supporting quite progressive festivals in country towns.

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And there are some people in this market – Kyu is one, who runs a festival outside a major city. There's also Kondo san from Kanazawa, who works in a regional city, and Fujito san from Kotchi in Japan, which are both regional places outside capital cities that have significant investment from local governments.

But those things are quite inconsistent and often based on the particular whims of the local mayor or the regional governor. I think one of the key cultural developments that I've noticed just in the time I've worked in Asia is while there is a lot of difference, there's an increasing intraregional touring and exchange.

So it strikes me that in the last ten years that's really on the rise so that you have projects like at breakfast this morning, Mr Kim from the Seoul Performing Arts Festival mentioned the Korea China Japan dance exchange project. And there seem to be a lot of projects where Asia is in fact touring and networking amongst itself.

Some of those projects Australia can interact with and move into but I think it's kind of a difficult question for us of where do we fit in relation to those things.

The question about is more Asian performing arts work coming to the West? I think it's inevitable because I think cultural dissemination follows economic power and it seems to me inevitable that more Asian performing arts work will tour Western countries, and I certainly see that in the structure of European festivals and American festivals, less so in Australia.

There's been an incremental shift in Australia. I actually think it's gone backwards a bit in the last ten years. And that in the early 90s there was a lot more Asian work came to Australia.

So there's a fair bit of bridge building to do because I also think the export of Australian work - and I should say here I'm not talking about commercial entertainment, because I think that's a whole different market and yes, you can do Cats in China or anywhere right. I'm talking about contemporary Australian work, really.

I think for the flow out to continue there has to be a greater flow in of Asian product. I think it has to be a reciprocal process so I think it's not only that I've spent a lot of my time touring Australian shows within Asia. I've also, as part of that deal, had to look at ways of bringing them in because not enough of that has been happening.

Some of the things I'd also like to look at are quite practical things to do with are there touring networks in Asia? Well, there are certainly very many networks of people in Asia who collaborate and exchange ideas and exchange programs

I think the idea of a touring circuit in the way we're kind of unconsciously informed by the European touring circuit where you get a shengen visa, you go into the EU on one visa, you move your freight around in a truck and it's all quite straightforward in a way.

Asia is not like that. Partly because of the concentration of audiences and economic capacity mostly in the larger cities, to move a company of say 20 people with substantial freight from say Shanghai to Seoul is actually quite an expensive exercise. It's the layoff of the company and paying them and it's the cost of air-freighting the freight. So the circuit is not so simple.

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And it certainly is not all like the European circuit partly because there is a greater inconsistency of capacity to actually buy in shows.

I think within individual countries and within larger countries like say Japan, Korea and China, what is developing is the capacity to tour within those countries which is in fact much less costly and much easier, because you're not changing countries, you're not changing visas, you're not having to export and re-import your freight. And I think that is happening in China. It's happening in Korea and to some extent it's always been difficult to do in Japan but I think it will improve as audiences improve in regional Japan.

So those factors are kind of prohibitive to touring within Asia, and I think that's combined with the fact that I do think the differences between the countries, in terms of tastes and what audiences want, are much greater than the differences between audience tastes in European countries.

A third kind of barrier, I guess, is I think festivals have traditionally been an access point for non-commercial work. They are here, they are in Europe and they are in Asia too. Unfortunately, most of the well-funded festivals in Asia, their dates are nowhere near each other. Hong Kong's February, Singapore's May, Seoul's October, a bit of a connection there with Shanghai I guess. But it's not like a circuit of festivals in that way. There are many other festivals within that kind of circuit but they don't have the same capacity to pay. They're not the same size I guess. So, that's another barrier.

I think probably the most important barrier, and this relates Douglas's question about the overall visibility of Australian performing arts, is that I always feel there's a kind of confusion when I talk to Asian presenters about where Australian cultural identity sits. And basically, while I think it's changed to some extent, or I wouldn't still be doing what I'm doing, and certainly when I started doing it, it just seemed impenetrable, was this strong sense that Australian work was really just kind of second rate European work, and actually, if they wanted to get something that was branded, that was prestigious and that they could sell to their audience more easily, they would rather go to Europe. They would rather buy French dance because it's got a stronger branded connection to them.

And I think we still absolutely suffer from that kind of market barrier that has not really been very successfully solved. I think in non-prestige product, I think in popular outdoor entertainment and stuff like that Australia can do very well because it's not dependent on brand. And it's certainly not dependent on nationality branding.

I think also a lot is made – and I don't disagree with it because obviously the change has been massive within Asia, and sometimes I just get off the plane in Singapore and think, 'God, the first time I came here 25 years ago it was like another planet.' So I think all that is true and the economy goes 'Wham' and the entertainment market goes 'Wham', but I actually think cultural change happens much more incrementally and much more slowly everywhere, and particularly in Asia. Well, not particularly in Asia. I think it happens much more incrementally and much more slowly in general. Because that's not connected with brands. It's not connected with landing products, it's really connected with an audience understanding.

Now I think possibly one way out of that is actually, ironically, globalisation and that as audiences have more access and information about other places in the world their understanding of contemporary product may actually increase which may expand the audience for it and encourage a greater diversification as opposed to just totally branded products.

That's my hope. That will do.

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Douglas Gautier: You sure? Thank you very much for that Rosie. Some interesting food for thought there.

William Wong runs one of these new venues in China and previously from Hong Kong but now well ensconced in Suzhou, and so William, over to you.

William Wong: Right, thank you. Everybody looks at my name tag and the first question they always have is, 'Where is Suzhou?' Right, it's 100 miles west of Shanghai, one hour's drive on a superhighway. It's one of the oldest cities in China, 2,500 year so inhabitants continued. It's one of the richest regions in China so now that they have got so much foreign direct investments into what we call the Suzhou Industrial Park, as joint venture of Singapore and China. They decided to build a theatre. And after that they think they should have someone to run it. So here I am.

But that also is, continuing on Rosie's theme, is what is happening in China: you have lots of new buildings. They are part of social planning, shall we say, because after your economic level reaches a certain plateau you need to have rubbish treating facilities, sewage treatment facilities, and a concert hall. Recently, if the liberalisation continue on they might decide even to have churches and temples. It's true. We just built a new temple.

So, economics, money, so then goes on to entertainment and culture. Confucius say when you are well fed and well clothed you want to know about honour and you want to be entertained: not exactly in that order but...

So, we began to program for a new centre. We began to look at the markets for which there was no previous research. So I asked our local party secretaries, 'What's the market like?' 'I don't know. You go and find out. You are the experts.'

So, we are now programming in every direction, sometimes we say haphazardly. We've programmed Chinese programs. We even bought a few programs from Nick. We do international programs, orchestras, dance, ballet, every which way. Old programs, new programs, and we get occasional awkward questions like, when we have one of Nick's programs over, my financial controller says, 'Why do they only have five actors?' They are used to 300 persons on stage, variety shows. You can't exactly see what everybody is doing but they like the numbers.

And when we had flamenco dancers for one of our opening programs my financial controller asked me, 'Why aren't they bringing any sets?' I said, 'They don't need sets. They just dance.' 'Oh, maybe we should deduct some money from them.' I'm not kidding.

So, I'm staying away from contemporary dance at the moment. But again I suppose you would say we've come to Australia, we know this physical theatre, we know that the emphasis at APAM is on physical theatre, is contemporary dance, something at which Australia excels.

I took some of my junior staff with me and I said, 'Australian wine and French wine is exactly like European performances and Australian performances. The Australians are sometimes much better but unfortunately they are Australian. So people tend to buy the bad French wine and not the good Australian wine because it's easier to sell.' But it looks like the Australian Ballet is making its way into China much better now, instead of some very strange Siberian companies.

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8TH AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET

25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ADELAIDE BANK FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND THE ADELAIDE FRINGE



So that's the way it is with China. They've got money. They want to succeed, they want to be in touch with the world. In the Chinese idiom, we want to be linked, as a railway, internationally. They just don't know where that road leads to.

And with Chinese performance and cultural developments I find that things are changing every day. Today you are not allowed to do certain things. Tomorrow you might be and vice versa. Like I learned for the first time, some two weeks ago, a certain European orchestra is going to the Beijing music festival and they are even allowed to perform The Messiah, which is unthinkable, a year back. But maybe Beijing is thinking of something. Maybe they will build a new church soon.

So again, Australian companies - actually I don't particularly agree with Rosie - Australia has a huge presence in China. All the musicals Nick mentioned, they came from Australia, not from Europe. They may have a British name onto it but they're all Australian singers, dancers, musicians and technicians.

We have a small dance company of our own for a dinner theatre which we plan to show for the entertainment of tourists coming to Suzhou and we had a couple of Australian dancers who are very, very good. And so I think for the Australian connection to China I think the future still looks very optimistic. I like Australian wine.

[Laughter]

But on the other hand you might want to know some of our peculiarities, what our market is like. I talked to a few of your producers here and some of the first question they ask is, 'How do I sell this?' Some of the things, please believe me, are quite unsaleable in China because we haven't got there yet. We do not know your history with the indigenous people and it's not in the school curriculum I'm afraid. We want to present it as a cultural project but maybe slowly and over the years as part of our efforts to promote cultural exchange between the two places.

Like Australia, we want to get out of the shadow of Shanghai. Everybody says 'Oh, you're part of Shanghai. We'll come to you after the Grand Theatre,' and so we want to get out of the shadow of Shanghai just as much as Australian wine wants to get out of the French wine's shadow. And I see you are getting there so I hope we are getting there, eventually.

So would that be about all?

Douglas Gautier: That's exactly five minutes, thank you. Okay Kyu, you follow that.

S Kyu Choi: William's talk reminded me of something: when we started first, this is ten years ago, this is the first time we were supported by the city, so they gave money for developing some program. So the first question was numbers: how many people from international companies? And secondly: what kind of brand name? Was it French or British or American company. So I said, 'I invited also Mongolia.' And they said 'Why Mongolia?'

And so a kind of big barrier in terms of cultural development in Asia is hierarchy, bureaucracy, that kind of thing so it's a big barrier to develop cultural development. So we opened with diversity so it was a very interesting talk.

Whenever I meet my friends or colleagues and asked: I'm from Chuncheon, I'm the Deputy Artistic Director with Chuncheon International Mime Festival. People change their face, 'Why mime?' So a lot of

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8TH AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET

25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ADELAIDE BANK FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND THE ADELAIDE FRINGE



people have stereotypes about mime, kind of Marcel Marceau or Étienne Decroux: only this, white face. So, they ask me, 'Do you mime?' 'Yes I do'.

Chunchoen International Mime Festival is not typical clown and mime. It's not that kind of thing. It started in 1989. When we started as an alternative theatre because people who started to mime wanted to find something new, not kind of text driven theatre, not typical dance.

I joined in 1994. Since then it became international mime festival, also I changed the direction a little bit into physical theatre, street theatre, site specific works. These days I'm in a new circus and also multidisciplinary art.

So basically the main concept is where body movement, image and space create new theatrical experiences rather than typical text based theatre and dance and those kind of things.

And also now what I'm doing is Asia Now is a kind of production company to develop new theatre and a contemporary and a dance production. So that's my own festival background.

Regarding today's topic, Arts in the Asian Regions and the Australian connection. Because as a practitioner what I'm interested in and why I'm here, this is my third time in Australia. The first time I came here for the Arts Market 2006, I found something very interesting in things.

Because my background is physical theatre, kind of street theatre, that kind of thing, Australia has great things and is strong with physical theatre and dance and also art and technology. Those kinds of things for me is very interesting.

I think in 1995 in Korea a local [unclear] system started. So a number of performing art festivals started and a lot of infrastructure. For example I mean a local arts centre and also in Seoul there are many arts centres built.

But these days I meet producers who are directors and presenters struggling with what kind of content we're going to have. So I think Australia and Asia connections are strong physical theatre and a new circus, that kind of dance, really, can be market, can be collaborating part. So that I find as a great connection.

Second things are I say that I'm a producer because festivals are growing up and when we started we had a two days festival with eight artists, now it's a ten day festival. So I'm struggling programming because all the time same artist, same performance so I can't do any kind of audience development.

So in terms of audience development I've found very interesting things from Australian side. The kind of community program and also the audience engaging with artists kind of program is very strong in Australia. So that's the second thing I became very interested in.

And again in developing content: I've been to Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide to meet some art centre directors on how they develop new works of arts. So, there are many artists development programs. So that's the third thing in terms of connection is how arts manager, art director, can have a conference, have discussions of how you develop your artists in your country.

Because the reason why I created Asia Now. Asia Now is a production company supporting, producing physical theatre and contemporary dance. Since I studied in London in a theatre school I decided, 'Okay', created this company,' because the infrastructure for a performing arts festival is there a lot but

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we can't find a very interesting program as well as audience development program. So that's why I created Asia Now.

So, the third thing in terms of Asia and the Australian connection is artistic development program, such as in ArtsHouse they produce a lot of work supporting artists, and also the ArtsHouse they have a very interesting culture lab. They have a strong networking within festivals, supporting each other so I was interested in those programs. So connection again, the third one. That will be very interesting.

The last one is again is we need content so internationally collaborating work is very, not popular, is a kind of starting point. So a funding body like Art Council Korea and also Korea Foundation and the others, they want to make international collaborating works so starting artists' residency program and also making international tour programs.

So I found that very interesting what kind of connection I can find as a collaborating between Australian and Korean artists. So also my project into 2010 is a Korean theatre company which I produce and a Korean [unclear] making new production here in Australia.

So those kind of forward things in terms of connection between Korea and Australia will be very interesting.

The other things, what Douglas mentioned, I think we can discuss about. That's my findings while I was at APAM and also in Australia.

Douglas Gautier: Thank you for that panellists, a wide range of views and experiences there. Questions from the floor. I know a number of you have lived in Asia. Over here? Yes.

Floor: I'm from the Philippines and definitely we feel, specially within Asia that ASEAN solidarity is very important now in creating a face for the south east Asian region. And we have done collaboration among the other ASEAN countries and results are dynamic.

When we wanted to have a third world festival because we felt everything was Eurobased and nobody knew anything about the Philippines because I'm chinky-eyed, they thought I was Chinese or Korean and it was important to have some sort of identity.

When we did this in the International Theatre Institute the most exciting thing that came out was a cultural collaboration between the Chinese, Korean and the Filipinos.

We did a Korean play, put it in our language and, because we have so many ethnic Chinese communities in the Philippines we utilised the martial arts traditions of China. And working together, mixing it with our own traditional rhythms, created something that was beyond what was expected by foreigners, meaning to say Europeans and North Americans, and it brought a whole lot of focus to the importance of Asian arts.

For us, in the Philippines, our connection is basically linking to the Aborigines. Historically we have a lot of Filipinos who have come here and who have intermarried Aborigines. And at the same time we have 110 indigenous communities who are unknown to the general community.

So, we used the presentation of bringing in an Aborigine to be part of our global indigenous cultural Olympics and it created a tremendous connection for all of our indigenous communities.

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I think the linkage or the commonality can be a real basis, especially in trying to find ancestral connections, by using an indigenous heritage base collaboration between Australia and the Asian region.

Then I would say that we have been trying to get a Chinese expert to teach our street kids to develop a street kids circus company because we heard how China sent somebody and did the Flying Fruit Circus Company. So round about if we can't get it from China we'll get it from the Flying Fruit Circus.

So there is a way of creating a cultural highway between the Asian region and Australia which is a subcontinent. In order to work this out.. but I'd like to focus on what our Chinese producer director said because I was in China when there were only about five Peking operas ,during Mao Tse Tung's time, the cultural revolution.

And now we see the diversity that has been opened up including within China and bringing in influences everywhere. But I honestly believe that if we really work out collaboration, not just in performance but also in media arts where we connect communications technology from animation of folk tales.

If we only knew all of the major folk tales or epics of every Asian country to animation instead of Mutt and Jeff when we grew up, with the cartoons, then I think very early on you would have a real appreciation and understanding and a synergy within the Australasian region.

Douglas Gauthier: Thank you for that. I think you're absolutely right and certainly, even though we're representing North Asia very much up here, South East Asia and our closer neighbours are very important as part of this.

And often I think the connections are really much more informal, or less formalised in many respects, and so sometimes it makes it not as obvious - I won't say harder but not as obvious - but certainly something we shouldn't neglect.

So thank you for that, some good comments.

Anybody else? Yes. Please.

Floor: My question is to the whole panel really and it's something that everybody's touched on a little bit, just in terms of how things sell throughout the countries, especially that the panel are representing - China and Korea - and I suppose the more regional centres I guess.

Everybody's touched on the aspect of prestige as what is selling in these new emerging markets for us for western entertainment. And my question would be where do you see the market develop going in terms of what is actually interesting audiences as the moment as opposed to what we might be interested in touring or programming. What are audiences actually responding to?

Nick Rongjun Yu: First about the audience, I just advise something. First of all for the theatre, in China, the most audience is young audience. For most of them it's the first time they go to the theatre. If you give them some they will. They will watch some. They don't know what is contemporary or classic but they know they go to the theatre. They want to have a story. They want to have the classic scenes. They don't want to really experiment or they can't understand. They will refuse.

For the dance I think modern dance is very difficult to promote in China. I think in Beijing and Shanghai and Guangdong just the three places they have the audience. For example in Guangdong they have the

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8TH AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET

25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ADELAIDE BANK FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND THE ADELAIDE FRINGE



Guangdong Modern Dance and the Beijing Modern Dance. They do a lot of work but most of their focus is outside, not audiences in China. So, if you want to bring the dance to China, the modern dance is really difficult.

But in Shanghai things have changes in the past two or three years. More and more young people they try to go to the theatre and watch the modern dance, even for the modern ballet, the other things, the multi things. So it could work but you need to promote very hard to find an audience.

For the music I think if the famous company, specially from Europe, from Australia, even a small company, it can find an audience. But the more classical music is very difficult.

I just now say about networks: in fact in China we have a lot of networks, the arts market in fact, in the Spring and the Autumn. But I think they also have around 500 or 600 people attend that. They're like a private party. If you wanted to enter it I think now it would be very difficult. They know, they want to have the production from abroad but they do not know how to compact with you, how to talk with you.

But I think the time has changed, and it's the kind of thing that ought to change. I really wish next time in China, when we have this kind of party we have international people attending that. I think the first kind of these people they must get a big audience because the market needs to get hit and hit now.

William Wong: I want to add a bit to Nick's answer. It gets back to economics.

I believe you have this in every country there is a class of audience that goes to operas, or the musicals – pay big bucks for big tickets. And there are the black box theatre audiences. There is the same split in China or rather gradation of levels.

So if you bring in a big group with top names, even though they are doing experimental work, you have to sell at a certain price level and beyond and you get the audience that is coming in ready to see a spectacle they can understand and enjoy and not something they have to think about.

There is, even in China, itself a lot of producers, a lot of groups who produce experimental works, new works that feeds to the domestic market and they are very successful with it. But there comes the question of costs if we bring in a group from overseas, all the logistics costs, artists' fees, hotels and accommodations. All that adds up to quite a lot of money and we are forced to bring the ticket price up.

They would then compare, 'This is what you see for \$100 in the smaller theatres. Maybe these promoters are not very honest.' There is that problem.

Douglas Gautier: Kyu, any thoughts?

S Kyu Choi: I think every country will be the same whether it's music or ballet, kind of big name productions, and all the same in every country.

But in terms of my background in physical theatre or street theatre, kind of experimental theatre works and the dance works. Basically it's not a big market so how to approach it is...

Each festival has different mission statements like international performing arts provide a program like Lucy Gillan or can be Chunky Move, a lot of well known production can go. So like physical theatre still there is more possibility in Korea. And also a lot of festivals or art centres now are driven by government money, so they want to put out there and also audience participating community program.

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS PRESENTS THE

8TH AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET

25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ADELAIDE BANK FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND THE ADELAIDE FRINGE



So Australian productions, if your production is not family oriented or something like exciting entertainment it's a little bit difficult. But the best way, the market is a performing art festival and also kind of arts centre community program, there's a big market I think.

Again, but I talk about collaborating works. Korean artists are very interested in work with different artists, joining. So that's long term development with each other. So you can make a different program.

And also when I program in our product oriented production and also process oriented productions, it's different because I'm very interested in experimental new work so even though we cannot be a market we support commissioning work and artist development program which is in a 50, 60 studio places or 200 small venues.

That's even though we cannot yet see the quality product we still are enjoying the process. That's cultural exchange or artistic exchange can be a big market I think even though you can't make big money.

Douglas Gautier: Thank you. I'm getting the wind up here so probably just one more question. Okay. One more question? Yes.

Floor: I'm Jill Morgan, Multicultural Arts Victoria. I'm very interested in points of connection. We have many Asian Australian artists here in Victoria, Adelaide and Perth. And those connections I think are really interesting because I know the Asian artists that we work with here are very interested to work collaboratively and that cultural connection I think is really interesting. I'd like to hear your point of view about that Australian Asian arts working with Korean artists or Chinese artists.

Because I think that artistic connection – we've got the government connection – but I think many of our artists can make great inroads in and establish those networks, informal networks as well.

S Kyu Choi: Arts Council Korea was a government organisation, it became independent. Since then they are very interested in an artist development program. So how? They started artists residential programs. I think dance is a little bit easier than theatre and the other parts.

So as a practitioner, and when we had an artists residential program, it's something we find a very difficult one. First, Koreans are not very good at collaborating because of the way of thinking based on Confucianism so there is a hierarchy. And they are director driven, so the director decides everything.

So artists are not very independent. He doesn't shout, 'This is what I want.' So it was a bit collaborating. So that's kind of difficult is what I've found.

And the funding side expected a great outcome. It tried to meet audience but the audience were not happy. So what kind of mission when we collaborated, or residence program when we had it, we had to find it.

So, the money side and artist side, and also producer side are very different. So, you have to classify what do you want. What you want, what I want. That kind of thing.

And also the third one is cultural differences. Douglas mentioned is there any Asian identification..

Douglas Gautier: Cultural identity..

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS PRESENTS THE

8TH AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET

25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ADELAIDE BANK FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND THE ADELAIDE FRINGE



S Kyu Choi: Diaspora. In terms of Chinese Diaspora, yes, because you use Chinese character. Japanese use something like that. Chinese Diaspora we use but really it's a very national identity.

So when we work with different artists within, Asian artists, still there are very cultural differences. So those kind of things, how do we overcome when we collaborate with each other.

Does that answer what you want?

Floor: I'm interested in the Diaspora in relation to the huge Asian population in Australia and that Asian identity. I guess there will be differences but there might be connections.

S Kyu Choi: I produced *Midsummer Night's Dream*. We performed here in Adelaide Festival Centre, Sydney and Perth and we toured a lot in Europe in the country, Australia and Singapore – Singapore we will be - Hong Kong, Taipei.

I found some interesting things in terms of a Chinese Diaspora. When we performed in European countries, or western country, they were very interested in something Asiatic, different movement, different Asiatic, different fairytale story.

Hong Kong is different. Hong Kong is a lot of western people, so it's a similar cultural concept they have but I found it interesting when we performed in Taipei. We adapted in Korean script so we used for *Lysander, Dimitri*, we used Chinese characters using stars – Eastern Star, Northern Star, something like that.

They understand. That is their kind of culture and also they understood the emotional feeling rather than something the other western people appreciated.

So in terms of the cultural Diaspora it works well, I think. So I can't say which but within Asian people there is a great cultural connections.

Douglas Gautier: I think maybe you could follow that discussion afterwards. There's a lot of potential there I think, an artist to artist basis.

I am really getting the wrap up here now quite dramatically. So, actually I think we could have gone on for a long time discussing this. We think this is a very important area at the Adelaide Festival Centre. As many of you know we began the OzAsia Festival last year. We will continue that on an annual basis.

It's open slather. We are looking for collaborations right across the board and our main accent is on contemporary work, collaborations between Asian artists and Australian artists. So with all your combined talents here, if you've got any thoughts, ideas, contributions, we're open for business. We really think it's an important area for this country to be involved in and so we're planning strongly for the future of that OzAsia Festival.

So, do put your two cents' worth in. The Executive Producer is over there, Jacinta Thompson. She is open to it all and happy to discuss.

Thank you for your time and coming today. Will you please thank the panellists.

Time for some Australian wine, William.

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25 - 29 FEBRUARY 2008 ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

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[Applause]