

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 5: The Producers: Alchemists of the Impossible

*Friday 29 February, 0900-1030, 2008
Piano Bar, Adelaide Festival Centre*

FACILITATOR

Marguerite Pepper, *Managing Director*, Marguerite Pepper Productions

SPEAKERS

David Micklem, *Executive Director*, Battersea Arts Centre BAC

Scott Rankin, *National Creative Director*, Big hART

Marguerite Pepper: Good morning everybody. Thanks for staggering out on the morning of the last day of APAM. It's been a roller coaster ride and quite a wonderful one. Thanks to Ian and the APAM team for including us on the agenda.

I'm Marguerite Pepper. I'm an independent producer based in Sydney, Australia. I'm joined at your right by David Micklem from the Battersea Arts Centre, South London, United Kingdom and on your left, Scott Rankin from Big hArt, Tasmania, Australia.

My brief today from my colleagues is to be chair bitch and I'll do my best to honour this role. I just want to give a short introduction though to set the tone and then allow David and Scott to deliver their responses.

We're here from all levels of the industry from those who produce, those who wish to produce, those who think they can produce and those who want to produce. So, this is a critical discussion because it's about the voice – for me - and vision of the independent artist and indeed community, and that this voice is nurtured and supported in the creation of their work and the sustaining of their practice.

I do not deny there are many individuals with producing skills that are sustained financially within the framework of a subsidised organisation but let's get to the nitty gritty.

A producer is someone who takes financial risk and harnesses the ideas and creativity of an artist or community to deliver an outcome, perhaps what they imagined could not be possible.

There is no model. These explosive connections between an artist and a producer happen for many, many, many reasons. We all come at our craft with different values, different aesthetics, differing abilities to deliver across a myriad of approaches and platforms.

But what binds us together is a passion and commitment to work outside of the square and build trust, both with the artist but also with the network that we hope may support us on a particular journey.

To David: I first met David here in Adelaide at APAM when he was with the Arts Council of Great Britain. David leads the UK delegation building an engagement with Australian artists and companies and indeed has left a legacy behind. He's now Executive Director of the Battersea Arts Centre of South London, as I said, and as I hear on the grapevine about to become co-artistic director.

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David is co-publisher of *The Producers: Alchemists of the Impossible*. This publication is available and downloadable free – don't let him sell one to you - on the web.

This book was a revelation for me. I've never really been able to or indeed really wanted to articulate what I do. Why? Because it's instinctive, it's responsive, it happens in a myriad of ways, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. Here is a publication that celebrates and acknowledges our role as key players in the creation and delivery of ideas.

As author Kate Tyndall, with such clarity, says:

Producers are often highly instinctual in their decision-making, combining great flexibility with unswerving fixity of purpose, and opportunism with a strong sense of direction.

Temperamentally they are able to take the lead in action and decision-making, and to facilitate others, often in complex patterns of partnership. They are brilliant at devising and building teams, and in understanding what structures to create and why. They are bold and creative entrepreneurially, and have the judgement, nerve and inner reserves to take considerable commercial, artistic and financial risk. They have to match the courage, risk taking and vision of the artists with whom they work.

But it's tough building a career as a producer in the arts here in the UK - read Australia.

The different stories [in this book] portray how long it takes to develop and reach full capability, and how - when your currency is people - the timescale is the real sweep and flow of their lives: the cycles of creativity in conceiving and realising an idea, the risk of burning out if an individual is over-exposed, the need to regroup and replenish, the need to learn, the need for a change.

I was particularly moved by that statement because there is an enormous burnout level to this role and there is never any time to regroup and think and learn.

Equally, it's about the gradual building of confidence and knowledge, the sheer impact of a sustained achievement over time, the routes and timescales towards maturity - by no means a linear progression. These stories play out over ten, twenty, thirty years, and their value resides in the full picture along the way.

She defines the producer as 'long-term collaborators, as initiator of projects and ideas, as organisational leader, producer as fast-moving independent, as cultural and social activist, as entrepreneur and business brain, as innovator, facilitator and support, and a guru empowering others.' These are personal, mutable ways of working that emerge through the stories of this extraordinary publication.

Mr Micklam.

David Micklem: Thank you, and good morning. And thank you all for coming. It's the graveyard slot. It's Friday morning at 9 o'clock, APAM and I know that that's a really difficult time for people to get out of bed so I appreciate you all coming today.

I'm going to start off by asking you to close your eyes for a moment but don't fall asleep. I want you to think about a piece of art, something extraordinary, something that's maybe changed the way you view the world, maybe the best thing that you've ever seen.

I'm prepared to bet that pretty much every example that you're thinking of will have a producer somewhere at the heart of that work. That there's someone who forges the link between the artist and the audience, that channels the necessary resources to bring out the best of that artist's work. Now

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that's not to undermine the fundamental role of the artist. It's just to say that working with a producer is likely to maximise the potential of their work, or bring it to a new context or new audience.

And think again now about the performing arts companies or the artists or the buildings or the festivals that are really thriving, either here or in the countries in which you're working. Again, I'd be surprised if this dynamism isn't being driven by a producing figure.

They may call themselves a director or a manager or a curator but I would argue there are a small number of producers who are genuinely delivering here and overseas.

And just think for one moment more about your area of art form practice, whether that be theatre or dance or music or circus or outdoor performance, or media arts or whatever. I'll bet that in most cases there are just a small handful of producers who are driving art form development, who are really making a difference, who in conjunction with the artists are changing the face of the arts.

I know that most of you know all that anyway so I was just going to spend about ten to fifteen minutes talking about why, if we agree that that role is important, producers in the performing arts are still struggling to maintain a career.

If the role of the producer is key to unlocking the complex relationship between artists and audiences why does the role continued to go insufficiently recognised. I want to bring the experience I have got working in the UK both as a producer and, for some time, at the Arts Council, to this forum and I'd like to bring my understanding to an Australian context and kickstart some changes in thinking here. And also, I hope it will be a chance to hear from you as well. I'd love to hear from you in just a moment.

First, a bit of background: I worked for the Arts Council for six years until 2007 when I took up my current role at BAC. During this time with the Arts Council I spent a lot of time banging on about the role of the producer and how as a public funder of the arts, the Arts Council needed to be better at supporting these people. I said we needed to be smarter in our partnership with producers and more flexible in our support for individuals.

I worked in the theatre department supporting contemporary performance. I saw clearly from that position that those producers who were able to sustain a career, and there weren't many of them, in the fragile areas of practice were making a huge difference, people working in experimental theatre, people working in circus, outdoor performance. They were just a very small handful of people who were really delivering.

In many areas of fledgling practice a small handful of producers were the infrastructure for that work. In a theatre ecology dominated by big buildings, a few producers were making significant contributions to art form and audience development. And a small number of extraordinary individuals were making a genuinely significant contribution to the arts in the UK.

Again, to quote from the book:

Producers are individuals and organisations who work with artists to make great ideas happen. The producer takes the lead in navigating between a bold vision of an idea and how feasibly and brilliantly to deliver it. Working with the artist the producer works out how to locate the idea and bring it to life in the world of its audience.

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But, in England, the Arts Council was failing these people wherever they were, whether they were working individually or whether they were working within infrastructures.

The Arts Council continued to be focused on artists and institutions and producers didn't seem to fit that model. And consequently across the arts and across the country the Arts Council was failing to recognise the importance of this role. And in failing to be consistent in its approach to producers the Arts Council and the arts in general were losing many of these extraordinary people to other contexts, other careers and other countries. And without changing the way the Arts Council engaged with these people it risked failing to attract a new generation of producers into the arts.

So, my work at the Arts Council was really about beginning a campaign to get producers better recognised. I wanted producers better understood, more flexibly supported and partnered. And as I banged this drum within the context of contemporary performance I began to realise that other areas of artform practice similarly suffered from a lack of recognition of these individuals. So I talked to colleagues working music and dance and new media and electronic and live arts and a whole range of artform practice, and I saw that the same challenges faced each of those areas of practice.

Particularly where the infrastructure was weak, producers seem to me to hold the key to unlocking the potential within artists' practice. But in each of these areas of practice I found that the producer was not being celebrated. Again, the big institutions and the major artists were soaking up the attention and resources of the principal arts funder. So, working with colleagues in England, I began to pilot initiative to test ways of better supporting producers.

In London I created a funding strand that offered individual producers, that's those who are working outside of a funded infrastructure, money for three years. We piloted giving producers just enough money to cover their overheads on the understanding that they could then apply to the Arts Council for project funding. An Arts Council that directed most of its resources to regularly funded organisations began to examine the concept of the regularly funded individual.

The Arts Council made some big investments in little companies, those fleet of operations that had the capacity to really deliver. In areas where the council really wanted to effect change, that's things like outdoor performance, circus, experimental theatre practice, they invested in individuals and small teams that could adopt a more entrepreneurial approach to the development of fragile work.

Artchoke, who have featured in this book, who are a team of three who produced Royal Deluxe's The Sultan's Elephant in London have just been awarded funding of £500,000 a year to deliver new work in the UK. Bill Gee who many of you will know from previous APAMs is now a regularly funded client of the Arts Council, and there are more examples. Colleagues at the Council has begun to take some braver decisions to support producers beyond the usual suspects.

In the UK we set up a Producers Forum which is a loose affiliation of producers working across the arts at all stages of their career, emerging and established producers together. The forum brought together producers working independently and those working within institutions of all sizes. It was a place for debate and conversation. Experiences were exchanged and ideas were promoted. The forum grew and in turn became a powerful lobby back to the Arts Council that had created it. The forum was convened by producers for producers and you might want to consider something similar here.

In tandem with these changes to the way the Arts Council support producers they began to look at how they might raise the profile of this role. And that's how the book came about. Last year with the Jerwood Foundation I published this book, *The Producers: Alchemists Of The Impossible*. I hope some of you

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have seen it. The book celebrates the lives of 14 extraordinary producers working across the arts in the UK and in mainland Europe. It also aims to act as an inspiration to a new generation of cultural entrepreneurs. Our hope that with this book was that it would help in a process where policy priorities include not just a focus on the individual or the artist or institution but the producer as well, whatever structural form that may take.

My view is that in the UK there should be greater producer led infrastructure across the arts and that producing talent should be spotted, nurtured and responded to as much as artistic talent is.

And I'm pleased to say the book is making a real difference in England. Within the arts and beyond the role is being better understood. Recent funding decisions as I have just mentioned have enabled some producers to be supported for the first time. Policy makers are better recognising this role in some big institutions are rethinking how they might structure their leadership, and what a producer might bring to that organisation.

And the book is resonating again not just within theatre but within dance, within music, live, combined arts and also people within TV and film are finding that the book chimes with their businesses and sheds new light on how those structures work.

And other funders in the UK are sitting up and taking note. The Paul Hamlyn Foundation which is a major giver to the arts trust, has recently launched its Breakthrough Fund which is £1.5 million per annum to support producers, both those working independently and those working within institutions. And the Jerwood foundation, the partner on this book, have also begun to put some real resource behind producers at different stages in their career.

The Arts Council is looking again as well at how it supports producers and rethinking a relationship that moves from that of parent/child to one of partnership. Whilst recent announcements of triennial funding in the UK have been overshadowed by a number of cuts many of those entities getting increases or money for the first time are producer led. There is increasing recognition that the priorities of the Arts Council and other funders are best delivered by creative entrepreneurs.

And the book seems to resonate here in Australia too. Through a number of conversations with colleagues at the Australia Council over a number of years we've exchanged thinking about how we better support producers. It would seem there is growing support here for this role. I know John Baylis particularly has been developing and promoting this role in Australia.

But maybe in the UK and here, and elsewhere in the arts, we are doing too little too late. Perhaps there is a continued failure and ambition to support this role. Maybe the gulf between aspiration and delivery is too wide for a publicly accountable funding system to bridge. Perhaps the idea of the inherent power of public subsidy being completely relinquished to a group of producers is still a bridge too far for powerful bureaucracies steeped in history of control and accountability.

It seems in countries with a less established infrastructure for the arts the role is even more important. In Australia for instance without a network of hundreds of touring houses across the country, each in close proximity to each other, the producer's function is potentially even more significant. From conversations this week at APAM it's clear that the debate about the role is as potent here as it is in the UK. Book sales here and in New Zealand are significant and I've had regular contact from producers in Australia asking about models for their support.

But I'm not here to flog books, although you can buy the book.

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[Laughter]

You can also download it for free from the web site which is www.the-producers.org but what I am here to do is help you and us to think about, how collectively as practitioners and colleagues working in the arts, we might better focus on producers, as well as artists and organisations.

We certainly haven't got it right yet in the UK and there are colleagues I can see here from the UK who may well challenge some of the changes that I described and question whether they are happening quickly enough or with sufficient resource. There is still much to be done and although the landscape is changing the philosophical shifts required are seismic. But we are heading in a positive direction and talent is being spotted and supported in ways that I don't think I was five years ago.

A quick warning: in the UK I think we spend too much time focusing on terminology. Too many administrators and arts managers have started to say, 'I'm a producer.' Perhaps some of them are producers, but real producers I think, those with that producing DNA, are rare, and it's hard not to be pejorative here but we kind of know a producer when we see one. We can see it in their eyes, whatever they are called, so don't get too hung up on job titles. Although you can learn the skills of a producer I would argue that these people are born and not made. I get a sense I'm probably sitting next to two of them here but I'll let you decide that in a moment.

So, I wanted to ask whether the issues that I describe from the UK perspective are the same here. From my knowledge of the sector in Australia I would guess the answer is probably yes but I'd love to hear from producers at APAM about your experience.

And I'd like to know what we can do about it. I say we as a sector, we as producers, we the funding system. How can producers be better supported across a career, wherever they work. And how do we create better networks for producers. Would a forum, either physical or online, be useful here and if so, how might that connect with other networks internationally? What are the flexible models of operation that really work for producers here and overseas and how can we get more of these, better supported and grown. What does the Australian performing arts sector need? And how can I help?

So, just to finish up, I think producers are like gold dust. I think every artist and every arts organisation needs at least one. I'd like to leave you with a quotation from the book. It's the final paragraph from Lieven Thyron, who for 25 years has produced the work of Alain Platel. I've had the pleasure of working with many producers, both those in this book and more besides and I know that they respond to Lieven's words when he says:

I hope in your book you can capture the flame, the heat inside, because I am not playing a game with you, I'm not joking, this is me. The flame is the subject of your book. It's not the skills, we know we need skills and we can learn those. This is something different, a flame, something burning, restless. I'm stuck with this, and therefore you will be stuck with this, you will be part of this, because I can do no other than express it through what I do.

Thank you.

[Applause]

Marguerite Pepper: We are happy to open up to the floor if anyone has a burning desire or we are happy to read the room and move to Scott. Does anyone feel that they need to leap up and challenge or discuss?

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You're very quiet. Have you all had coffee?

So, Scott is a writer, director, and creative thinker a man of ideas and words with a powerful commitment to social justice. He straddled the worlds of commercial theatre and developmental and community arts in a way that no other individual has dared.

[Laughter]

Scott Rankin: Thank you. And thank you, Carolyn, for producing the event there with one missing ingredient. Look, permission to just go, 'that's enough', at any point in the next 12 minutes, okay?.

I guess there are a couple of things - this is not about the money. Producing is not about the money and discussion this morning shouldn't be about the money. And that's hard if you're trying to pay a mortgage and there are very dear people here who are. I think producing is about the meta-narrative and what we're doing as artists. If you focus on the money then the artist will begin to focus on the commodity. And it's very dangerous - at the moment I think we are in the decade cycle - where you are talking about producing the governance culture because very quickly you start to move to issues of management rather than issues of the vision.

I was going to start with a paragraph which I've crossed out but it was going to say that 'this would be a useful place to talk about performance and producing and put in context, in context which is not self-congratulatory and preoccupied with our own importance and goes partway to ending the stultifying and numbing traditions of the heavily subsidised funding strategies which almost without fail fund our flagship companies in this country to produce provincial mediocrity for the consumption of the tourist industry, and underfunds the small to medium sector which at least produces work which has some interest on the broader stage internationally.'

But I think that...

[Laughter]

I've just noticed that John Baylis is wearing some really nice threads here at APAM and I didn't want him to get that shrimpy taste in the back of his throat and hurl on his coat, so...

[Laughter]

I think it's about the meta-narrative, and nations don't actually exist as a fixed entity - I'm just going to read for a little while here and please cut off or interject - they come and they go and they morph surprisingly quickly.

Nations, if you look at the good Professor Said's words, are narrations but are woven together ever more intricately by individuals and their responses to historic circumstance, as seen through the filter of their communal identities documented and learned collectively through the work of story makers.

So our entry point as producers is at the point of cultural dramaturgy in this is a big responsibility and I give full credit to David Pledger and a glass of whisky last night, for that term.

Often, as we've seen in our country, one dominant narrative will block out all other narratives from forming or continuing. And it's this inability to see other narrations which allows the dominant groups to

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colonise and oppress the other in their midst. And this is the picture of what our dominant narrative has tended to do for the last couple of hundred years.

And for Australians, we saw a couple of years ago, the story makers stamping very heavily on a desire, an electoral desire, to add a chapter about contrition, and then 11 years after that we saw Kev, the script editor, coming in with a bit of dramaturgy and saying, 'Let's put that chapter in.'

As producers our job, whether we recognise we're doing it or not, is to contribute to this narrative. The work we create always come from a process of some kind and one of the big mistakes that we make as producers or directors or playwrights is that we tend to think that the narrative of the work begins on stage when there's an audience present. But the narrative begins with a process of dreaming up the work, of creating an environment where the work can be made on whether work can be funded, where the first building blocks of the work are assembled. In other words, the narration is already there in the way the work is produced and continues to be there after completion, in the memory of the audience.

If we view work in this way we will open the sector up to new income streams. We're likely to affect many more people and potentially many more public and policy forums and therefore turbo charge our contribution to the national ideas and narrative.

And I question whether producers should only be seen to be in the context of art making. It's been a really interesting experiment with Ngapartji Ngapartji, for instance, to start with one producer, a creative producer and then find because that project's dealing in a number of languages, that we needed a language producer to look at the way the Web portal was emerging as a place for people to go before and after they saw the show, to explore Pitjantjatjara as a language and culture. And then, as it expanded, it needed a community producer and there are new ways of us thinking about what a producer is.

So, to do this we have to be as creative with the process as we are with the content of the work onstage. So if we say that the future is an idea in the present now and culture is the discussion of the ideas that reaches forward in time and presents the future to us here and now, most often some kind of narrative and evolving transaction, some kind of narrative is there with the audience and the audience is participating in that narrative usually with some kind of transaction that involves money. And that's where the money enters if you like, not at the beginning point

So, alongside the fearful, firewalled academic, legislated and policy-driven methods of holding this cultural discussion and talking about the ideas that are the future in the present, we've left open this one way for the maverick or the shaman, if you like. We say to one group which is artists, 'Okay, let's see what you think without substantiation from the expression of self, without statistics, what the future might look like - just you, expressed.' These individuals, playwrights, directors, actors and designers are entrusted to explore and reflect a maverick expression of the future in the present to help the narrative to emerge.

And in some primal and collective place we beg them because as human beings we crave narrative to crack us open and to shock us and to help us bring in the future.

Now in that messy place where we allow artists to make work for us what I think happens is that the work itself begins to beg questions of artists. And the problem is that artists in the middle of it, can't read the questions, can't see all questions, and I think the most interesting place for a producer - and you talked about being in the DNA - I would say that the most mature role in the arts is that the producer

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because they're the ones whose job it is to see the questions that the work is asking of the artists, and encourage and create the environment for the artists to answer the questions.

And that requires somebody who is prepared in the fragility of somebody who is making work, who is prepared to make really strong, self-limiting choices and step up towards the artist and then step back. And that's why I think there aren't many producers in this country, not because it's a survival issue, but because it's a maturity issue.

And the question I think for our funding institutions, State and Federal and local, is who is producing the producers? Because that's a long work.

All explorations of all artists begin as DIY. Virtuosity begins at that point and many of them, through dedication, become technically brilliant and many artists, through flight of fancy become technically brilliant and the work becomes full of nuance and inspired. Occasionally, an artist working within a process that involves many others, both professional and interested, will redefine the use of technique and bring great discipline to the flight of fancy and incant into the ongoing discussion of ideas the future in the present now in a visceral, kinetic and undeniable way, not through didacticism but strangely through the fragility of the poetic which doesn't impose information but rather in awakens a hunger to know more.

And so for one precious hour in the total of our approximately 650,000 hours we will feel deeply transported by the perfect codes of meaning, politically laid out before us, and will experience, from rows A-K, a kind of group gestalt. And some of us will boo and some of us will clap and this is the defining moment for a successful work of art, and the occasions in which we, as an audience, encounter it are rare.

If all these elements combine we have a very healthy context in which to make new theatre and something worth funding. And that's where the rubber hits the road for our funding bodies and for our producers. If that experience is happening to rarely we are in trouble. If it is happening often we're doing a great job. If it's not happening very often in the sinkholes of funding in this country, they should be funded from elsewhere, other than the agencies whose responsibility to spend taxpayers' money is for innovation, excellence and significance.

From that moment theatre becomes the art of forgetting or remembering. Audiences see only a percentage of the artist's intention and from that moment they begin to forget. So, if a dancer or a playwright or a director or a designer or a producer concentrates on the individual, inner worlds and texts of individual works, we are basically creating fodder for people to forget. If an artist or a producer thinks broadly over all the work they'll make in their lifetime, or with that company, or within those collaborations, and those who will come with them on the journey as an audience, they'll focus maybe on a dozen sublime moments an audience may not forget in a lifetime.

And if this is their focus what they'll be creating is a new language and that's what we don't have in this country, or it is what is emerging in this country, a language of our own, if you like, to carry our narrative inclusively which is also interestingly, at times, of significance around the globe. If we stopped making work, sometimes I wonder if it would matter, because we're too focused on the commodity and not on language and the metanarrative.

So, if this is the reason that we choose to make performance, to take an audience with us, as we keep the narration open and inclusive - and I'm using the word narration not a playwright sense but in kinetic anything, the broader sense of story - what would success look like?

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Perhaps critics, when we occasionally have good ones, will critique the broader discussion of ideas in relation to this language rather than just act as a consumer affairs advocate telling us whether a show is good value for money. Boards will be chosen to support the maverick activity rather than to attempt to rein it in. And they won't be chosen from the Macquarie Bank in Sydney necessarily, and there will be a much more flexible makeup of boards in this country.

Artistic directors will be trusted and producers will be trusted rather than the committee driven model of approval and peer assessment. The audit and governance obsessions that destroy innovation rather than support will be seen for what they are: useful, simple, small and relatively unimportant skill sets that should be serving a much bigger agenda. Artistic programmes will be put together with little interest in fulfilling the obligations of the tourist market or the subscriber list. Flagship companies, when they remain year after year flabby and sloppy and provincial, will be defunded from the rare pools of funding that there to support innovation and excellence. They'll be moved generously towards tourism.

And the proof will be in the pudding. Almost all the interesting work being made in this country is coming from the small and medium DIY sector and places where artistic directors and producers are not held in check. Places such as, interestingly, the combination of adrenaline that I think is come in the last decade or so with the MFI and with festival directors who make room for producers and make room for emerging companies, and yet this is the part of a country that struggles for funding.

And it's also the place where companies of that size operate in a culture of scarcity and I apologise for this. In this room there are companies who I would, I am often tempted to just undercut slightly in the dialogues with people who form opinion.

I think it is happening at this conference and I think there's producers in this room who are producing work: make the first impetus a positive regard to the progress in which a work is making and the progress of a company rather than one to undercut. That's something that in Australia we do a lot.

I had lots of other brilliant things but I think we should move to the floor.

Marguerite Pepper: Indeed, thank you Scott. Thank you.

[Applause]

Okay, would anyone like to challenge Scott on any of those issues or indeed discuss with David.

Scott Rankin: Can I just check whether it has to be 'challenge and discuss'?

Floor: I just want to say I think it was very brave and it's very nice for someone to put brave and difficult opinions across that you might even sometimes not know if you're fully putting across something that completely represent yourself but you're trying to put out there. And that's what this is about. So thank you for doing that. It's a rare thing to find.

Scott Rankin: Thankyou

Marguerite Pepper: Can I just ask Scott, if we go back to the rare DNA of people who facilitate vision - I use the word 'facilitate' because I think that's important. It's not about the money. It's about finding ways to do it. Do you want to talk a bit about the money? I just ask that question in the context of wondering or perhaps posing the question about financing, under financing, us.

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Scott Rankin: Okay, I'm going to throw in the model maybe, and see if this is useful. If we say that all work is made in a context and from a process, and we just throw that process up for a moment and we hold that in the air, and we say that's about the meta-narrative of the work, what happens before the work gets anywhere near the stage.

And if we say the taxpayer requires from the executive of government that they spend almost 50% of our money essentially to buy behaviour change, and infrastructure if you like, out there in the community whether it's the end of criminality or the way in which we're allowed to die or not destroying the beachfronts by walking down fragile dunes, or whatever it is, we're interested in the government that we elect for the 36 months to buy behaviour change.

To get behaviour change it requires an attitude change and to create an attitudinal change requires a cultural shift and culture is the discussion of ideas and ideas are story so we in this room as producers are not in some peripheral backwater. We are right at the heart of what the taxpayer requires that governments do.

Now if you focus on the meta-narrative and say the lead up to a work about sand dunes being made and fragile sea grass, or fragile grass on sand dune being preserved. If you say that is a goal then in what is essentially population wise is the size of a local government, the size of a city, a big city, there are funding avenues federally that are dying for new and innovative ways of protecting the seagrass. So you look at those funding streams.

Now the artist doesn't have to go there but the producer is going on the sand dunes in the Shoal Haven region or down here at Meningie, we need to do something and we need to create public awareness and we need to create behaviour change. And you know that culturally that's a really interesting area and you know that you've got a friend who has one of those things you stick in the ground to look at soil samples, and you know that soil sample as a concept is something that is going to resonate as something not heard regularly by presenters of festivals or whatever and you get your dooverlackie and you get a soil sample and you take it to a pitch session and you say, 'Look at this. See that bit of sand there? That is made up of... And at that time 5000 years ago, these people lived there. And look at this now. That is an old margarine container lid.' Or whatever, and you create a narrative in that pitch.

And the producer is doing it with the artist and it's all about the exquisite nature of the work that's going to be there, but they want to spend \$500,000. You were hoping to ask for some developmental funds of \$5000 so you get the developmental funds but you're talking to them as well.

And then you begin to create the work and yes, it plays in festivals but it also plays in other contexts that get this behaviour change happening about sand dunes and grass. And then, post the show, there's a whole other way in which that piece will live.

What we need to essentially do, as producers, is to see where our work sits within the broader meta-narrative, if you like – if I use that phrase once more I'll kill myself – the point being in practical terms that what we're buying from somewhere like the Australia Council is, the transfer, the thing that we're doing is about excellence, innovative and significance. And in other sections of government we're buying completely different things that help to fund the making of the cultural dramaturgy and the process of making the work.

Now that includes a lot more people in the arts and there is still that finished work. Now the reason people are deeply suspicious of this kind of approach is that failed artists, hurt artists who either couldn't

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cut it or slept with the wrong person and got shoved out the back door and didn't get their work into festivals or whatever it was and are jaded, move into community art. I'm from that – believe you me.

[Laughter]

The point being the community sector or the community partnership sector or the CCD sector has to take responsibility for the mediocrity that it has perpetuated over many, many years and has to take responsibility for its unwillingness to be critiqued with everybody else. That's why it stinks as an area and that's why producers usually don't move into that area, but that's why a vast area of interaction with different portfolios and different levels of government is lost to us as a strong funding stream to be put next to commercial funding, and put next to traditional arts funding.

And I don't think, in a first world country, that we have an excuse to not be able to fund our work, but what we have to do, as producers, is being as creative about the process as we are about what ends up on stage.

I hope that wasn't too longwinded.

Marguerite Pepper: Can we have a response? Yes, one hand

Floor: Hi, this is question for anybody up there but just extending what was just said. If you want to engage in cultural dramaturgy with the commercial sector, I suppose I would be interested in some examples of how you create the room, create the possibility and the attention that you would need to bring in your core sample and put it before a commercial funder or to create that opportunity. What are the sort of avenues that you might use to stimulate the initial exchange with the right kind of attention?

Scott Rankin: Okay. I'm just going to describe something and it is a discussion that Bronwyn Purvis had, and I've had some of it, so...

Marguerite Pepper: Bronwyn is one of your creative producers.

Scott Rankin: Just imagine that you've got a Federal Government that is wanting to get as many people off the disability pension as possible. Just imagine that quadriplegia costs the insurance sector and the taxpayer \$15 million flat. Quadriplegia costs \$25 million, approximately.

So if you said, 'Okay where's Bruce Gladwin and here's Bronwyn Purvis. Here's a collaboration.' The government wants to get those people off the pension. This is what they save for every year that somebody's taken off and human resource departments in say Westpac and the big corporates are struggling because they can't find people to fill jobs. So there's a really fertile area to make art.

So you go to the courts. You find six people who are recent quadriplegics from motor vehicle accidents or whatever, and any kind of disability. You working with them to create a piece that you're going to put on in the Velodrome in Sydney. And you're going to work with them to create a highly visual work that is much more exciting than Westpac's end of year celebration of their profit line brilliance.

What's happening is that there is a huge influx of technology, a new wave every six months, of ways to interface between digital stuff and someone who can only move their eyebrows, and Westpac doesn't know about it because they don't have time to research it. So they don't move people with a disability into their workplaces because they don't know about that huge range of resources.

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So you create a work with Bruce's company with Bronwyn directing or producing or whatever and it looks absolutely exquisite. Your only audience in its first round is the boards and senior managers of these kinds of big corporations. But you've negotiated with them and they're coming to see their work and they're bringing some of their key clients. And the work is brilliant and immersive and all the other words we want to use for a wonderful art piece, and then six people who can only move their eyebrows, or their lips or whatever, come out and you introduce them as the makers of the work, and then the technology is introduced.

And what you've created is a producing relationship with Westpac. They go, 'That is amazing.' And then you say, 'Here are 250 people we want to place in work,' and they go, 'Great. Let's see them,' and you say, 'Here are the industry people you need to talk to stay abreast of the emerging technologies.' 'That's great'.

The Federal Government says, 'You're brilliant. In a year's time you're going to be as rich as Therese Rein because of your ability to place people in employment. That's great,' and the producer, who has made sure the work is not affected by these other discussions in negative ways, is also presenting that to festivals.

Floor: You were describing a situation where the starting point was an understanding of how the impulse for the work fits into a whole series of government initiatives and corporate objectives. When the artists start the work that's not so clear. I'd be interested in everyone's experience of that.

Marguerite Pepper: I think Scott's model is easily transferable, going back to the idea of the vision, the artist and the idea and how that idea is contextualised first and how as a facilitator/ producer, you then go out into the community to find ways of supporting that vision that might not necessarily be a grant to the Australia Council.

Scott Rankin: And that is true, you have to get clear about those things but the community, the newspapers, this highly resourced place that we live is screaming out with wanting artists to interact and it's there. It's a producer's question.

David Micklem: I thought you were asking a different question which I'll answer anyway which is about where commercial producing and subsidised producing meet. When Marguerite and I met yesterday for lunch we talked about the fact that Marguerite's work spans both the subsidised and commercial world. And part of that is pragmatic because there's not enough subsidy to pay your rent and keep you buying cups of coffee, but part of it also because the commercial work not only financially feeds the work you do but also creatively feeds the work you do.

Do you want to talk about that a bit, Marguerite?

Marguerite Pepper: Well, I'm not here to talk about me. I'm here to generate questions from the floor so has anyone got a response to that?

Floor: I think one of the things that it's important enough for us to consider is, as producers we're the link. So we're often being required to link the art or the artist, with the audience, with the community, with the festival. So I think we have to keep in mind, as producers, that it's our job to come up with those social marketing hooks and those social marketing links.

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So it's easier for us, because we have an entrepreneurial spirit, to look at what you're saying Scott. We can find those links in the commercial sector. We can say 'What need does this meet? What need can this deliver on?' and we as producers have to get out of the tradition of phenomenon marketing.

Because every show is amazing and brilliant. We have to stop that. We have to say, 'What does this mean? What does this deliver on that is a social marketing point,' and that's the hobby horse that I've been trying to work in the independent sector in Melbourne, to say, 'You can deliver amazing things. You can deliver life-changing things. You can deliver the most brilliant need based, whatever the community you're trying to sell it into and let me help you link that.' and I think that's an important role for producers, particularly in Australia, need to embrace.

Scott Rankin: Great.

Marguerite Pepper: Thank you. Any other responses? Yes, down the front. Here. Thank you.

Floor: I have a slightly different thing and forgive me if it's not particularly well formulated but I'm slightly concerned in the UK about an extra layer of bureaucracy that keeps artists out, and of course the brilliant producers don't do that but I can start to see that there is that possibility and it's scary.

The other thing, I've had the great privilege over the last eight months to be looking at where contemporary innovative performance is at in the UK and one of the things that has really struck me, and I've started talking to the Arts Council in England about, is that creative thinking isn't allowed in high enough up.

So that it may not be about an artist's particular work, the work they're burning to make but it's about having access to the strategic and the perspective of the kind of cultural dialogue that Scott's talking about. And then making sure that there are creative people sitting at the table, able to have the ideas that will then transfer into the very practical projects that may change the world.

Marguerite Pepper: I'm not sure that I'm quite clear. So you're feeling that there is a layer between you as a practising artist and a bureaucracy? Like the door is shut?

Floor: It's my worry that the door's shutting. I'm not sure where I sit. I'm one of those uncomfortable, difficult people that I don't know what I would call myself. But you can start to see that there's - in the commodity - there's a language that starts to be used and that producers can talk to funders more easily than creative people can. So that actually there's a barrier.

Marguerite Pepper: This is not the only way to create work. This is a forum about producers who are one cog in the wheel. There are many artists and, indeed, communities who have the strength to speak for themselves and to move through circles in order to create an installation, a painting, a sculptural piece that doesn't need us. There's a myriad of ways and that's why I used the word 'facilitator' in a way.

Do you want to respond to that?

Scott Rankin: I'm not sure that it's going to exactly answer the question but I think we need to remain very open in our perception about people who are high up in arts policy and their level of creativity. If I was in that position, I couldn't do it. The creative questions that are asked of senior people in arts policy and funding agencies are really intense and I don't know anyone - other people may - I don't know anyone who doesn't work incredibly hard in those forums, and I'm not just sucking up.

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That's true and they are different kinds of creative questions but if you imagine in the 36 month cycle - in Australia anyway - of change of government, and we were in a decade where one of the core values of government was firewalling ministers from criticism, and you're only two or three steps down from a branch head or a senior advisor or whatever, and you've got a lot of pressure coming down this way and a lot of hands are tied, it may be difficult to enter into creative discussions.

And let me say this: those funding agencies are there in a sense for our turn at the wheel as artists. So, it's a great thing to interact. Not 'I want more money' but 'How can I help?' and to make that the attitude. And so, for argument's sake, if you were given an amount of funding that was perhaps going to fund your company to create mediocre work, it's a very good thing to give that money back. And it's a very good thing to do that in dialogue, which is not a protest or an attack, but to do it in such a way that you create opportunity for new discussions between the minister and the CEO or the minister and however that department is structured.

But be pro-active about it. If you feel a door closing be pro-active about the discussions and do it with positive and smart regard for people in those positions.

Marguerite Pepper: Yes, do you want to introduce yourself so we know who you are and where you're from.

Floor: I'm Kate Miller from the Barking Gecko Theatre in Perth. I just wanted to pick up on Scott's point about being pro-active and I think we all need to do this. You are probably aware that, however you feel about it, there's a 2020 conference coming up in Canberra and one of the problems with all this is there is not enough funding and that's why people have to make decisions and not let things grow that should grow and perhaps mightn't succeed.

And I'm involved in the visual arts as well and the last thing I did before leaving Perth was nominate someone to attend that conference. I'm hoping the producers do that.

And as the community cabinets go around Australia I nominated for it in Perth and I nominated for a meeting with Peter Garrett, just to be pro-active and say the small to medium theatre sector needs more money. And I just think we all need to do that. I know that's sort of getting into another area but it's to enable the creativity to flow so that people aren't stopped lower down the scale.

Marguerite Pepper: Yes, thank you. And there was another hand there. Thanks.

Floor: Just to move it away from funding just for a minute – sorry, Jennifer McLachlan from the Australia Council – David you've moved from funding to venues. Do you see a role for the venues and presenters when we're talking about excellence, innovation and significance and the support of producers. Could you talk about it from that perspective?

David Micklem: Absolutely. I think it's the role of the venues, the role of the artists, the role of the touring companies to deliver those agendas are you are describing. I don't think either the Australia Council or the Arts Council can do that because, with the greatest respect, you're not producers, not as an organisation although there are people who have producing DNA working within those contexts, whether it be the Arts Council or the Australia Council.

But I think all those funding bodies can do is create a framework that enables that work to be produced, that delivers excellence, innovation and significance. We've got a version in England I think - I can't

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remember what is now: excellence and access, or something. It's been a while since I worked for the Arts Council. I've forgotten.

Does that answer your question Jen?

Floor: [inaudible]

I think BAC is unusual in that we have a team of eight producers working in the organisation and effectively what BAC does is it sows seeds. I use the analogy of kind of acorns being sown and we must throw 100 acorns in the soil every week and maybe one of those will become an oak tree in five or 10 years time, and 90 of them don't ever grow.

But, what we have with this team of producers are individuals who can - to extend the metaphor further - can nurture the buds as they start to grow and where there is something extraordinary, where there is a brilliant germ of an idea, they can let that flourish.

One of the things that we've pioneered at BAC is this idea of the Scratch Program, so that's taking a piece of work at a very, very early stage in its development and placing it in front of an audience and again, many of those scratch performances go no further than that. The idea is not strong enough or the artist needs to have another idea or refine his or her ideas but sometimes those ideas are fantastic and so that's when we use our team of producers to resource those ideas, not just financially that give them time, dramaturgical support, space, new ideas.

And, most famously, that's the process that delivered *Jerry Springer, the Opera* which started off as one man at the piano with three songs and he literally offered people a beer for an idea, and four years later it still playing at Carnegie Hall in New York and it's touring the world. But for every *Jerry Springer the Opera* there are lots of seeds that don't grow and I think it's a producers work at BAC to, with taste and integrity, decide in conjunction with the artist which of those saplings - sorry the metaphor has gone too far now - which of those saplings needs the most water.

Marguerite Pepper: Can I just throw in the notion of passing on the DNA and how important it is as elders in the community to share knowledge and mentor. Do you want to talk a bit about that, because you're doing it.

Scott Rankin: Sure. A long time ago, and I'm on D status with the Australia Council and I should have acquitted this, but I got a fellowship which was really to look at this question of producing a new model and we were reading a fair bit about rhizome models, which is a much flatter model. It's like a bamboo root, as opposed to a tree root. And there was a lot of encouragement in the late nineties that companies tighten up their vertical structure and deal with some necessary governance issues.

And what tended to happen, just to continue with the sapling metaphor, is that thing started to go pear shape in a literal sense in that the middle management kind of area, the more vertical you go, in a general sense the less trust you utilise in an organisation and the more middle management you need to support the decision-making.

So we wanted to be much more prolific and much more responsive to communities. So, we did two things. We looked at setting up a flat model that have a lot more trust basis to it and where producers would talk across the organisation, not through the board or through the AD, up here and then back down. And we combined that with talent, with people who had a burning passion and a talent and wanted to do something about seagrass or something about homelessness or interact in the story

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making, in the meta-narrative of the country, and bring their - Fuck! I used that word again - with ideas that were playing out in the country, if you like.

And all our projects have a timeframe. We try to make them not less than three years in the making of a work. Ngapartji Ngapartji has been an eight-year process but we try to bring things to an end and allow that to be like a firework that goes bang, and you see what happens from the work resonating.

So that decision which is really just playing out, and this presentation is my acquittal if somebody could tell ///, is coming to a conclusion here for arts at APAM as a whole series of creative producers have the opportunity to learn for better or worse from the way that the organisation was doing things. So there are now six projects the size of what Big hArt was when we began the process basically. And they are all underfunded but each one..

Marguerite Pepper: But they all happen.

Scott Rankin: And each one costs about \$1.5 million so that's a big organisation that could not be supported without the sort of infrastructure that a state arts funding body has, you know what I'm saying? But because it's a flatter model and information is passed on, experimented with and chucked out and there is a lot of freedom around the makeup of each project and the creative producers are supporting each other and they are continually in dialogue, there is an exponential growth and capacity to handle the growth. And only once in the time of the organisation that we've been doing this has there been an issue where trust didn't replace probably \$160,000 worth of wages for each project per year. They're very real things. Only once that there's been a failure and that's not a bad average.

Marguerite Pepper: So Big hArt has six creative producers now?

Scott: I'd have to do an audit to find out.

Floor: Hi, I'm Paul McGill. I know this isn't about you, but I'm really interested in your answer to your own question and equally David. To me it's quite a critical issue.

Marguerite Pepper: Passing on the DNA?

Floor: Yes.

Marguerite Pepper: As I said in my introduction a lot of what one does is intuitive. I believe we were placed on Earth to pass on and share information and, through the process of my own company, I've employed or mentored many, many producers, facilitators into the industry and I'm very proud, and would wish to continue to do that as long as I'm still able to fund myself.

David Micklem: I wanted to come back to this thing about producers being born and not made. 'Producer' has become very fashionable term in the UK. I'm probably part of the reason for that and that's not good thing. Lots of people are calling themselves producers. Some of the schools and colleges, a graduate level, are setting up producers courses, you know, Masters in how to be a creative producer.

And my heart sinks because I don't think you can learn how to be a creative producer. It goes back to that quotation from Lieven Thyrion. You can learn the skills. You can learn how to read a balance sheet and you can learn how to cut the budget by 25% or how to do X., Y and Z. But that thing you can learn

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the things that I know that Marguerite does because you've either got all you haven't and that's kind of tough.

Marguerite Pepper: But you can be a role model and you can share. And yes, not everyone is necessarily going to light the candle and move forward but with some of those skills it's, as we were saying yesterday you through a little rock into the pond and the ripples keep coming out and out and out. And those influences and that way of thinking and the listening, trust and what you can do when you trust each other and trust in each other. I remember one woman I mentored many years ago she said, 'Marguerite, you know, the thing I've really learnt from you is when you sit with a creative force the first time and you start to share ideas.'

It really is learning by observing often and having someone with the passion to drive you to want to make change and make things happen.

Floor: Hi, I just wanted to make a comment. I'm a commercial producer from the United States with a strong background in the not-for-profit presenting world, which is the world I came out of, to become a commercial producer but one of the things - actually the most joy I get every year is teaching Commercial Theatre Management at De Paul University's Theatre School.

And this year in particular, in response to the mentoring comment, I found that we have learned so much more from the people we're mentoring than the other way around. It's just extraordinary. I've never learned so much as I have from the students both undergraduate and graduate.

In this year, just by way of example, we had the biennial conference of the League Of American Theatres And Producers in Chicago, which is the service organisation for Broadway. And my class of students along with two other performing arts management schools got together and we did a session for conference which was subsequently cancelled because of the stagehands can strike - but I'll explain that in a minute.

We got together and we did an apprentice challenge the secession and we an apprentice challenge as a session and we sent out a notice to students in all of the theatre management programs in Chicago and asked them to state why they wanted to be a part of this.

And we sent up an Apprentice Donald Trump type of session where they answer specific marketing question for a particular touring Broadway show that was coming through Chicago which happen to be Jerseyboys. And when the conference was cancelled because of the stagehands' strike we went ahead and did our session anyway for the people in Chicago that were local. We videotaped it and sent it on to the League.

It's a fascinating study of what 18 undergraduate and graduate students responded to in terms of marketing plans to this very commercial production. It was a different language. I'd argue that they know so much more than we do and it was a wonderful way to bridge the producing and the soon-to-be producing world.

Marguerite Pepper: I'm not sure it's a different language but, Scott?

Scott Rankin: I just wanted to add into that idea of passing it on. I think 70% of it, providing you got someone who is talented, is taking away all the things that aren't a producer and 30% is passing on information. That's kind of how it works for us.

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Floor: This is more my question back to you about mentoring. I get violently ill when I hear that word having been someone that was mentored in community cultural development by the mafia of the sector, therefore gaining all generation's bad habits and biases and about what was possible. The seven producers in Big hArt often discuss, well, where are the other ones? We're not that all that old and we're feeling like where's the next crew? And how do we get to them and how do they get to us. It's not about being mentored. It's about the relationship between autonomy, collaboration and the pathway. I know you do it but Marguerite and David, how do you see that happening? What are the strategies there?

David Micklem: Yes, I think I'm as anxious as you are about where's that next generation of producers coming from, because why would you do it? Why on earth would you be a producer in the subsidised ecology.

Certainly in the UK when you're probably looking at the first 10 years of your career being spent maybe not doing the job you want to do or doing the job you want to do but doing it with no money. So yes, I'm worried about that. That's one of the reasons for producing the book is to act as an inspiration to say, 'Hey look, these people did it by the seat of their pants and made it up as they went along, and now they are able to sustain a career and run small business.

But yes, I'm anxious in the UK about where that next generation is going to come from. Maybe it's the commercial sector. Maybe it's looking at other places outside of the arts. There are people working in kind of video gaming at the moment who've got that producing DNA I think. It'd be great to see what they might do at some stage.

Marguerite Pepper: Fiona Winning, there's a response.

Floor: [inaudible] Sydney and a little bit about Melbourne but through PACT youth theatre there are groups of young people that are self organising fantastic work and fantastic platform opportunities and recognising what's missing. And they're going, 'this is what we need.' And they're in their early twenties. I think next wave, I know less about that in Melbourne, is actually fostering a process based artist as initiator and maker and self producer, which is how much of our generation got to be producers as well. So I think there's a fantastic new generation of people that are much more sophisticated than certainly I was at that point.

Floor: David, I met Shelley Hastings the last Edinburgh Festival who is one of the Battersea producers and I was so interested in the model of how you guys work as an arts centre which seems different anything I've come across here, and from what I've heard, different to anything in the UK. And I just thought it would be great for people who don't know for you to tell a little bit more about the way you work. The bit that interested me as an artist and artistic director was that not only do you have those scratch nights but that you follow the development of artists through and keep pushing them to the degree of, for example, a group called Cabaret 1927 who has scratch season in 2007, went on to take that show to win every award in Edinburgh, which is now toured to New York, and now Battersea has helped them organise their Australian tour out of that.

And I see so often that an arts centre or funding helps someone to make a project which is great, but then it sort of lost and it's almost like that funding doesn't get to follow through because you make something and everyone says it was great and then it's now, where? And it might be a year or more before things happen. It seems to be great the way you have that process. Could you elucidate on how you came up with that or how it works?

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David Micklem: Sure. Very briefly, our mission and it sounds daft in this context, but our mission is to invent the future of theatre. And to do that, yes, again it's about sowing those acorns but it's also about ensuring that when we do grow a piece of work like 1927 - who is between the devil and the deep blue sea. I know he's going to the Opera House studio in June - that we keep supporting them. So we always will.

We've got this kind of producer for life way of looking at the artists and organisations that we develop so whether it be somebody who's fresh out of college who's just got a great idea and we'll provide them with some support and that may go somewhere or that may go nowhere, or it's actually looking at a more established company and taking them on the journey to try out new things.

We're doing a Scratch in fact with Station House Opera at the moment, who are an established company with a major international reputation, but because we got this relatively safe environment at BAC, Julian and his team can take risks that they couldn't take if they were making work elsewhere. And so that Scratch will take place in May and that may become the beginning of a new direction for Station House Opera. It may be a heap of shit, in which case that's fine. We've taken a risk. We've put a bit of money, a bit of time and a bit of resource into testing an artist and taking him in a new direction.

I think without giving you a big, hour long chat it would be difficult to summarise what we do in any less detail than that. Thank you.

Floor: I've been particularly interested by the last five minutes of conversation because I too have been to Battersea Arts Centre. I know David. We worked together for a while and I got my start there. I'm an Australian, born in Melbourne, just by banging up. I just kind of went over and worked as an intern and I think that's part of potentially a Scratch program. It's not about work but I've been developed there and I do feel like I'm getting after service care as well because I'm still in touch with them. Everybody is really supporting me and I've just nailed my first kind of full-time job. And that's taken me quite a while since finishing university and it's been really hard.

[break in recording 29.41.8 second CD]

Scott Rankin: ... the cost of, what it's costs our company to do a business plan for us it's around \$30,000 and I know a few companies who've been asked to do four business plans in five years, from various bodies. If that wasn't the preoccupation and the preoccupation was facilitating the creative producer relationships, nationally, with the same level of resource we'd be in a very different situation. And it's nobody's fault but it has been an under-resourced structural thing in this country.

David Sefton: That was one of the things I was thinking about when I was delivering my speech at the beginning was what networks are there here in Australia. It's a great big country but there must be virtual networks that can be created whereby producers can share good practice, can talk about artists they're working with, that could be a potential pool for emerging artists to tap into to find producing talent in a city or a town near where they might be. I don't know if that already exists here but it's certainly something that we've piloted in the UK, both virtually and real world meetings, and it's worked in that it's provided a forum for discussion.

One of the things Marguerite and I were talking about yesterday is being a producer is a really lonely place to be because you tend to do it on your own and what the forums in the UK have done, if nothing else, is make lonely people realise that they've got friends. And if nothing else I'd recommend it in a country the size of Australia. That might be something really useful to look at is a network, probably a

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virtual network, but somewhere where you can let off steam, have a moan, get excited about a project, form new relationships.

Marguerite Pepper: I think there's definitely an informal network but perhaps that's one of the outcomes of this session. Yes, we're just about to finish. Thank you.

Floor: Sally Richardson. I'm a producer from Perth. I was really interested in how quickly you were able to say, 'Oh, and if it fails it doesn't matter.' And I keep thinking so many times people in this country talk about producing as picking winners and I find that really challenging and that whole notion, the whole climate of not being able to take risks has actually permeated right through our culture, in terms of the funding bodies and the needs of funding bodies, and I found it very refreshing, anyway.

Marguerite Pepper: That's kind of a full circle because that's exactly what Barrie said in the opening address of the right people, the right time, the right place, the right context and it's all fabulous and the wrong people...

I jammed the switchboard of the Sydney Opera House with one of the most successful failures of my life and I'm still here. It's a rollercoaster ride of learning and there's no pressure to succeed. There's an enormous pressure to support vision and artists and allow that extraordinary fire to burn and deliver back to us as a community.

Thank you everybody. We'll be around for further discussion. And thanks to the APAM team again and look forward to having food and wine, breaking bread together over lunch and sharing stories. Thank you everyone.

[Applause.]