

Feedback with an emphasis on “The Independent Artist”

THE ROLE OF THE THEATRE BOARD

- Supporting high quality, innovative theatre
- Supporting entry points for a diverse range of theatre / practitioners
- New work
- On going support for established artists who have reached a plateau
- Supporting / validating the different levels that theatre emerges from
- The independent artist who works alone, with collectives of other professionals, and self producers are not left out of the loop
- About product, not about who the artist or work is attached to / produced by

LONG TERM FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

- Essential for certain companies with large infrastructures re planning etc
- Does long term funding arrangements with companies work to the detriment of independents, collectives, co ops, smaller co op companies? Re funds allocation
- Is there the risk of only certain types of company attached / marketable work is produced professionally?
- Does the voice of the more alternate / co op creator (work not programmed by funded companies) become stifled and invalidated?

GREATER VARIETY OF STRUCTURES

(The small grant system presented as an option for the independent practitioner)

- It is the independent artist / collective & co op artists that can be left out of the funding loop, even if practise & new work is high quality
- Many established artists if not in the “funded company” circuit continue to work for nothing (that is, no money) but attract audiences / reviews / awards
- The independent is often marginalised even in representation and comment
Self promotion can be viewed negatively by “the establishment” but the nature of independent practitioners leaves no choice; a result is many independents stop promoting their work through burn out, self promotion & no funding fear, and then, stop creating art
- We lose many talented people operating independently each year – burn out
- A system to support a much greater number of this sector through smaller grants would see exciting and innovative theatre practise continue and grow
- A system of “small grants” for independents (not open to funded companies) with a limit placed upon it – say \$15,000 would foster many people now often left out, or who have stopped applying and often working without funds
- Independent artists are often skilful at creating high quality work on low money. Critics of a “small grant” system could say, “ but artists will not be working for full award wages”; many already are working for no wages, and seeing work reach professional outcomes, so a small grant system would see innovative artists have a starting point to secure more money through box office, private sponsorship etc.

PRODUCERS

- A greater diversity of producer systems would see greater diversity of theatre
- The Bake-House SA, La mama VIC, Blue Room WA and AFCT In-space season SA (examples) provide a solid structure for independents to operate within – more of these style companies, or increased funding would increase low cost, high quality theatre and also present theatre at low ticket prices,

increasing the reach and audience of theatre and hopefully assisting to remove elitism from theatre (small grant system would assist these works, with the existing structures in place to provide producing support)

- There are many skilled self producing independent artists, and this should continue to be acknowledged and supported

WHICH ARTISTS

- Peer assessment panels can be problematic if the peers come from the pool of artist in ones own working environment (small cities in particular)
- Peer assessment becomes even more problematic for the independent practitioner if peers are, or have links to funded companies; there is the risk of only one kind of (marketable / company) type work seeing production – the existence of peer links back to that company can be consciously or unconsciously supported against the practitioner working independently
- A mix of assessors nationally seeing national applications is the way to present fair assessment both in states and nationally
- Should the independent artist (not connected to any funded company) have a definite place in all assessments of applications?
- Do the project officers themselves need more say to determine funding outcomes – they are generally not practising artists and this could be seen as a benefit, not to the detriment – They are in a position to view all applications with no attachment / semi attachment to any artist or project (peers often have some kind of attachment, if not to the project, then to the peer)
- State funding bodies / peer assessment panels should in no way assess or comment on national Aust Council applications from artists from their own state; it would further marginalise alternate / independent artists and continue to create a “who is in” in the state mentality already existing

INNOVATION

- Who are the experts?
- Does a broad mix of practise and levels of entry of practise best assist / support in the defining of “innovation”
- Is innovation really a matter of opinion in all art?

LINKS WITH COMPANIES

- Could all artists being encouraged to link with a funded company; or companies receiving further financial support to mentor emerging or independent artists further marginalise the independent practitioners who are not creating work that those funded companies like / want?
- Do theatre / styles of theatre / stories need to be validated by links to a funded company in each state? Why?
- There is a risk of further silencing the theatre and artist that is not supported by a company
- The independent artist / co op / collective etc needs validation without needing to attached to any existing funded company