

Appendixes

6.1 Appendix: Australia Council Brief Document



Australian Government



RESOURCING WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE

The Australia Council invites quotes for a research project to develop an examination of resources for supporting Australian writing for performance. The brief for the project is attached.

Any specific enquiries seeking clarification of the requirements outlined in the project brief should be directed to Kim Hanna, Senior Program Officer of the Theatre Board, on (02) 9215 9103.

The closing date for quotes is 2pm on 21 February 2005

Quotes should be submitted to:

Tenders
Examination of Resources for Writing for Performance
Finance Officer
Australia Council
PO Box 788
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

RESOURCING WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE

An examination of resources for supporting Australian writing for performance

INTRODUCTION

This project will address the question of how best to resource the ongoing development of contemporary writing (and writers) for performance through institutional structures.

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

This project aims:

1. to survey the resources currently available in Australia for the development of writing for performance
2. to assess the strengths of these services and identify gaps
3. to examine best-practice models in this area, both local and international, with particular focus on the institutional structures that support them
4. to make recommendations on how the Theatre Board's funds can best support the development of writing for performance over the next five to ten years.

PROCESS

The process to achieve the aims of the project will include the following:

1. An examination of the current resources available for the development Australian writing for performance. These will include:
 - a. the two national organisations: the Australian National Playwrights Centre and Playworks,
 - b. state-based script development organisations,
 - c. those theatre companies with script development programs, and
 - d. the state and territory Writers Centres around the country,
 - e. writers festivals,
 - f. publishers of new performance works,
 - g. the Australian Writers Guild, and
 - h. the Australian Script Centre.
2. An assessment of how well these resources meet the contemporary needs of both writers and producers. This will include the following considerations:
 - a. accommodation of different writing and creative development processes,
 - b. diversity of performance genres,
 - c. geographical access,

- d. diversity of cultural backgrounds,
 - e. the different needs of established and emerging writers,
 - f. the needs of theatre companies that produce new Australian scripts, and
 - g. the relative merits of script development processes with no immediate performance outcomes, and those linked closely to such outcomes.
3. A comparison of the present state of script development in Australia compared with ten years to fifteen years ago, noting any significant trends. This would include:
 - a. changes in the script development resources available, both within specialist script development organisations and within production companies,
 - b. changes in the way script development services are delivered,
 - c. number of production opportunities for new Australian writing for performance,
 - d. number of new plays published,
 - e. levels of support for writing for performance by funding bodies, and
 - f. any significant shifts in attitude, thinking, or methodological approaches to the development of new work for performance.
 4. A review of different institutional models for the development of writing for performance, with an evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses, and their applicability to the Australian context. This should include both national and international models.
 5. A series of recommendations on how the Theatre Board can best use its funds to augment existing resources or create new ones.

In fashioning these recommendations, you should give some consideration both to the constraints on the Board's funds and to the existing institutional support structures for script development, but this should not inhibit you from suggesting a broad range of options, some of which might require a significant new investment by the Board or different structures,

SCOPE

The primary focus of this project is writing for all forms of live performance, where the performers and audience share the same space. Script development for TV and film is specifically excluded from the brief. Writing for radio or digital media is relevant only insofar as it is connected to this primary focus.

The project will give particular (though not predominant) focus to the role of the Theatre Board-funded national organisations: the Australian National Playwrights Centre, Playworks and the Australian Script Centre.

The project should include consultation with all state and territory arts funding agencies.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION FOR THE CONSULTANT

The following recent report provide some background information:

- *Analysis of the Triennially-Funded Organisations of the Theatre Board* – a report by I.D. Roberts and Associates commissioned by the Australia Council (2003)
http://www.ozco.gov.au/arts_resources/publications/theatre_triennial/

REPORT

The report should include a brief description of the methods used in conducting research, and a description and analysis of the findings. Conclusions, with strategic recommendations should form a comprehensive aspect of the report.

The Australia Council may make a form of this report available to the public. However until discussions to that end take place this research and all progressive reporting on the project are to remain confidential.

TIMELINE

Monday 21st February	Tender submitted
March 2005	Consultant chosen
March – July 2005	Information gathered
August 2005	Draft report submitted
September 2005	Final report submitted

6.2 Appendix: Methodology

The methodology for this qualitative research involves four main research processes.

- 1) Organisational profiles of the script development organisations state arts ministries and theatre companies were developed by meeting with or telephoning representatives of the organisations and compiling all available material. A meeting was conducted, where possible in person, to develop a profile of the organisation and its programs in 2005. The organisation's programs were also researched for 2000, which usually required a meeting with a different individual, and where possible programs were also researched for 1995 and even 1990. The researchers were supplied with organisational information in verbal explanations and follow-up emails on points in the profile. This process ensured that organisations were able to provide information, although follow-up information was not always forthcoming, including annual lists of productions. The Australia Council applications and acquittals for the national SDOs after 1990—with some gaps in the records—were available to the researchers.
- 2) Questionnaire on the web for writers. Responses to this questionnaire were anonymous. The questionnaire was available on the web from mid-June to mid-August and was advertised through the newsletters of writer membership organisations and in *RealTime*. Collated responses were used to develop perspectives from writers about script development programs and processes. Professor David de Vaus assisted with the question design and LTU's Comet and Marcus De Rijk.
- 3) Interviews for comment addressed twelve questions and were conducted with arts industry people involved in script development programs professionally and/or nationally over the past five years. These allowed the researcher to establish that the analysis corresponded with professional opinions.
- 4) As well, research was conducted with other organisations by telephone or in person to develop the information about fields that are related to script development: publishing, competitions, writers' centres, and tertiary courses.

6.3 Appendix: Participants in Research

Organisation Profiles (and some IC)

Libby Anstis	Cathy Gurrin	Suellen Maunder
Stephen Armstrong	Tom Gutteridge	Chris Mead
Tamara Asmar	Sophia Hall	Julian Meyrick
Debra Iris Batton	Jackie Halsey	Marilyn Miller
Alan Becher	Susan Hayes	Erin Milne
David Berthold	Regina Heilmann	Lucy Morrison, Paines
Ian Brown	Alex Hurford	Plough
Angela Chaplin	David Jaffe	Suzanne Oberhardt
Sam Cook	Andrea James	Robert Piani
Adriano Cortese	Beverley Jefferson	David Ryding
Anthony Crowley	Atul Joshi	Dr Kerry Shafer
Maude Davey	Kathryn Kelly	Steve Shaw
Kamara Dell-Wykes	Robyn Kershaw	Jill Smith
John Du Feu	Stuart Koop	Kim Spinks
Anne Forbes	Gail Kovatseff	Alicia Talbot
Judith Fox	Ian Lawson	Lian Tanner
Andy Freer	Greg Lissaman	Clare Tizard
Chris Gallagher	Shelley Lush	Ann Tonks
Katherine Giovenali	Don Mamouney	Helen Tsongas
Ryk Goddard	Nick Marchand	Tom Wright
Michael Gow	Peter Matheson	

Interview for Comment

May-Brit Akerholt	Margie Fischer	Peter Matheson
Stephen Armstrong	Chris Gallagher	John McCallum
Virginia Baxter	Keith Gallasch	Aubrey Mellor
Nancy Black	Laura Ginters	Anna Messariti
Ian Brown	Michael Gow	Marilyn Miller
Victoria Chance	Liz Jones	Robyn Nevin
Rosalba Clemente	Jenny Kemp	Sally Richardson
Peter Eckersall	Robyn Kershaw	John Romeril
Megan Elliot	Maryanne Lynch	Fiona Winning
Wesley Enoch	Nick Marchand	Tom Wright

6.5 Appendix: Report on New Writing Development Overseas by Julian Meyrick, September 2005

Overview

In May 2005 I flew to the UK to view shows suitable for Melbourne Theatre Company's program. While there, I also took the opportunity to meet select Literary Agents, Literary Managers and Artistic Directors, to talk about the commissioning and development of new stage writing. The notes that follow are practical observations on how a number of different theatre companies in the UK are currently managing play development.

It was illuminating to see organisations comparable to those in Australia, staffed by people much like ours, struggling with comparable problems. In the literary area these are: the problem of finding suitable new plays, especially for larger venues; the problem of developing plays from first draft stage onwards; the problem of writers who don't complete commissions, or whose completed commissions aren't right for the repertoire; the problem of persuading Artistic Directors to stage new plays, or stage them in anything other than tiny studios for short seasons; and the problem of relating new writing to other areas of performance-making, whether these be physically-based, design-based, sound-based or technology-driven.

But while the companies and problems are analogous, the general environments aren't. The UK presently demonstrates a more successful approach to the development and staging of new drama than the one found in Australia. Three reasons account for this. First, there is considerable grassroots activity in identifying and skilling up potential playwrights. These programs are often stepped, so that the different needs of emerging, experienced and established writers are separately catered for. Second, there is good co-operation between non-commercial and commercial theatre sectors, which means that transfers of suitable new work into the West End are relatively frequent. The rewards for successful playwrights are therefore high. Third, there is a widespread assumption, held by theatre managements, critics and audiences alike, that new stage writing is culturally important, that it should be encouraged, developed and programmed, and that it has as much to say, if not more, to contemporary audiences than a re-appraised classic or a new drama from another culture. Ironically, because this assumption of the value of new local drama is ubiquitous, UK theatres appear relaxed about staging classic and overseas plays, or types of non-text-based work. The staging of new stage writing is not 'an issue' in the way it is in Australia. Or rather, the issue is one of type and quality, because quantitatively the amount of new local drama remains constantly high.

Soho Theatre, Hampstead Theatre, Tricycle Theatre

These are small London-based companies, each of which has as its main focus the development and staging of new work. Each has bright young Literary Managers interested in what is happening in Australia, and keen to talk about what they are up to. All run two spaces (though Hampstead's studio is more rehearsal room than public venue). All give between 6 and 20 commissions annually, for a fee between £5,000 and £8,000. All run writer development programs with junior (first-time writer) and senior (skilled writer) branches.

- a) *Soho Theatre*, based in central London, has a separate Writers' Centre that runs a raft of development schemes. For example, it offers in its building three 'writers' rooms', complete with desk, computer and copying facilities that can be given to writers in need at short notice. The Centre also assesses between 2,000 and 3,000 unsolicited manuscripts a year, i.e. everything that is sent to it. This makes Soho Theatre a first port of call for new UK writers, along with the Royal Court, and maybe the Traverse. And for similar reasons: because new writers are read there with a view to their potential rather than the requirements of a pre-existing program formula. However, this puts the Centre at odds with the Soho Theatre proper, whose agenda is excellence-focused rather than access-focused. Word in the industry is that relations between the two sides of the organisation are tense, and the head of the Writers' Centre, Nina Steiger, will not stay much longer. The Centre offers:
- A script-reading service (for unsolicited scripts)—all plays receive written feedback.
 - Soho Young Writers Development Program—a three-tiered course taking writers from a 'taster group', through a ten-week course, to a 'core group' in which they receive close dramaturgical support and attend master classes over an eight-month period.
 - A writers' attachment program—six writers are chosen for a year-long relationship with the company with the object of developing a full-length play.
 - Launch pad—a year-round program of development workshops, including monthly staged reading).
 - Writers' rooms (as above).
 - Writers' library and newsletter—a play script library and email newsletter offered as a writer resource.
 - Outreach—a program aimed at promoting diversity and inclusiveness in the Soho writers' programs. It includes a youth play festival and schools workshop program.
 - Verity Bargate Award—a biennial prize of £3,500 (plus writer residency) awarded to the most outstanding new play by an emerging playwright.
- b) *Tricycle Theatre*, based in Kilburn, North London, has an audience demographic that is substantially 'non-white'. Part Irish, part African-Caribbean in descent, part Asian, these spectators meld with more traditional white London liberal theatre-goers to make up a multi-cultural audience. Or so the company claims. Without being privy to the Tricycle's audience surveys, one can't say for sure. But they certainly *program* as if the above were true, offering a range of work written and performed by non-white artists. As well as developing a form of verbatim drama that is now a regular feature in programs elsewhere (e.g. *Nuremberg War Crimes Trial*; *The Colour of Justice*; *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*), the Tricycle runs one of the best regarded non-white playwrights' groups in the country, featuring many illustrious names who are loyal to the company. Nick Kent, the Artistic Director, and in his fifties, has the canny look of someone who has been through bad times as well as good. But right now, these are the good times. The Theatre offers:
- Commissions to a range of emerging and established writers from a predominantly non-Anglo background.

- A range of writers' groups for emerging and established writers from a predominantly non-Anglo background.
 - A selective manuscript reading service.
- c) The *Hampstead Theatre*, based in Swiss Cottage, North London, can't be more than three or four miles away from the Tricycle. But its feel and audience make-up couldn't be more different. Essentially, Hampstead Theatre caters for high-brow, intellectual spectators who as likely as not are Jewish. For years, Hampstead's repertoire was a mix of ideas plays and potential West End comedies of the better sort. Now housed in a new 400-seat venue and under the leadership of Tony Clarke (ex-Birmingham Rep). Hampstead offers:
- Commissions to a range of established and emerging writers.
 - Start Nights—very short play presentations that give artists, not just writers, 'a chance to try out new material in front of an audience'.
 - A selective manuscript reading service—the company makes it clear that it expects submitted plays to be fully developed, and that it will not read successive drafts of a rejected script.

Royal Shakespeare Company, Chichester, National Theatre, National Theatre Studio

These are large mixed production houses putting together repertoires of classic, overseas and new British drama in seasons that, in size and complexity, resemble those of Australian CAST companies. While each engages in the commissioning and developing of new work, this is strategically targeted to produce plays that meet the programming needs of individual companies. These needs are different in each instance, and likewise the development programs. The number of commissions given out varies between five and forty a year, with fees ranging between £6,000 and £10,000. This wide deviation reflects the fact that these are companies whose interest in new work is occasional and who are always in a position to program alternate fare (classics, revivals, overseas drama).

- a) *Royal Shakespeare Company*. I met with Jeanie O'Hare, the new Literary Manager (recruited from Hampstead, where she had worked under Jenny Topper). After many years of focusing solely on classics, under current management the RSC is once again taking an interest in new work. This has a low profile but some interesting things are coming out of it (e.g. Zinnie Harris's *Midwinter*), and the commissioning and development program has both good intentions and solid resources behind it. Nevertheless, O'Hare was upfront about how difficult it is to service new dramas in a company whose main season is full of plays that are anything but new. Royal Shakespeare offers:
- A range of commissions to established writers.
 - An annual new play festivals with add-ons—lectures, workshops, meet-and-greets.

“The Royal Shakespeare Company is to try and shed its dusty image and tackle new plays about subjects as varied as British experience in Basra to Irish politics. A New Work Festival, in the first season from the new RSC artistic director Michael Boyd, will comprise four full productions of new plays, readings and work-in-progress...Festival director Dominic Cooke says the aim is to one day 'thread new work into the RSC's program of Shakespeare'.”

- b) *Chichester Festival*, Chichester. Runs a 1,000-plus seat theatre and a 300-plus seat smaller space in a regional town three hours drive from London. Its internal organisation is complex, since it is nominally a ‘festival’, packing its eight-show season into just seven months between April and October. A company of actors is recruited at the start of the year (50 or 60, including musicians, who are covered under the same award). Shows are then rehearsed in repertory, and added incrementally to the season until, by late July, it is theoretically possible to see all eight productions in the course of a single week. Three Artistic Directors run the Festival, though one of these is effectively a General Manager. Each season is individually themed and productions in the Festival Theatre itself make use of a collective ‘concept design’, which in 2004 saw the stage flooded to create an indoor lake (the theme that year being ‘Venice’). Individual sets then layer over this concept. The workload the Festival imposes on all staff during its peak is immense, and key to its viability is a new award allowing management to make use of backstage staff for unlimited hours during ‘on’ months in return for time in lieu during the ‘off’ period. The Festival offers:
- A range of commissions to established writers, mainly translations and/or adaptations of classic works—though the occasional newly written work makes its appearance too.
 - A range of add-ons with a new writing focus, aimed at young playwrights in the immediate region.
- c) *National Theatre/National Theatre Studio*. The empire that is the UK’s national theatre is comprised of a number of smaller fiefdoms, each with their own area of expertise and own agenda. I met with Jack Bradley, who heads the Literary Department at the NT, and (separately) with Lucy Davies, Head of the NT Studio. There is a close relationship between the two that sees the latter develop many of the writers staged by the former. Jack Bradley told me that effectively the Cottesloe, the NT’s smallest theatre (approx. 300 seats), is given over to new work. At its peak a few years ago, it was opening and closing new plays every month. (Bradley implied that this encouraged a ‘never-mind-the-quality-feel-the-width’ approach to play selection.) Lucy Davies pointed out that the Studio was not just devoted to developing writers, and provided me with examples of choreographic, visual and technical workshopping happening under her aegis (which included the development of mixed-media extravaganzas like the NT’s adaptation of Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*). This strengthened my belief that writer development programs thrive best in an atmosphere where a range of other practical work is going on, putting writers in a holistic environment more productive than hot-house atmospheres focused exclusively on text development (like the O’Neill Playwrights Centre). The NT offers:
- A range of commissions to established writers.
 - A range of mentoring and development programs aimed at the best of emerging writers.
 - Workshop facilities for writers, directors and actors developing work for the NT.
 - Office space for writers trying to finish a particular play.
 - A range of add-ons with a new writing focus.
 - A range of add-ons aimed at younger playwrights.

“Central to the Studio’s work is a commitment to new plays and writers. Readings, workshops and funded attachments are some of the ways the Studio supports young playwrights. It introduces them to the working theatre, provides a professional sounding board and gives encouragement, time to follow their hunches, expert advice and a room to write in. Plays developed may then be rehearsed, not for public scrutiny but in a sympathetic environment—tested under laboratory conditions, as it were—before they emerge into the outside world.”

*National Theatre Studio booklet
“Tested Under Laboratory Conditions”*

Meeting with Paines Plough

This meeting with Roxana Silbert, the new Artistic Director of Paines Plough, was one of my most interesting. I had failed to secure a meeting with Vicki Featherstone, the ex-Artistic Director of the company and now Artistic Director of the new Scottish National Theatre. More than any other company—with the possible exception of the Royal Court—Paines Plough is associated with the expansion of new stage writing in the UK over the last ten years. But despite lining up a time months in advance, last minute commitments on Featherstone’s part made her unavailable. Roxana Silbert, however, gave me an overview of Paines Plough’s work and an insight into some of the challenges facing play development at the moment. Among other things, she told me that the old provincial touring circuit was dying—that neither companies nor actors wanted to commit to long runs in the regions any more; that London transfers were vital to the cultural profiling of new work; but that a coalescing European touring circuit was also proving attractive. None of this seems to have slowed the company’s efforts, and the success of their recent *Other England* season—a cycle of newly commissioned plays seeking ‘to create an alternative census of the English language at the beginning of the 21st century’—has re-confirmed its position as a forcing house for the best of new stage writing. Paines Plough offers:

- Commissions to new and established writers, often packaged in thematic ways, or in partnership with other, sometimes non-text based companies.
- Narrow-focus development initiatives, usually excellence-focused, with clear strategic goals—e.g. *Future Perfect*, ‘a national young writers group...[who] will work with Paines Plough over a year on an ambitious development program which aims to create the new generation of theatre writers’.

“The driving force behind Paines Plough is the vision of the playwright, and the company has been discovering new voices in British theatre since 1974. We seek, encourage, develop, support and produce writers nation-wide, touring plays throughout the UK and Europe. At every level writers are encouraged to be courageous to their work, to challenge our notions of theatre and the society we live in.”

Information on Paines Plough provided by the company

Roxana Silbert also gave me some background on the Scottish Playwrights’ Studio, set up some years ago to transform a moribund stage writing scene and produce more programmable Scottish drama:

“The Playwrights’ Studio, Scotland, is a new national initiative designed to directly engage the people of Scotland with new playwriting and raise the standard of plays for presentation to the public. It celebrates, promotes and

develops Scotland's rich and growing culture of writing for live performance; improving and sustaining artistic quality, raising awareness, and increasing access to new playwriting."

www.playwrightsstudio.co.uk

The Scottish Playwrights' Studio is the most comprehensive play development/writer development entity that I came across in my travels. Its numerous schemes and programs are beyond description here. However, what distinguishes it in my mind from a dramaturgical service *per se* is both its advocacy function (within the industry and the government) and the pro-active nature of its approach to existing Scottish theatre companies. That is, its function is not simply to provide a literary resource for the status quo, but to vigorously promote new stage writing by skills development, play development, increased commissioning and increased profiling of local drama. These activities lead to close relationships with Scottish theatres in the actual programming of such drama, a fact borne out by the Studio's aims and objectives:

- 1 Improve access to plays
- 2 Identify new talent
- 3 Increase number of new plays produced
- 4 Develop quality of new plays
- 5 Develop skills and experience of playwrights
- 6 Make best use of existing skills, experience and contacts.

Conclusion

My views on why new stage writing in Australia has struggled recently to establish itself in mainstream repertoires or to appeal to younger artists are on record (*Trapped by the Past: Why Our Theatre is Facing Paralysis*, Currency Press Platform Paper, 2005). Short of large-scale reinvestment at all levels of the industry allowing existing companies to expand their playwright development schemes—if they have any—it is hard to see the current situation turning around of its own accord. My own experience at Melbourne Theatre Company is that mainstream theatres are under intense pressure to serve their core programs, and those programs are under pressure to pay. New stage writing sits uncomfortably in this context because its development is resource-intensive and its risk perception, if programmed, high. Looking at the independent theatre sector, even when the predisposition to stage new plays is there, the performed results are often variable. Personally, I wonder if today the skills relating to play development are widely disseminated enough at the small to medium level to provide an adequate ground for another 'wave' of Australian drama.

The UK companies described above are of various sizes and mandates. Most would describe themselves as 'text-based', though the nature of the drama they commission, develop and stage is very different. In over viewing the current Australian theatre sector, it makes sense to cross-reference overseas experience with our own to ensure that we are 'covering all the bases'. But even without a detailed analysis, there is clearly one kind of entity missing from our industry—the small studio-based and/or touring-based entity, with a focus on new stage writing, set up to work closely with existing theatres to help them develop and program appropriate new plays. Paines Plough is probably the closest example of this type, although the Scottish Playwrights' Studio shows that a service organisation can develop an active approach

to programming if suitably briefed. The key features of such organisations are, I believe, the following:

- 1 The organisation is fundamentally an artistic one, headed by an artist/artists. It has an artistic program, not just a service program, and is judged by the quality of its product, not just the extent of its services.
- 2 The organisation has a 'narrow focus' to its development programs and an ability to change these to reflect changing strategic goals. It is not a resource for every playwright in the country, nor are its programs intended to reflect the needs of writers alone. Its focus should be the line between emerging and established playwrights, serving both kinds of writers, but with the majority of its effort (for self-evident reasons) going in to the first.
- 3 The organisation works closely with other theatres to co-develop and co-present work. It has the resources to mount work of a small-scale nature (i.e. to stage a studio program). But where larger scale production is required, the organisation must find an industry partner. This limitation is actually a strength, since it encourages organisations to spread the risk of staging new work by working co-operatively.

It is possible that such an entity, if properly constituted, would have a catalysing effect on Australian theatre companies, working with them to identify the strongest emerging playwrights and the strongest projects by established ones. If it can attract the best dramaturgical talents, and successfully communicate its message to the industry that play development matters, and that better development leads to better plays, then it will be in a position to 'brand' writers under its remit. This would go a long way to encouraging existing companies to re-examine their commitment to new stage writing, and to implementing strategies to it re-inflate its presence in mainstream and non-mainstream repertoires alike.

6.6 Appendix: Submissions—Independent Theatre Case Study

2003

May: The writer gives the director/dramaturg a script. This partnership has a track record of production. The director and writer have each worked in numerous contexts for almost twenty years.

August–October: There are meetings and formal dramaturgy. The writer applies for the R. E. Ross Playwrights' Script Development Award and wins \$4,500; this represents a \$1,500 fee to the director/dramaturg and \$3,000 to the writer. Award presentation in November 2003 is part of the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

September: Director/dramaturg applies to Arts Vic for project funding with a glowing judges' report.

November: The director/dramaturg applies to the Australia Council for project funds for a production to be produced at Trades Hall in September 2004.

Late December: Notification that project was unsuccessful in obtaining funds from Arts Vic. The project officer at the Australia Council encourages the partnership to let the application stand.

2004

March: Second application made to Arts Vic. Notification that Australia Council application has been unsuccessful. Director writes to arts benefactors, without success, but is impressed by the promptness and graciousness of responses. Script sent to Playbox but no response received.

May: After announcement is made that Playbox has a new artistic director, the director writes to him.

June: Notification from Arts Vic that application is again unsuccessful. Decision to do a profit-share production with cast, but an intended actor drops out. The role requires an older, mid-career actor but few of them are available for a profit-share arrangement. A female performer leaves also, due other commitments, and has to be replaced.

July: Deadline for City of Melbourne Grants is missed because of 'grant submission fatigue' by a team of one operating from a home office. Submission made to Myer Foundation for a separate project.

May–August: The director is in contact with twelve actors, posts six copies of the script, clocks up 210 kms in mileage in meetings with potential performers and is dependent on partner's income.

August: Production cannot proceed in September so is renegotiated with Trades Hall performance venue for December. Reading of the script takes place in the venue with lighting designer and set and costume designer present. (This is entirely voluntary, but professional.) Arts Vic application made for the next project.

September: Director applies to Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority for inclusion on the 2005 VCE Playlist.

October–November: Nine-week rehearsal schedule but director has to replace another performer. The writer is paying for the rehearsal space, a hall in Northcote. Rehearsals are for three days each week. There is a publicist on the project who is working for a reduced-fee version of her usual practice. Publicity will take \$1,000 out of box-office takings. Pre-show publicity shots taken. The designer and her volunteer helper and the stage manager are hard at work gathering props and costumes and calling in favours at education institutions and theatre companies. The director's partner constructs the set from discarded timber. One of the actors designs the flyer. A volunteer takes on front-of-house management.

October: Application to Theatreworks to be considered for a return season in 2005.

November: Application to the Australia Council for the next project. Notification that application to the Myer Foundation was successful.

December: Production opens and goes very well, with a glowing review each in *The Age* and in *Beat*, and a qualified review in the *Herald Sun*. Friends and colleagues rave. But it is a struggle to get audiences as too near Christmas. Show video made with two cameras. The production costs a total of \$7,500 but makes only \$6,000 at the

box-office. Notification from Arts Vic that application for the next show unsuccessful.

2005

January: Director applies to Showcase Victoria, the Regional Arts Victoria event for presenters and producers. As this is director's first experience of 'getting a tour up' as a producer, director attends an information evening at RAV. Advised to have an interval (so the presenter can make money at the bar) and on ideal length of show. Also advised that once presenters have expressed interest, a tour date to be pencilled in, and application made to the Arts Victoria Touring Fund for the touring costs. If unsuccessful, go back to the presenter and 'renegotiate' the cost of the show.

March: Application to Arts Victoria for the next project. DVD of produced work sent to Malthouse for consideration in their 2006 season, but despite positive comments it is not programmed.

April: Selected for RAV Showcase in Ringwood. The director is sent an invoice for \$43 for two lunches. The stage manager is paid \$100 by the director and \$75 spent at Office works on colour copies of the photos and the flyer, and copies of the DVD of the show. Five presenters express interest in booking the show in 2006 and dates confirmed with three of them.

June: Nominated for six Green Room Awards. Malthouse will consider project early in 2006.

August: Application to be part of the Australian Performing Arts Market in Adelaide in 2006 with production. Approach made to Myer Foundation for permission to use the grant for a creative development rather than a production. Application to Arts Victoria for the next project.

September: Application to Long Paddock program. The submission process involves logging onto the Cyberpaddock website and completing an on-line form that asks for details of the touring party, technical specifications and so on, but there is room for a 150-word synopsis of the production. There is nowhere to submit script or DVD excerpts. Two weeks later, the director receives an email informing all who applied to Cyberpaddock that if they have not heard by the following Monday, they have not been successful. The message continues that an unsuccessful production can still be represented at the Long Paddock forum if, by the end of the week, the director can send 70 copies of script, photos, CD-ROM or DVD to Western Australia where the meeting will be held. Director laughs out loud. Notification that unsuccessful for Long Paddock, which suits director who cannot afford to go to Western Australia.

To be continued ...

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