

MUSIC COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

Focus Group Sydney- Artists

Venue: SSO Offices, Pitt Street Sydney

Date: 24 May 2010

Time: 2pm-5pm

Chair	Richard Letts, MCA
Present	
Lyn Williams	Gondwana Voices
Brett Weymark	Sydney Philharmonia Choirs
Roland Peelman	The Song Company
Andrew Batt-Rawden	Chronology Arts
Alex Pozniak	Chronology Arts
Raff Marcellino	Composer
David Worrall	MCA
Damien Ricketson	Ensemble Offspring
Lynn Gailey	MCA
James Nightingale	New Music Network
Jehan Kanga	MCA Youth Music Council

Questions and issues raised:

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- What can we learn from the overseas classical music industry that can be applied to here?
- Audiences renewing in the 45+ year age bracket rather than in their 20s. There is a special need to attract young audiences
- Presentation- US studies show people are resisting the presentation, not the music itself.
- Finding serious new repertoire for a large orchestral audience, which is the economic backbone of the sector.
- The term "Classical" can be interpreted in many different ways. "Art music" may be a better term – it's more inclusive.
- Community participation rates are low. Increasing this, even at amateur level, will increase audience numbers
- Why are some venues more successful than others? Proximity to performers/ Intimacy?

- Are we suffering from a lack of venues that are suitable and affordable for small to medium organisations? There should be an audit of all the possible venues in each major city.
- Recently changed licensing laws now allow for live music in restaurants and bars in NSW. Should we be making use of this in order to make classical music more accessible to the general public?
- Should we be combining with the other arts in performance?
- Would there be any benefit for venues if small to medium arts companies were offered a more affordable deal during off peak times?
- How have trends changed in the past 25 years? Is there a change in what audiences come to?
- In the past 25 years the arts have declined in regional centres.
- The over-professionalisation of the music industry has meant audiences have lost ownership of the music they are going to see.
- How do we revitalise the performing arts in regional areas?
- Could we increase the number of regional time-specific festivals? Where would be some appropriate places?
- It has become increasingly difficult for any organisation to prove its economic viability. Realisation should be a goal in itself and non-monetary values should be emphasised.
- We need to be careful not to alienate existing audiences while trying to build new ones.
- Audiences are becoming much more discerning due to the increasing choice in the market. Clever marketing is needed to attract people.
- How do we act in the community to engage more people?
- There are no regular segments on news programs, including on the ABC, dedicated to the arts or music. The fact that it isn't on the news can make the public think that it isn't worth anything. Could the ABC replace one sports item with something on the arts in every program?
- What is being done about the proposed arts precinct on Hickson Road in Sydney?
- We need to think about Australian Content objectives on the arts channels.
- Could large orchestras and ensembles undertake a regional tour of the major cities in order to engage local communities? There are many town halls and performance venues that are empty most of the time.
- We need to make a clear and powerful statement about the core values of classical music. We do not do this, and the values discussion is dominated by the market.

EDUCATION

- Should we be giving school aged children musical experience outside of the school curriculum?
- There is a problem with music education in many schools, but there is potential for a good music education outside of the school curriculum. This, however, is not always accessible to children in regional areas.
- There is a need to maintain the independence of music as a faculty in schools and universities.
- Could the new Rudd school halls house an arts company? – a contra of a home in return for time with students and teachers. School venues can be empty 50% of the time. It would be beneficial to the students to have artists in residence. How do we get around the public liability issues?
- Many teachers are frightened to teach music as they have not had an adequate music education themselves. How do we educate the teachers?
- In Europe there are heavily subsidised municipal conservatoriums. NSW is the only State with such institutions but they are only lightly subsidised and charge market rates. How can we make a similar model work here, providing inexpensive access to expert music instruction in regional centres?
- There should be more opportunities for regional children to attend a live performance. Musica Viva has a wide reach, however this is not to all schools. Could other large organisations do something similar?
- How do we teach young musicians financial skills and how to market themselves and generate an audience? Is there a gap in education at the tertiary/ secondary level, remembering that the mainstream popular music business model is not useful in this sector.
- The impact of every child having a computer- this has changed the experience of music. The importance of seeing and experiencing live music needs to be stressed.
- Children used to be exposed to more live music through other artforms, where now there are often pre recorded soundtracks used. Could we encourage more interaction, for example, between dance ensembles and live orchestras?
- At the elite level, are children and young adults being given false expectations that everyone will end up being a soloist? Does this devalue other avenues in a music career?
- Could we use sport as an example? In football there are many layers beneath the professional level which keep the community actively involved. This in itself generates interest in professional matches.
- There is no place for school leavers to go if they want to continue playing their instrument for enjoyment.

- It is increasingly difficult to convince students of the value of delayed gratification when it comes to performing music.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

- Should we be using digital media to make classical music more visible? Eg, iTunes, live streaming.
- How do we make use of new technology to connect with people?
- How can we use the new broadcasting streams to tell the whole of Australia what is going on in the performing arts?
- Could there be a radio network to provide classical music to younger audiences?
- Social networking sites could be a way to encourage audience members to take more ownership of the music.
- Is there a place for iPhone apps for ensembles and arts organisations?
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OTHER QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

- Should small to medium organisations be combining to lobby for government funding?
- How do small organisations and musicians approach the government? Could there be a session developed by the MCA to teach small organisations to lobby effectively?
- Can we locate a figurehead who can articulate general concerns to the minister?
- Could there be an MCA led group that meets every six months to come up with various goals and lobby together?
- Could similar organisations be linked to enable funding and infrastructure to be more effective?

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Proposed actions:

ADVOCACY

- The formation of a focus group that meets on occasion for political lobbying.
- A list of press release syndication websites to be made available.
- MCA to organise workshops in lobbying /advocacy
- Develop and promote a statement to assert the core classical music artistic values
- Persuade ABC TV to include an arts story every evening, possibly replacing one sports story

VENUES

- An organised effort to address the lack of venues in Sydney – survey of needs, current venues, possible sources of additional venues especially through government
- Find a way to link small arts organisations with schools, especially by becoming artists in residence in the new (or existing) school halls.

COMMUNITY

- Build music making activity at community level. Look at the model offered by sport e.g. soccer.
- Provide performing opportunities for school leavers.
- EDUCATION
- Find a way to ensure school teachers are educated adequately to teach music
- Extend music education for school children outside the curriculum and outside the school
- Educate artists in self-management skills

AUDIENCES

- Find strategies to revitalise ongoing artistic activity, build audiences in the regional areas and at community level.
- Use new technologies and new media to find new ways of connecting with people, especially a young audience.