

**SERVING ARTISTS
SERVES THE PUBLIC:**

**PROGRAMMING
ARTS FESTIVALS IN
ASIA AND EUROPE**



Serving Artists Serves the Public: Programming Arts Festivals in Asia and Europe

Publisher

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in collaboration with the European Festivals Association and LASALLE College of the Arts.

Coordinator

Claire Wilson

Editorial Team

Claire Wilson, Katelijn Verstraete, Audrey Wong,
Verena Tay, Kathrin Deventer, Juliane Reissig,
Kalaivani Karunanathy, Valentina Riccardi, Sali Sasaki.

Designer

FurryFish
www.furryfish.com

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For more information, please contact:

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)
31 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 119595
info@asef.org
www.asef.org

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A programme of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)
www.culture360.org
info@culture360.org

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
INTRODUCTION	2
Introduction <i>by Audrey Wong</i>	3
ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING AND BEYOND	7
Introduction: Beyond Artistic Programming <i>by Audrey Wong</i>	8
Serving Artists Serves the Public <i>by Robyn Archer</i>	9
Art, a Programme, an Audience <i>by Hugo De Greef</i>	18
MAKING A FESTIVAL: THE CONTEXT	22
Introduction: A Festival Comes from a Context <i>by Audrey Wong</i>	23
Making Arts Festivals in India <i>by Shivangi Ambani</i>	24
Attakkalari India Biennial: Towards Creating a Vibrant Contemporary Dance Platform in India <i>by Shiva Pathak</i>	36
Festivals in China <i>by Mu Qian</i>	40
New Media Festivals in the Netherlands <i>by Hans van Rompaey</i>	45

SERVING THE PUBLIC?	52
Introduction: Which Public Do We Serve and How? <i>by Audrey Wong</i>	53
Exploring New Festival Typologies in Europe <i>by Ramona Laczko David</i>	54
Festivals and Communities: Two Thai Case Studies <i>by Toby To</i>	59
Singapore: Festivals for All? <i>by Katelijn Verstraete</i>	63
CAPACITY BUILDING FOR YOUNG FESTIVAL MANAGERS	71
Introduction: It's the People Who Make a Festival <i>by Audrey Wong</i>	72
A Festival Manager's Job Evolves Along with the Festival <i>by Daniela Mišcov</i>	73
Case Study on Co-production: <i>Nijinsky Siam</i> <i>by Judith Staines, Sophie Travers, MJ Chung</i>	81
EFA: A Network for Advocacy, Training and Capacity Building <i>by Kathrin Deventer</i>	86
Reflections on the Atelier for Young Festival Managers <i>by Hugo De Greef</i>	94
CONCLUSION	100
Conclusion: Final Reflections <i>by Audrey Wong</i>	101
Contributors	102
Publishers	105

FOREWORD

This publication, *Serving Artists Serves the Public: Programming Arts Festivals in Asia and Europe* is the fruit of a collaboration between the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the European Festivals Association (EFA) and LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

In May 2011, these partners joined forces to organise the *Atelier for Young Festival Managers*, the first Asia-based initiative by EFA, in conjunction with the Singapore Arts Festival.

The project was introduced in Asia by Goh Ching-Lee, Founder/ Artistic and Executive Director of CultureLink Singapore, and was kindly supported by arts benefactor Dr Haruhisa Handa, Chairman of the Japan-based International Foundation for Arts and Culture (IFAC). His gift enabled ASEF to support the participation of 17 young festival managers from 12 countries of Asia and Europe.

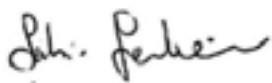
The idea for this publication grew with the intention of sharing the experience of the Atelier, while including the reflections of other professionals working in this field. Besides the many practical aspects relating to arts management and artistic programming, the publication aims to highlight other topics and issues that were discussed during the event, such as the social role played by both local and international festivals, and the various contextual challenges that they face.

This publication shall, therefore, serve as a practical tool of information for aspiring festival managers, as well as inspirational reading material with relevant 'food for thought'.

It also has a strong focus on Asian festivals since much less has been written about contemporary festivals in Asia, in comparison to Europe. Festivals in Asia are growing exponentially and we believe that an increased understanding of this changing environment is also important to generate new frameworks for cultural cooperation in Asia and Europe.

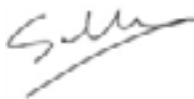
To conclude, we would like to thank everyone who took part in the process of making this publication, and we look forward to reaching out to more potential partners and contributors in view of a second edition.

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)



*Sabina Santarossa, Director,
Cultural Exchange
Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)*

LASALLE College of the Arts



*Chew Suyin, Head,
School of Arts Management,
Faculty for the
Creative Industries*

European Festivals Association



*Darko Brlek, President,
European Festivals Association*



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

by Audrey Wong



Participants at the opening of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011 in Singapore. Photo credit: ASEF

The word ‘festival’ is often received with enthusiasm, and gets people excited; it might be the association of the concept with ideas of celebration, gatherings, social ritual, and merrymaking. Today, festivals are eagerly welcomed by tourism boards (and tourists themselves), city authorities, businesses and governments, recognised for their revenue-generating potential and profile-raising possibilities.

Festivals come in different forms — food festivals, book and literary festivals, festivals celebrating particular cultural traditions or heritage, film festivals, religious festivals, and so on. What about the ‘arts’ festival? What is its role in society and why should we care about the how and why of making arts festivals?

One reason to care may be that a festival often surfaces or raises to public awareness, certain issues that are important for a society, neighbourhood, or other groupings of people. These issues may already be known and revealed publicly, or

remain latent, still to be articulated in the public domain. Issues of identity, representation, power, authority, marginalisation, boundaries of expression, ownership (whether ownership of certain expressions of culture or more literally, ownership of property and land which festivals may occupy) and social relevance are just some of the common topics of debate around the manifestation of festivals. A festival and its modus operandi — how it is programmed, who programmes it, who founded it, how it is marketed, who attends it — can be put under the microscope by those who feel they have some stake in it, whether they are the government, funding bodies, sponsors, artists or audiences.

As cities compete globally for economic position (where arts and culture have become part of the terms of the competition) a festival can be contested terrain for different interest groups. The terms “creative cities” and “cultural capitals” have entered into the discourse of politicians as well as the public, and indeed, into the language of some arts practitioners as well.

Against such an environment, it is worthwhile to take a step back and reflect more deeply on what lies behind the art of running, managing, programming festivals. The focus of the European Festivals Association's Atelier for Young Festival Managers on the 'work' of enabling creation within the context of a festival, reminds us that at the heart of an arts festival lie the art and artists themselves. What does this actually mean? This publication focuses on searching for answers to this question.

The Atelier for Young Festival Managers, initiated by the European Festivals Association (EFA) in 2006, is especially designed for those who are working or have ambitions to become involved in programming or in programming related departments within a festival. During 7 days, 45 carefully selected participants from a broad diversity of countries can widen their horizons, broaden their programming skills and develop exciting new ideas under the professional guidance of renowned festival managers coming from all over the world to share their rich experience. Next to a high-level reflection in small topic-based working groups, lectures and debates, practical activities and case studies, interactive exchanges based on papers that participants prepare for the Atelier, informal talks and contacts with artists and with leading cultural institutions from the region create an outstanding opportunity to link insights gained in the working groups with the concrete environment. More information about the Atelier at www.atelierforyoungfestivalmanagers.eu.

Speaking about the importance of artists, however, is not always received sympathetically by policy makers and funders. Answering their questions often leads festival

managers down a dangerous road in the discourse on festivals. Arts festival organisers are often asked: What is the relevance of your festival to the public? Who are your audiences? Who benefits? As Robyn Archer reminds us in the first article, *Serving Artists Serves the Public*, arts managers and festival organisers are often under pressure to demonstrate in concrete and quantitative terms, the benefits of their programmes, turning our attention away from the complex work of art-making to focusing instead on instrumental reporting. Underlying such questions is the assumption that the artist and art is divorced from the public. Should not one ask whether this assumption is true?

The title of this publication proposes a different perspective on this question: we claim that "serving artists serves the public". This was, indeed, the theme of the closing session of the first Asian Atelier for Young Festival Managers, initiated by the European Festivals Association (EFA), and co-organised by EFA, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and LASALLE College of the Arts, in Singapore in May 2011. The Atelier was brought to Asia by Goh Ching-Lee of CultureLink Singapore. This publication is part of the outcome of the 7-day training programme, containing a series of papers by festival organisers, arts managers and observers, reflecting on the theme.

This publication is envisaged not only as a collection of papers, thoughts and case studies on current and recent developments in arts festivals, but is also intended for use as a learning tool for young arts management students. At the end of each section is a short piece of text proposing questions and learning points for students. We view 'students' as everyone who wishes to know more and learn about the art of festival-making, and thus we hope that this publication will be useful to those working in the arts.

The Purpose of this Publication

What is at stake in a festival?

The focus of this publication is not on the tools and techniques required for the successful management of arts festivals. We will not talk about marketing, audience analysis, sponsorship, best practices, and so on. Rather, this publication looks at a fundamental question of festival management in detail: Why a festival? What's at stake? And to arts and festival managers, the question is asked: What is your own stake in organising the festival? What are you doing about it? What is your festival doing in your location, in your part of the world?

Along the way, the articles cover key concepts of festival-making as well as the kinds of capacities and qualities which the festival manager and director constantly pursue in their course of work. In this sense, some 'tools' can be found; however, discussion of these 'tools' is rooted ultimately in the larger question of the purpose and meaning of festivals.

The intention of the publication is to provoke self-reflection on the part of the reader. The role, function, purpose and meaning of festivals in any locality is always changing as the social, economic and political contexts change and as trends in the structure and modus operandi of festivals evolve. Hence, it is essential that festival managers understand these contexts, and for them to evolve their own strategies based on knowledge, experience and reflection, to create arts festivals that are meaningful, relevant and ultimately, as Hugo De Greef expresses in his article, to "create in a splendid way and present art to excel in a sustainable manner over the long run."



First day of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011 at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore.
Photo credit: ASEF

The structure of the publication

The publication has been organised according to 4 broad themes: Artistic Programming and Beyond; Making a Festival: The Context; Serving the Public?; and Capacity Building for Young Festival Managers. It is hoped that the themes take the reader through a particular journey of understanding.

The first section *Artistic Programming and Beyond* covers “big questions” and the larger context of festival-making. The paper by Robyn Archer asks us to stop and consider the larger meaning and purpose of festivals in an age when public funding for arts is constantly at risk of being cut. She argues that ultimately, serving the artists does in fact, serve the public. We should perhaps argue for the benefit of the arts to society in a different way, from a fresh perspective. Hugo de Greef then articulates what is for him, the point and purpose of festivals – the work with artists and the generation of meaning. These two papers by veterans in the festival sector are reflective and in fact, likely to provoke questions in the reader’s mind as well.

In the second section *Making a Festival: The Context*, we have papers that describe the current evolution of festivals in specific countries with their own political systems and different kinds of public and private infrastructure and support for the arts. In Asia, arts festivals are a fairly recent phenomenon, and in a country like China, there are still strict government controls over who is allowed to even organise a festival. What are the contexts and environments in which festival directors and managers are working in Asia? How do festivals thrive and survive? Are there larger social needs that festivals are being asked to serve? How are festivals organised in these localities? In these contexts, what is considered a meaningful arts festival?

The third section of the publication, *Serving the Public?*, links locality and place and the culture that is particular


to these localities, to innovation in programming and questions about the artistic direction of festivals and their relevance to the ‘public’. Moving from new festivals emerging in Europe that address social concerns and needs to two different localities in Thailand and Singapore, this section also reveals the diversity of festival models around the world.

The fourth section on *Capacity Building for Young Festival Managers* turns its attention to the challenges for festival managers and building capacity for those who run and manage arts festivals. For festival managers — indeed for most managers in the arts — personal and professional development are intimately intertwined. Developing one’s personal capacity for the work of festivals is therefore crucial. How do we define this ‘capacity’ and what are the qualities required of a festival manager, and how does one go about acquiring experience? Case studies and personal reflections from festival managers and artists will deal with these questions.

At the end of each section are boxed texts which guide the reader to further reflection and research.

The publishers hope that this publication will be a useful tool in particular for young people entering the field of festival and arts management. The articles also present a snapshot of the current state of play, especially in the context of arts festivals in Asia and these papers also serve as useful documentation for those seeking a better understanding of the field.

Finally, we do not make any claims to be comprehensive in covering the festivals in Asia or Europe - it would be impossible to do so in a publication like this. Readers can seek out further readings and resources through the various networks that are mentioned in this publication; indeed, we hope that this publication stimulates readers to continue their own lines of inquiry!



**ARTISTIC
PROGRAMMING
AND BEYOND**

INTRODUCTION: BEYOND ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

by Audrey Wong

The two texts in this section by Robyn Archer and Hugo de Greef pose important questions for those of us working in the arts and cultural sector now, when the economic crisis spreading globally threatens to derail artistic initiatives that people have worked hard for decades to establish. Apart from arts funding cuts, arts workers are once again being asked to justify why society and government needs to pay attention to arts and culture.

One of the arguments posed here, is that arts and festival managers should not fall into the trap of using the purely economic discourse of KPIs¹, measureable outcomes and markets to argue for what they do. What is at stake is not “merely” attention from those in power in society, those who hold the financial resources — we need to answer very seriously, and in a considered manner, the question of ‘what’ is the arts and ‘why’ the arts. One detects the glimmer of an answer in these almost-poetic texts: the work behind the arts, the reason *why*, is ‘meaning’.

It follows then, that the work of the festival manager and programmer is to enable the conditions for artists to create meaning for us, for the public. Hugo De Greef states this clearly: “this

is the essence of making and presenting art: the generation of meaning.”

How do festival managers let this work of generating meaning happen? One is by giving opportunities for new artistic works to happen, which in turn stimulates new ideas to circulate in society. It also means that the festival programmer needs to look into the different modes of creating work — going beyond artists who work in more socially-accepted or mainstream modes, and seeking out artists who might be trying out a new or different, and innovative, artistic language. Whether artists are trying out new forms, using new technologies, doing “socially engaged art” such as engaging with communities who have traditionally not been represented in arts festivals, or communities defined by specific qualities, there is a discipline and thinking employed which the festival manager needs to take into account. Ultimately, the festival manager has a responsibility to the art and the artistic process: the heart of the work in the arts. One of the responsibilities, which can also be seen later in this publication through the case studies of co-production, is “a thorough knowledge of the artists and their work... follow the artist’s development and assess what

will be presented to the audience.” There is also the responsibility of taking the artist and the work to the audience, the public, making them ‘acquainted’; through this connection of artist and audience, meaning is also created.

Robyn Archer poses a challenge to festival and arts managers who are often under tremendous pressure to deliver results and numbers, and reminds us that festival and arts managers ultimately have a social responsibility as well: “In the festival context, it may be dangerous only to think about your market, your audience and how to serve it. If you are only in the business of giving your market what it wants, how do you stimulate the creative muscle in your society? This will only happen if you expose them to the new. How do you expose people to the new?”

¹ Key Performance Indicators is industry jargon for performance measurement, frequently used in Singapore.

SERVING ARTISTS SERVES THE PUBLIC

by Robyn Archer

The following text is taken from a speech given as part of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers in Singapore, May 2011.



Robyn Archer giving a keynote speech at the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011 at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. Photo credit: ASEF

There is at present, in many and varied cities, regions and countries, an intense focus on audiences; and in one form or another, aspects of arts and culture have been in question for a long time. We now must take into account not only those audiences who are likely to be interested in what artists in all genres produce (the arts audience), but also those potential audiences who may not yet have encountered the arts.

The festival construct itself, applicable to all festivals, has been widely observed for many years now as a highly successful marketing tool. For more than half a century, data has been gathered to show that people are more likely to attend a performance in a festival context than if that performance is a one-off event: this especially applies to slightly edgier or riskier work. During festivals new audiences are created, and existing

audiences get more adventurous. But as useful as data-gathering can be in the financial and political context, and as necessary as it has become for most arts organisations to justify their existence, it can create problems for artists, as well as rewards.

During the last half of the twentieth century there were various approaches to government for justifying funding to the arts. It's a matter of perpetual grief to many of us in the arts that the case is not self-evident. I will refer to the thorny matter of evaluating the arts a little later, but suffice to say here that I think we all understand that a civilised society's hallmark is in the way it regards and supports

“During festivals new audiences are created and existing audiences get more adventurous.”

arts and culture as a core value to all citizens. I was recently at a football match in Adelaide and sat next to a fellow Ambassador of that club: he

is Australia's (and one of the world's) most celebrated craniofacial surgeons. He is currently reading Joyce's *Ulysses* and will use that

book as a centrepiece to an upcoming keynote to surgeons. He said that you can have all kinds of professions — surgeons, engineers, judges — and they will all have infinite expertise and wisdom around their own patch, but it is only the arts which create awareness across the whole spectrum.

Unfortunately it is not a view shared at all times by all of those who have the power of the purse-strings, and so over the years there has grown a perceived need at various critical times for successive waves of justification. One of the strongest has been jobs. The arts create jobs. When we think of what surrounds a theatre production — carpenters, lighting technicians, publicists, cleaners, caterers, ushers, ticket-sellers, launderers, printers, drivers, on and on, in addition to the core group of actors, director, designer, composer, etc. — we can see that the arts do indeed create many jobs.

But that data-collection has had a couple of consequences: on the one hand you have an industrialisation of the arts to the point where arts boards have members with only business skills and no understanding of the way the arts work, and arts companies are weighed down by the weight of paperwork, acquittals and statistics to justify their existence. On the other hand, it is often forgotten that without the first spark of creation — the authors sitting alone with some concept popping into their brain, or the collective working through all kinds of material to arrive at what they will start working into a new production — there is nothing around which all those subsequent jobs eventually develop. Without the art and the artist, nothing follows.

When it was announced that President Obama would be constructing a national stimulus package, lobby groups went to work to battle for a portion of that package to go to the arts. This was in the face of hundreds of museums closing their doors, and companies folding — most often because in that country where government funding is not the principal source of income for

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the arts, their vital philanthropic lifeline had been cut off — and that same well-heeled audience was also not going out as much.

I was speaking at that time in New York to the annual conference of American Performing Arts Presenters and found that their powerful lobbying was invoking FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt) and the New Deal. At the time of the 1929 New York Stock Exchange Crash and the Great Depression, which we must recall had dire consequences, then, as now, for the rest of the world, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then President of the United States of America, constructed The New Deal, and part of that New Deal was the WPA — the Works Progress Administration which was the

stimulus project of its time. It included the arts, often by putting artists on a payroll to document the times. Many authors, film-makers, writers and photographers joyfully signed up for a working wage and projects which they found stimulating and satisfying along with the feeling they were ‘helping out’. But it has to be said that many also protested the idea that they had to work on prescribed projects deemed useful, rather than deserving to be paid just to continue the intense trajectory of their own work.

The lobbying proved successful, and although US Dollar (USD) 50 million was not a lot in the context of the billions of dollars in stimulus money — and probably quite out of proportion in terms of how many Americans are working or otherwise involved in the arts — nevertheless those in the arts took great heart that at least there was some recognition of the role of the arts in American life.

Currently we are in another wave of justification — and its name is community. Many artists are happy to work in community and with social engagement. There is a new wave of young artists for whom pressing issues in a wide range of areas — environment, ecology, refugees, democracy itself — are integral to their work.

In conversation with an accomplished artist and documentary filmmaker, I asked him: “Why do you do all your projects out in tiny towns in the Australian bush?” He said, ‘Rural and regional Australia has got all this ‘latent and cultural wealth’. We are not good at history and we should pay attention to the wealth of wisdom that is just lying fallow out there.” So this artist is a miner, excavating regional Australia for the wealth of stories and knowledge that lies beneath the surface of remote communities — and will be lost to us if not for artists, like Malcolm McKinnon, who are willing to find and preserve that wealth in creative ways.

I have done a great deal of work of this kind in the past and I chaired the Australia Council’s Community Cultural Development Board, but in the midst of this good work and its great benefits, we are yet again going to forget the moment of creation, and the support of those whose job is simply an exercise of the creative imagination, something out of nothing, and uninhibited by social necessity.

If anyone dares to say that artists must be socially engaged, let’s never forget

“Do you only work for your passion, or do you work for society? It’s a good question—because if your passion goes beyond individual creativity and you want a clear and measurable effect in the wider world—then there are smart ways to do this.”

that artists are also human beings and citizens: they also pay taxes and eat and thus support the food and power industries. They too pay bills, and raise children for the future. Of necessity they are engaged. Must they also direct their work exclusively to works that are also of direct benefit to society? I maintain they bring that benefit whatever they do.

I am wholly supportive of, and I frequently commission, artists who wish to work in a context of social engagement. The question could be posed: do you only work for your passion, or do you work for society? It’s a good question — because if your passion goes beyond individual creativity and you want a clear and measurable effect in the wider world — then there are smart ways to do this. There’s an arts company in Australia called Big hART. They do beautiful, excellent projects all over Australia, especially

in remote areas, and especially with outsider cultures. One example was *GOLD*, a study of farmers having to walk off the land and leave their properties because of drought and their usual practice is to train young people (most of whom who have had problems at home or on the streets) in a new technique (in this case, interviewing) to record the stories. Another example, *Namatjira*, is about the famous Australian Aboriginal painter who faced many severe challenges in his life, but the show is connected to a study of the local arts centre and the role of such centres as the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Australia.

These projects are done with virtually no arts funding. Their funding comes from social welfare, police and others because of their outstanding non-recipient rate. One of their founding members, Scott Rankin, takes changes in government policy as a constantly shifting opportunity. He looks at their priorities and because the communities and range of artists and young people he works with is so vast, he can usually bend a project to these priorities and get it funded. So this kind of “start with the need” and be flexible enough

“No mathematical or scientific challenge can equal the arts—especially the shock of the new. The most important quality of such a structure would be Resilience.”

to bend your art to that current need, works very well for some. However, I would also strenuously argue for a holistic structure which also supports artistic endeavour per se. Dr Vilayanur S. Ramachandran has done extensive experimentation to show that the arts are by far the best means of enlivening all parts of the brain at the same time. No mathematical or scientific challenge can equal the arts — especially the shock of the new. The most important quality of such a structure would be Resilience.

Resilience is defined as “the ability of any system to absorb unexpected disturbance without wholly changing its nature and function”. We are currently experiencing a whole range of unexpected disturbances (economic, earthquake, drought, tsunami, to name a few) and the arts sector (and many others too) is found wanting in resilience. The theory comes first from economics, and then from environmental streams, and I use it for the arts. Briefly, everything is cyclical. A forest will grow beautifully for 150 years, and then start to implode. If you have only taken care of the top of the trees, the beautiful canopy, and neglected the

undergrowth then you will be faced with chaos at the ultimate implosion. But if you’ve cared for the growth close to the ground, then your forest will continue to grow without a huge period of absence or chaos.

So the automatic response in the face of crisis is to let your undergrowth die, and shore up your tallest and most beautiful. However, it’s exactly what you ought not to do. To build resilience you must maintain education, experiment and support the smaller stuff closer to the ground. It’s easier to maintain in hard times and it caters specifically to your future audience.

So, what is needed is a structure which does not topple when times get tough, which is built in a way that will also withstand this agonising roller coaster of good times for the arts and then bad times the minute an unexpected disturbance hits. And the only thing that will allow that to happen is to create an unassailable evaluation of the arts, something written into *everyone’s* constitution, not just the UN Bill of Human Rights. It would value a stable framework for artists to be able to continue their creative process, even when times are tough. We cannot

survive without brave creative thinking on all fronts, and nothing stimulates all those fronts like the arts.

Therefore, in the festival context, it may be dangerous only to think about your market, your audience and how to serve it. If you are only in the business of giving your market what it wants, how do you stimulate the creative muscle in your society? This will only happen if you expose them to the new. How do you expose people to the new?

You support artists in the creative process, to come up with the new, and then you support the results of the creative process to get to the public. Then commerce usually grabs up the very best of those ideas (for example, advertising, digital applications or fashion) and the innate creativity is even further dispersed. It’s a vast ecological network which will be starved of the nutrition it needs if you don’t maintain constant creative process in the arts. If you care about your people, you will not put the majority of your funding only into those things which people already know and love.



Discussion at the Esplanade in the framework of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011. Photo credit: ASEF

If people already know and love things, then there is indeed a market, and some of that market ought to be able to operate on commercial terms. A government ought not to get in the way of the commercial and entrepreneurial transaction between supply and demand, but it should support those things which have as yet no market, but show splendid potential. Of course there is nervousness, but look at scientific research. Some scientists spend their whole lives failing, but no one questions the value of their work. Those failures are contributing to the much greater and longer path to eventual success. Why do

we not value artistic experiment in the same way, as an invaluable contribution to human progress, whether the specific project succeeds to please a public or not? To build resilience we need to be more robust in our arguments for the value of research and development in the field of artistic endeavour.

"If you are only in the business of giving your market what it wants, how do you stimulate the creative muscle in your society?"



Plenary session during the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011. Photo credit: ASEF

“It’s great to support that activity, but it will be greater if policymakers develop a methodology for equal interaction of artists in decision making and planning, not just developing policies to which artists are forced to respond.”

As to community, I believe we are in a time when young artists are more socially engaged. As I said before, we are again in a lively time when politics and society and issues of community at the grassroots level are intimately related to what many artists are doing and want to do. It’s great to support that activity, but it will be greater if policymakers develop a methodology for equal interaction of artists in decision making and planning, not just developing policies to which artists are forced to respond. And we ought not to neglect those great contributors to community who insist on working on their own terms, not because they are selfish, but because their most effective contribution will come when they remain true to themselves and their muse.

Festivals are often in a unique position to offer all kinds of opportunities to artists whose passion is to stimulate us. In a sense, ‘community’ is a loaded word — are artists not part of various communities? For example, of a community where they live, where they buy, they send their children to school?

We can easily find ways for festivals to embrace broad audiences, but always with respect for that audience to enjoy things that are new and fresh and stimulating, not just feeding them the crumbs of worn-out entertainments. We can also always find avenues for work which has arisen from community, when artists do engage in this way, inspired by the stories and courage of certain communities. But we must also serve those artists who don’t work in those overt ways, yet still have incredible value to community in that their difficult and painstaking process eventually comes up with new ideas and forms which eventually make their way into our lives.

If we commission and support the kind of art which is genuinely creative, not just copying, not just recycling, then we are doing the greatest service we can to our audiences, our community, our society. We are presenting them with the means to stimulate in them the creative muscle and awareness they need to go out and do all their respective jobs in a way that works towards a more

“If we commission and support the kind of art which is genuinely creative, not just copying, not just recycling, then we are doing the greatest service we can to our audiences, our community, our society.”

engaged society, a clever society, and one receptive to new ideas.

Some of these artists will passionately wish to work in community and to see that effect close at hand and immediate. Others will work in artistic isolation, but their ideas will be disseminated equally for the good of society. Having argued for art in community for twenty years now, it's terrific to see it being taken up with such enthusiasm in so many countries. But I hope in that generous sense of inclusion, we do not lose sight of the inherent value of the arts, and artistic process which is often extremely private.

This is a very different approach from only looking at the audience, deciding what they like. If the arts go on relying only on their consequent benefits — jobs in the industry, contributions to community well-being, usefulness in education and health — then, I believe, we are not building resilience.

We just continue to sidestep the most difficult measure of valuing the arts, that is the inherent value of having people in your society working at the edge of new ideas and creativity, experimenting, sometimes revealing those experiments, sometimes those experiments succeeding, sometimes failing. This is an argument that needs to be developed, refined and passionately presented every time someone says, “These artists are just selfish and indulgent, doing obscure work we don't understand and making no contribution to our society.” Unless we have convincing arguments against

that false accusation, we will never have a resilient on-going framework for the continuous support of creative endeavour.

There is a concern when engaging with governments that the arts are not seen as elitist. This is interesting. When major sports organisations take Ministers on a tour of their stadia or facilities, they are at pains to show that they are in an elite group, with fabulous elite facilities for the training of elite sports people. We need to develop strong arguments also for elite artists, and elite groups of audiences. If we develop into a mono-middle-of-the-road always audience-pleasing globalised culture, then we are doomed.

The democratisation of opinion through new communication technologies has rendered expert opinion almost extinct. The arts are a three-legged stool: artists, audiences and the conversation that surrounds, disseminates and interprets them. Our third leg is vaster today, but wobblier. I love to hear the constructive views of someone who is an expert in the field, someone who loves the art and knows about it and can mediate opinions about it. But the only way expert critical opinion is going to survive is if it takes on the responsibility of developing itself as an art form which can engage public interest because it is great and engaging writing or speaking, as well as carrying the weight of experience and knowledge of the form.

Otherwise we are left only with what audiences like or do not like, and

“We need to develop strong arguments also for elite artists, and elite groups of audiences. If we develop into a mono-middle-of-the-road always audience-pleasing globalised culture, then we are doomed.”

while every taste is valid, the best commentators can create an expanded awareness, a context both historical and geographical, and can start to expand taste, and thus, in my opinion, tolerance for new and different perspectives.

I think the reality is that when we think about audiences or community in isolation, we don't necessarily serve the arts. It is possible, in times of bread and circuses, to please audiences without artists. However, I would argue you do not serve your audiences well if you only please them. You are not stimulating the curious and creative in them and thus not availing yourselves of the very best means to inject new ideas and energy into your society.

But I do absolutely believe that if you serve artists, you serve audiences. There are some, but very few artists who will claim they do not need or want an audience. Most work in remarkable ways to fashion their most imaginative work, and they want to take that before the public and share that awareness of the human condition with others, they want it debated and responded to.

The result of that invention and creative process is thereby shared with the wider world first through an audience, who then share it with others. Whether it's a creation to expose an audience to an apprehension of pure beauty in visual

image, music or movement, or whether it's a hard political reality framed in the skills of drama and actors, art has a knock-on effect.

Even if the artist works in isolation, spare a thought for Van Gogh — unknown, unloved, before his time, a tormented artist with little recognition in his own lifetime, and with only the support of his brother. Look what his works continue to do for us — how they elevate the human condition and make millions in the world respond to colour, passion and life itself. Have a look at the stats, and the tourism benefits of the Van Gogh museum. It took a while, but the artist never saw the benefit. Let's hope that history doesn't make fools of *us*, that we are not seen as the century that advocated the utilitarian use of art and artists, or art for the sake of swelling audience numbers, economic development, tourist stats and bragging rights, to the detriment of conditions for those whose real value is contingent on a space for thought, sometimes isolation and experiment. Let's make sure we serve artists, in their right. If we serve them to ensure continuing practice of creativity at the edge, then we serve not only audiences but we serve community, society and the world at large.

I dedicate the following to all artists, in all countries,
currently having it tougher than they should have to:

HARD TIMES (Stephen Foster, USA, 1854)

Let us pause in life's pleasures and count its many tears

While we all sup sorrow with the poor

There's a song that will linger forever in my ears

Oh hard times come again no more

'Tis the song, the sigh of the weary

Hard times, hard times, come again no more

Many days you have lingered around my cabin door

Oh hard times come again no more

While we seek mirth and beauty

and music light and gay

There are frail forms fainting at the door

Though their voices are silent their

pleading looks will say

Oh hard times come again no more

'Tis the song, the sigh of the weary

Hard times, hard times, come again no more

Many days you have lingered

around my cabin door

Oh hard times comes again no more

Reflections

- Why should the arts be supported by governments?
- Should artists and art be socially engaged?
- What do you think is meant by 'resilient structures' and how can these be set up for the arts?
- As a festival manager, how does your work connect with the cultural policy of your city, region, or country? How do you and the artist engage with policy issues?
- How can you as an arts manager stimulate critical reflection in the arts?
- Serving artists serves the public: do you agree with this?

ART, A PROGRAMME, AN AUDIENCE

by Hugo De Greef



Flanders Festival Gent KidsOdeGand. Photo credit: Werner Vermeylen

Programming a festival, defining the playlist of a theatre or a concert hall: I've always experienced it as a great favour. It is an inconceivable pleasure to be in a position to invite artists and ensembles to present their work, to play. To sit in a chair where you can decide to show beauty to an audience is a real delight. One evening your audience takes the road to enjoy the artists you were allowed to choose to perform. However agreeable and gratifying it often may be, it is also a mission with a great and delicate responsibility. However divine this favour may be, I've always experienced it as something extremely sensitive and often very difficult. Fragile and breakable!

Programming in a rash or superficial way has great consequences. Not only in ruining the night at the theatre of your audience, but also in possibly damaging the social position of art and the artists. How to shape this responsibility as appropriately as possible? This is of course very different for a theatre or a concert hall, for a festival or a cultural centre, whether you are a producing artist, or you run your own ensemble of actors/musicians/dancers under contract, or you are a venue merely staging performances on invitation — such western, foremost European models are in fact very recognizable. But in essence, the responsibility is the same in the entire world. The context in which you have to work co-determines the responsibility.

“It is an absolute added-value to join one or more international cultural networks. Formal networks are indeed important.”

A house for the arts is a house for culture.

A house for the arts has nothing in common with casualness. It wants to create in a splendid way and present art to excel in a sustainable manner over the long run. By its abundant series of exquisite art, the house obtains an authoritative maturity.

Defining the programme of a house for culture is not the same as setting the agenda. Why one concert follows after another, or why one dance performance is offered precisely before or after that particular theatre play does not depend on the chance offer of artistic appreciation. It is possibly put on the agenda in exactly that way so that one can communicate about it smoothly. This has to be part of the game once one comes to the finishing stage in defining a season, a series, a festival. Artistic quality, maximum public outreach, and a fair agenda are the palpable results: it is a balanced completion of the story that the house for the arts and culture desires to tell. The clearer the story, the clearer the meaning of the house will be. And finally, this is the essence of making and presenting art: the generation of meaning.

In my experience, defining a programme has always been the result of a process based on a huge curiosity, acquired expertise, as well as one's own preferences and experiences. Because of all this, programming is a very personal business. Notwithstanding that the many contacts and consultations will help, of course. Indeed, reflection is needed!

Also required are a large set of points of departure and a thorough knowledge of the artists and their work. An

artist's work created today is never an isolated thing. It builds on previous works and clarifies the works to come. The artist's oeuvre expands step by step, work by work. It is vital to follow the artist's development and assess what will be presented to the audience. Making an audience acquainted with an artist, an ensemble or an orchestra is part of your public function and development. It is very gratifying to present an artist on a regular basis, every time with a new work, sometimes with a presentation of a former successful work, and to see the public reception grow season after season, festival after festival. I have often witnessed how the public becomes familiar with the oeuvre of an artist, year after year. That it is successful and that it is talked about: the word-of-mouth effect is incredibly important, and in fact, the best sustainable way of communication.

Your city, your country, your history, the audience you've attracted, the political and social environment: all these factors turn your house into a unique place. The festival where your programming takes place is different from any other festival. Therefore, a good knowledge of the diversity of that context is essential to optimise the offer. When I founded the Brussels Kaaiteater and was able to turn it over twenty years from a biennial festival into an authoritative venue for the performing arts, the quality of the place was absolutely determined by its direct environment. The Kaaiteater I have developed in Brussels would have been entirely different in Paris, Berlin or London. The success of an offer clearly depends on the capacity to establish a maximum connection with the identity of the context that you are programming. Naturally, the ideal situation is that the work you are doing co-determines the context — and that defines the difference between a good programme and an authoritative one. It is not always possible or realistic but it has to be the fundamental ambition to have the artistic work influence society. This certainly presupposes knowledge of the context!

I have discovered the most inspiring aspects of my work by travelling a lot: meeting colleagues, seeing artists at work almost everywhere, breathing fresh air, being open to surprises and seeking confrontations. I often urge my younger colleagues to travel and this was strongly promoted during all the Ateliers for Young Festival Managers. It is a pillar of the work. It seamlessly links to networking. I have helped to create and develop various formal cultural networks, for example the Informal European Theatre Meeting (IETM) and the European Festivals Association (EFA). A few years ago, I was the co-founder of the European House for Culture (EHfC). This experience with networks and in networking has taught me a lot. Therefore I am very grateful to all these networks and all the members of these networks for what they have taught me. They have made my work really possible by adding quality to it. It is an absolute added-value to join one or more international cultural networks. Formal networks are indeed important.

Even more vital perhaps are the informal networks that you develop together with friendly colleagues mostly from other countries. Also in this instance I have positive experiences. Thanks to the informal networking with a few festival colleagues and theatre friends, we have been able to produce artistic works of superior quality. In this way, our audiences were able to see exceptional works of art. Networks of friends are clearly beneficial to the programme you are putting together. It is also stimulating: it defies you and forces you to think ahead. Thinking ahead is another essential point of departure. A programme is not developed one festival after the other, but over a number of festivals through many years.

“A programme is not developed one festival after the other, but over a number of festivals through many years.”

Of course, one has to communicate about it at a certain point of time, and you have to sell your ‘programme’. And it is important to present a well-organised and well-balanced programme that can be read very easily and that maximises its accessibility. But it is the result of a designed part of a finality that is situated in the long term. A long term not being final either — that is always shifting, that is developing in and over time. After longer periods — three years, five years, ten years — the lines have to be clear. Meanings will surface. I’ve already talked about ‘generating meaning’.

Therefore it is necessary to be thinking ahead. In developing a programme I have always been worried about the ‘how to go further’

and ‘what next’. Thus I am always very curious about what the artists are brooding on. What is living in the embryonic phase? Once you know, you can co-draw the evolutions within your programme. You have noticed that I shift my attention from public to artist, from environment to sustainable management, from knowledge to networks. All are aspects of the same movement! Because that’s exactly what it is: a movement! But what is most important to me will always be that one moment when the house is crowded and when the audience is moved by what is happening on stage. And it works when the public is involved and responsive, and when the artist on that stage knows that his message is understood and appreciated.

From all this, I distil the most important aspect of all: the artist and his work. Without it, there is no audience, no environment, no reason to travel, no reason to network. The idea that serving the artist is serving the audience is so important that it has become our guiding principle in EFA through the

initiative of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers. I quote Bernard Faivre d'Arcier (the former director of the Festival d'Avignon): "car le vrai rôle d'un festival est d'aider les artistes à oser, à entreprendre des projets" ("the real role of a festival is to help artists to dare, to work on projects"). The best thing is to cooperate as much as possible. It will optimise your work and certainly ours as well to obtain better results, day after day. Because we know that "in the end it's all about the art and the audience".

Reflections

- What is the purpose of your festival and how is this related to the context (place and time) in which you work?
- How do you think you contribute in "creating meaning" through your festival?
- How is artistic programming a "personal business"? How do you relate the "personal business" to the public context of a festival?



**MAKING A
FESTIVAL:
THE CONTEXT**

INTRODUCTION: A FESTIVAL COMES FROM A CONTEXT

by Audrey Wong

In this section, the publishers have included contributions mapping out part of the landscape of Asian festivals, specifically from China and India, the emerging economic powerhouses of Asia. Yet, these are also two countries where cultural policies are uncertain and there is no structured system of state funding for arts and culture.

The writers here give a picture of how festivals started and how they developed, against the background of country-specific trends and conditions. Shivangi Ambani shows how, in India, passionate individuals are key to the making and programming of festivals, frequently in response to the needs of communities, including artistic communities. Through galvanizing people, communities and resources, they have made things work, and created successful festivals that connect to their localities, but the challenge of sustaining the festivals remain. Shiva Pathak's study of the Attakkalari India

Biennial turns the lens in detail on one festival in particular, and makes some observations on how a festival might connect foreign and international artists to a locality. Mu Qian gives an overview of the situation in China, where festivals are new, and where privately-organised festivals are rare, due to China's political system, though new models of organisation are emerging as the country changes. Hence, it is important for anyone seeking to work with a festival in a different country, to have some understanding of the contexts of these festivals, the needs they respond to, and the political and social situation of their localities. This is particularly pertinent in terms of co-productions. Later on in this publication, a case study of one international co-production goes into more specifics in this area.

This section ends with Hans van Rompaey's article on new media festivals in the Netherlands, where the environment for art-making is very

different from China and India. There has been state support for festivals as well as "laboratories" where new media work is generated, though today, the economic situation also threatens such financial support. Van Rompaey shows how these festivals address a changing social, cultural and technological environment, through innovative approaches to programming that focus on engaging the audience and public. The festivals had to think very carefully, how these very new works can be presented in a dynamic and engaging way to the public, which involves new approaches to presentation.

Think about the festivals in your own country: what are they? How many are there and what needs do they address? How did they get started and how have they developed? What is the influence of locality and customs on these festivals? An interesting exercise you could undertake is to map out the landscape of festivals in your country!

MAKING ARTS FESTIVALS IN INDIA

by Shivangi Ambani



Revellers enjoying the festive mood at the Baajaa Gaajaa Festival 2012. Photo credit: Underscore Records Pvt Ltd

A report developed by the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) for the British Council in 2011 lists 25 arts festivals in India categorised under music, dance, theatre, film, visual arts and others — and this by no means is a comprehensive list.

These festivals operate in a near-vacuum of any arts policy, regular funding or arts management professionals. Most festivals here are driven by the passion of their founders, who want to find a voice for the arts in a rapidly changing society. While each of these festivals is unique in its aims and approaches, there are also several similarities in the challenges that each faces.

This paper presents a comparative analysis into the case studies of four

arts festivals in India: Attakkalari India Biennale, Baajaa Gaajaa, Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) and the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (KGAF). The selection of these four festivals was in part due to their immense popularity, and/or the high regard in which they are held. They were also chosen in a way that each festival focuses on a different art form and are also based in four diverse locations across India such that each serves a very different type of audience or community. This paper is based on a research thesis prepared by this author as part of the Master of Arts Administration degree course of the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Australia. The case studies in this paper, as in the original thesis, are based on interviews conducted in

2011 by this author, for the arts blog, <http://indian-art-festival-research.blogspot.com/>. Quotes in this paper are directly from the interviews.

This paper begins by providing the context within which art festivals in India operate — historical, social, cultural, political and economic, before briefly introducing the four festivals that are profiled in this paper. The comparative analysis of the four case studies is conducted along the criteria of conception, artistic decision-making, audience/community served, outreach initiatives as well as funding to understand how each of these components shape the programming of festivals in India.

Socio-cultural, Economic and Political Contexts

Anmol Vellani, Executive Director of the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), traces back India's arts festivals to the long history of village festivals, which he says, "create the space for rituals and allow for mythology to flourish." The festivals — particularly those connected with religious celebrations — took on political colours in the pre-independence era. As Sanjoy Roy explains, "*Ganesh Chaturthi* or *Durga Puja* became symbols of resistance against the British Raj."¹

Jayachandran Palazhy, Artistic Director, Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, says that dance and music festivals were an integral part of the Indian social fabric for centuries — and dance specifically "enjoyed a pivotal role in our social, religious and artistic calendar till a couple of centuries ago". The colonial rule, he says, put the first setbacks on India's

"The evolution of the art festival continues today in its urban form, in response to the rapidly changing urban landscape."

cultural festivals and the post-independence attempts to revive the arts only further boxed the arts into misleading categories.

"(Efforts to reinvigorate the arts) primarily focused on classical dance and that too with a relatively narrow focus of what they called as 'rediscovery' and 'protection' of fast disappearing forms. But the lopsided strategies by self-appointed custodians in fact helped to take away the reins of artistic practices from several families and communities who were the real practitioners and disenfranchised and marginalised them in the process. Many dance artists were forced to move to the cities and operate in a system controlled by the upper class interests, thus creating an artificial disconnect between the art form and the communities that sustained and nurtured it. Over the years this process helped to wipe out several important artistic streams and standardised them into so called 'classical dances

of India', an artificial socio-political construct."

The current avatar of arts festivals, Vellani and Roy believe, can be found in the music season in Chennai, which began in the 1920s or 1930s and today runs for two months with over 3500 *sabhas* (events/gatherings) presenting concerts, lecture-demonstrations and seminars round the clock. Roy also mentions the Khajuraho Dance Festival and Konarak Dance Festival as important precedents which focused on tourism. "The only handicap they suffered was that they were run by the government and have not achieved what they set out to do," he says. "However, the Khajuraho Festival continues to attract over 7,000–8,000 villagers from the area, who come together to savour the best of

classical music and dance... in itself, a rare feat."

The evolution of the art festival continues today in its urban form,

in response to the rapidly changing urban landscape. For instance, Vellani believes that the idea of a 'neighbourhood' has been created by locality-centric festivals like the Bandra Festival and the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (KGAF) — he says such festivals "respond to these new urban constructs."

Some of these 'new urban constructs' are driving the growth of festivals in urban India. Graham Delvin Associates lists some key behavioural and leisure habits in an urban populace that provide an ideal ground for arts festivals — this includes increase in disposable incomes, number of options for leisure, and sources of information through new communication media, while people simultaneously become time poor. The rapid urbanisation of India has created these conditions in the cities where Indian art festivals have flourished.

¹ Festivals remain fertile ground for politics to play out in India to this day—from the cancellation of Salman Rushdie's appearance at the 2012 edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival or the cancellation of the 2011 Harud Literature Festival.

The growth of arts festivals in India, as everywhere else around the world, is also due to the sheer economic potential they offer. Roy, who produces the Jaipur Literature Festival as well as dozens of arts festivals globally, admits, “Tourism is a main stay for any festival and our primary aim always is to drive more traffic to our festivals from across the world.” He recognises that festivals “create an economic incentive for towns, villages and cities” adding that “Jaipur contributes approximately Rs.10 crores (100 million) of extra spend during the Jaipur Literature Festival.”

His festivals, says Roy, marry commerce with the arts. For instance, festivals are now also being used to regenerate inner city locations into commercially ‘hot property’ through the arts: “By advising realtors to provide rent free or discounted accommodation to artists and the arts community for living accommodation, studio or exhibition space and rehearsal space, inner cities can attract artists to convert unusable spaces into edgy neighbourhoods. Once this happens, gentrification of

“The growth of arts festivals in India, as everywhere else around the world, is also due to the sheer economic potential they offer.”

the area is a matter of time with boutiques opening, lofts being converted and real estate prices going up.”

Additionally he says, festivals “allow for costs to be amortised and marketing to be focused.” Rahul Mehrotra, the architect who co-founded KGAF, says that festivals

amplify the synergy of bringing the arts together, with little investment: it is the simple economics of sharing costs to increase profits. Mehrotra also believes that festivals “prepare the terrain for global capital to land”, while Aneesh Pradhan, Festival Director of Baajaa Gaaja, says that several festivals are initiated simply “to tap into potential sponsors from government and non-government sectors” without having any “holistic vision and curatorial perspective” and thus, no “far-reaching consequences of a positive kind”.

Artistic directors of each of the four festivals studied in this paper admit that a clear vision, identity, integrity and purpose are essential component of any festival (Pradhan; Mehrotra; Sahney Sharma; and Prasad). As Mehrotra adds, festivals “can bring allied forms of art together and create dialogues, but there needs to be an agenda.”

Four Arts Festivals in India: An Introduction

This section provides a brief introduction to the four Indian arts festivals that are part of this study. The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (KGAF) is the oldest — started in 1999, the festival is now in its 14th edition. This multidisciplinary festival hosts events covering dance, music, theatre, literature, film, visual arts, heritage and a street fest — all free entry. Initiated to revive the heritage buildings in the vicinity, the festival now works towards the upkeep of the locality.

The Attakkalari India Biennial, run by the Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts is an international contemporary dance festival held in Bangalore every two years since 2000. Apart from main stage performances, installations and site specific work, the festival also hosts several ancillary programmes each year, including workshops,

film screenings and seminars. Many events are ticketed, but nominally priced.

The Jaipur Literature Festival is the largest literary festival in the Asia Pacific, held annually in the historic city of Jaipur, with the Diggi Palace Hotel as the main venue. The festival directors are prominent writers William Dalrymple and Namita Gokhale. Inaugurated in 2006 with just 18 participating writers, the three-day festival now attracts guests like J.M. Coetzee, Orhan Pamuk, Pico Iyer and Michael Ondaatje among many others, with free entry to all events.

The youngest, Baajaa Gaajaa, which was initiated in 2009, is an annual music festival held in Pune. Dedicated to the richness and diversity of Indian music, and the indie music industry, the festival is curated by noted Indian musicians Shubha Mudgal and Aneesh Pradhan, supported by a team of experts. This three-day free festival includes performances, lectures, workshops and seminars.



Hip-Hop show In Vivo by S'poart Company at the Attakkalari India Biennial

Conceiving a Festival: Understanding the Motives of Festival-makers

None of the four festivals participating in this study are state-run — so they serve no governmental motives, but are overwhelmingly driven by individual passion of the festival makers.

Attakkalari Biennale's 2011 report states:

Attakkalari India Biennial has been established to serve as a platform that makes available to artists a wide landscape to outline and present their work, increase their visibility and broaden their base through partnerships at all levels. (Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts 2011)

“It was about passion for contemporary dance and the need to make it grow in India and to make the Indian dance scene grow in the world,” says festival manager Trupti Prasad of the motivation behind the initiation of this festival.

The KGAF had its small beginnings when Mehrotra was working to get the Fort area in Mumbai recognised as a conservation zone. The Kala Ghoda area organised itself as an association and began to use art to expand the potential for the area to be identified as an art district. Mehrotra says that he went from gallery to gallery to create a poster with all the activity that was already happening and then added a couple of public events in the evening to mobilise the use of public space. “The festival was really a form of activism to get the city to recognise Kala Ghoda as an arts district,” says Mehrotra. “Though my aim was the physical transformation of the area, I still had art in the centre of my own imagination and realised that the galleries needed a forum for collective identity.

After two or three years of running the festival we had raised enough money for restoration of the buildings we had identified and wanted to demonstrate how buildings could be revived.” (Mehrotra)

Pallavi Sahney Sharma, Chief Executive of the Kala Ghoda Association and Committee Member, KGAF, says that it has since evolved into a festival that aims to get an increasing number of people interested and involved in the arts every year. She says, “With Mumbai being the financial centre of the country, I believe that a whole generation of her people has missed out on the arts. Delhi, I think has much more exposure to the arts and culture — the festival hopes to bring the same exposure to Mumbai.”

Baajaa Gaajaa meanwhile seeks to address the needs of the music community specifically:

“Baajaa Gaajaa seeks to provide a platform for all sections of the music-making fraternity to meet and discuss ideas, issues, prospects, problems, once every year and hopefully continue the dialogue at micro levels through the year” (Pradhan)

“It was about passion for contemporary dance and the need to make it grow in India and to make the Indian dance scene grow in the world.”

The Jaipur Literature Festival, was originally an initiative of the Jaipur Viraasat Foundation, an NGO that works with Rajasthan's musicians and craftspeople to preserve skills and promote economic livelihoods while protecting heritage. Now produced by the Teamwork Productions, the festival celebrates Indian and international literature.

Programming Festivals in India

Each festival has a mission statement that sets out the guiding principle — diverse music for Baajaa Gaajaa, contemporary dance for the Attakkalari Biennale, Indian and international literature for JLF and popular arts for the KGAF. However, it is often the location and the legacy of the place in which they are run that sets the tone for each of them.

For Roy, understanding the context of the place and generating a passion among the local community is a vital component of the JLF, and one the team had to work hard to define.

He says, “In Jaipur, the general impression was that this was an exclusive festival for white people. We had to work overtime to ensure democratic access, equality in seating and in treatment and hospitality. Today the city feels it’s their festival.”

Prasad too believes Bangalore is ideally situated for a contemporary dance festival like Attakkalari India Biennial. “On a macro level, the nature of its geopolitical and cultural location makes Bangalore a strategic centre to initiate a North (India)-South (India) dialogue on innovation and performance arts with an international perspective.”

KGAF is perhaps most deeply rooted in its locale. The festival and the locality emerged simultaneously, each feeding into the others’ identity. Since it began

in consultation with the art galleries in the neighbourhood, it thus has a strong commitment from its local community. Sahney Sharma says the connection is still very important: “The KGAF began as a means to facilitate restoration projects in the locality and now we continue doing so by channelising funds towards further beautification of the area by installing traffic islands and public furniture and cleaning up the area.”

Only one of the festivals studied in this paper is programmed thematically —

“A question of global debate in programming today—and particularly in Asia—is that of defining the traditional and the contemporary.”

the Attakkalari Biennale maintains a broad theme which helps to create a framework for the featured performances (Pathak 2011). Roy finds thematic festivals to be restrictive. “Theme-based festivals however are in fashion with artistic directors finding favour in this model as it allows them to be creatively different and often contributes to the age old press question of what’s different,” he says.

The staff at Attakkalari Biennale too have contended over this idea. As Pathak writes, “The festival team has always been faced by a dilemma of

whether having a theme limits the programming of the festival. But it has continued to have one as it feels that themes create a thread for the audience who then draw their own linkages. The theme is thus selected in a way that it responds to the community at large.”

Curatorial direction for programming remains a challenge for all the four festivals. As Pathak admits, small budgets constrain the ability of the curators to travel to find new and appropriate works, and so the festivals have to depend on the curatorial panel’s expertise for the selection process.

A question of global debate in programming today — and particularly in Asia — is that of defining the traditional and the contemporary. Pradhan says, “In the Indian context, it is

difficult to differentiate between the contemporary and traditional. If a traditional classical composition is sung to the accompaniment of drums and a synthesiser, does it make the music more contemporary?” Baajaa Gaajaa avoids differentiating between the two, but does highlight folk, classical and other traditional forms, “because these do not get as much airplay at most times, and we also create podcasts around folk and tribal music,” adds Pradhan. While Attakkalari focuses on the contemporary, KGAF has found some difficulty in bringing contemporary works to its audience (Sahney Sharma).

“It is often the location and the legacy of the place in which they are run that sets the tone for each of them.”

Another challenge is presenting younger or emerging artists alongside the more established. KGAF resolves this by interspersing emerging artists with the established ones. Sahney Sharma says, “We may end the day with an established artist but the emerging ones present during the day. We also encourage emerging acts just before an established one.”

Since 2009, Attakkalari Biennale has had the 2009 Young Choreographer’s Platform, as part of which young and emerging choreographers from South Asia and UK were provided with an opportunity to develop work under the guidance of experienced mentors. Palazhy believes that supporting emerging artists and experimental works is one of the key roles of an arts festival. “Building on the strengths of what it has achieved so far, a festival should be able to imagine the future possibilities and take calculated risks

to open up new avenues for the arts and artists. A good festival should help to create new works and nurture new visions as much as it presents existing works of art. This investment in the arts and artists is vital so that the arts festival does not merely become an agency similar to a fair where products and services are sold,” he says.

Interactivity in performances and increasing multidisciplinary events even in single-art-form festivals like Baajaa Gaajaa and JLF is a growing trend. Outreach for a younger audience has become a focus for some festivals, particularly KGAF which has a separate curatorial section for children.

Bureaucratic processes — seeking permissions from various bodies and taxation of foreign artists — along with political challenges remain a constant barrier for festivals. Sahney Sharma recollects, “We once had an art installation of a cow, but had to take it down.² The KGAF is a festival for the masses and we have to run it without offending anyone.” Additionally, the lack of world-class performance venues also remains a massive challenge, particularly for Attakkalari Biennale (Prasad, Pathak, 2011). Finally, it is perhaps budget constraints that remain the biggest challenge for programming festivals in India.

“Building on the strengths of what it has achieved so far, a festival should be able to imagine the future possibilities and take calculated risks to open up new avenues for the arts and artists.”

² The cow is a sacred animal in Hindu mythology.

Funding for Festivals

State-run tourism boards have provided support to festivals in the past. The Karnataka State Tourism Development Board was one of the partners for Attakkalari Biennale in 2011, while KGAF tied up with the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation and zonal cultural centres and the JLF too partners with the Rajasthan Tourism Board.

Corporate sponsorship, although hesitant and still a little tight-fisted for the arts, remains an important source of funding. Support also comes from the Indian branches of international cultural institutions like the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, Alliance Française, the British Council and others. While the British Council India has directly funded only the Hay Festival in Kerala, Jaipur Literature Festival and the NH7 Weekender music festival in Pune, they have indirectly supported several festivals such as the KGAF and Attakkalari Biennale (Pushkin) “by helping UK artists and companies to appear there and meeting those costs or putting in staff time directly”. Adam

Pushkin, Head of Arts at British Council India, adds that this in-kind support is extremely beneficial:

“We put in our knowledge and networks in the UK: e.g. for the International Film Festival of India this year, we are putting in very little financial investment, but our knowledge and networks in the UK are meaning that the festival can put together a package and attract people that they wouldn’t otherwise be able to do.”

India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) is the only independent grant — making organisation in India working exclusively to support the arts. However, the IFA does not fund festivals as a whole but has supported some modules relevant to their programmes; for instance, they funded some modules of the Theatre for Young Audiences conference in New Delhi. Vellani says that IFA also engages with festival authorities “to introduce them to the individual works that we have supported.”



Jailbreak Mind, a solo performance by Fabien Priville at the Attakkalari India Biennial

Commenting on the problems with funding currently available to arts festivals, Vellani says, “Funding at the moment is not available for festivals to take well-informed curatorial decisions because funding for pre-festival R&D activities is not available generally. Funding is made available only for the execution of the festivals but not at the research stage.” There is also a new draft policy of a proposed Cultural Mega Festivals scheme, on which the Ministry of Culture (2010) is currently conducting a public consultation with stakeholders. Vellani says the scheme is problematic because “it focuses on mega-festivals. It treats a large festival as a magnified version of a small festival. In this case as in others, the government is unwilling to take risks or provide support at an early idea or inception stage.”

Funding or support from various agencies also affects curatorial decision-making: there can be a discrepancy between what the festival wants to include, versus what they can get funded (Pushkin, 2011). Some festivals simply write to all the embassies and international cultural institutes asking for “an act”, reveals Pushkin. He compares the conditions for programming festivals in India with those in the UK:

“In the UK, most serious arts festivals receive funding from the state, via the Arts Council and via local authorities, to cover their core costs (i.e. salaries, office costs, the bulk of the programming, etc.). Secondly, most UK festivals — although not all — charge for tickets, and that is an important part of their income. This means that sponsorship, while important, is only one part of the funding mix: so festivals are usually able to take more artistic risks.”

As most arts festivals in India (three of the four studied in this paper) remain free, dependence on sponsors and supporting institutions takes a huge toll on curatorial independence. Further, Pushkin adds, that while free entry may make the festivals very accessible,

“From an audience development perspective, you might argue that the attendees are still overwhelmingly from more affluent backgrounds and could easily afford to pay. It does make it difficult to develop a sustainable creative economy if the core audiences/regular arts attenders are in the habit of not having to pay for their arts.”

“Funding at the moment is not available for festivals to take well-informed curatorial decisions because funding for pre-festival R&D activities is not available generally. Funding is made available only for the execution of the festivals but not at the research stage.”

Key Challenges for Indian Festivals

The comparison of four Indian art festivals in this paper has revealed some common problems that plague the festival industry as well as the Indian arts industry at large. Most festivals seem to be stuck in a vicious cycle of poor funding or support, which constricts quality independent programming, which in turn means the festivals are unable to mobilise sufficient audiences. A particular problem for Indian festivals is that even those like the KGAF and JLF, which have gained immense popularity, continue to remain un-ticketed. Corporate funding for the arts is still a fledgling source for the industry, and there remains just one independent arts funding body in the whole country.

Support from the government remains scant. In fact, the Ministry of Culture of the Government of India has been accused of gross inefficiency (Ganesan, 2011), and even a new scheme meant for cultural festivals looks skewed to already established 'mega festivals'. The local and central governments seem to have only suddenly woken to economic possibilities brought by successful festivals like the JLF. And yet, lengthy bureaucratic processes and corruption, with a general insensitivity towards the arts, is characteristic of the government approach to this sector.

Finally, the lack of trained professional arts workers is a key challenge. The country's arts education institutions remain focussed on the fine arts, performing arts and art history, with no specialised courses for arts managers.

Reflections

- What is the landscape of festivals in your country and how have they evolved?
- Do you know of festivals in your country which were founded and driven by the passion of individuals? How have they changed over time?
- What would be your motivation to make a festival?
- How are festivals in your country generally funded? What is the relationship between your festival and your funders?
- What would be key challenges for festivals in your country?

Conclusion

Dealing with these challenges is a daunting task for any arts manager. But these case studies reveal some key learning points.

Curatorial direction and a clear vision is the most important component identified by each of the four festivals. Research into the idea behind the festival — spending as much if not more resources on the curatorial research before the actual execution of the festival — is essential to ensure success. It is also important to garner the resources before starting the festival and then ensuring a healthy cash-flow situation to allow for eventual independence.

Imaginative partnerships can perhaps help with this severe lack of resources faced by festivals today. Collaborations with tourism boards and foreign cultural agencies are the only ones being explored at the moment — that too in a rather short-term and sporadic fashion. Increasing collaborations with a broader range of governmental and corporate agencies, as well as other arts and heritage institutions in more long term and meaningful ways will help to make the most of the synergy offered by the festival model.

Networking with other festivals and global dialogues, particularly through forums like the Atelier for Young Festival Managers organised by the European Festivals Association, would bring valuable lessons from more established and other establishing festival markets.

A general lack of cooperation between arts organisations in India has also been a major reason for the lack of lobbying power with governmental agencies for greater support.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, audience engagement and audience building through structured outreach and balanced programming is perhaps the most important task

for arts festival managers in India. Long-term, sustainable and strategic approaches to identifying target audiences — and then actually cultivating meaningful relationships and building arts communities — is essential for the survival and growth of arts festivals in India.

The major difficulty for arts festivals in India is the volatile situation in which they operate due to a lack of policies, frameworks and vital infrastructure — problems which are

not going to be resolved in a hurry. However, a growing economy of a young and upwardly mobile population with increasing leisure time and easy access to information provides the perfect stage for the growth of arts festivals. And yet, a challenge for these festivals is to sufficiently engage this population hitherto underexposed to the arts.

Indian arts festivals thus operate in a scenario of as many challenges and threats, as there are strengths and opportunities. The experiences of four festivals studied in this paper should help future arts managers to manage these challenges and optimise their opportunities.

“Research into the idea behind the festival—spending as much if not more resources on the curatorial research before the actual execution of the festival—is essential to ensure success. ”

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- Jaipur Literature Festival: <http://jaipurliteraturefestival.org>
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- European Festivals Association: <http://www.efa-aef.eu>

ATTAKKALARI INDIA BIENNIAL: TOWARDS CREATING A VIBRANT CONTEMPORARY DANCE PLATFORM IN INDIA

by Shiva Pathak



Scenes from the Attakkalari India Biennial. Photo credit: Attakkalari

The Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts (Attakkalari) is one of India's premier organisations working in the field of contemporary movement arts. It was constituted in 1992 to facilitate the development of contemporary cultural expressions in the performing arts. Through its many distinct programmes (which include education outreach, a diploma in movement arts and mixed media, research and documentation, national and international platforms for exchange and performance, a resource centre for stage technologies, the Attakkalari repertory and the Attakkalari India Biennial), it works towards creating a context for contemporary movement.

The Attakkalari India Biennial, an international contemporary dance festival, is held in Bangalore, India, every two years since 2000. The geographical location of Bangalore makes it a strategic centre to initiate a dialogue on the arts in the South Asia region. The biennial started off mainly to provide a platform to artists from this region to perform, the exposure and opportunities being very limited during that time. In the early days of conception, the festival showcased traditional and folk artists who had developed a new, contemporary movement vocabulary while also retaining the soul of the original form. Alongside them were also their international counterparts, thus facilitating a creative forum for

exchange of ideas. The festival as a result served as a platform in South Asia for artists to present their work, increase their visibility and broaden their base through partnerships at all levels.

Over time, many such platforms became available to artists, with the West beginning to develop a keen sense for the Asian aesthetic. Consequently the vision of the festival expanded from merely being a platform for artists to implementing a thematic focus for each biennial. The themes of past editions of the festival include Mapping New Territories, Traditional Physical Wisdom and Innovation and Technology. The festival now features not only performances from

India, but also Europe, the Americas and Australasia. Associations were gradually forged with organisations and cultural agencies. For instance, there were performances from France and Germany as their cultural agencies were also looking at opportunities for cultural exchange with India.

After six editions of the Biennial, the festival is now on the map of the global dance and movement arts calendar. An international panel of curators has helped immensely with the programming of the festival. The panel is composed of practitioners who, on the one hand, have had great exposure in the current trends in movement arts globally, and on the other hand, have a finger on the pulse of Indian audiences and the festival's cultural context; and hence the programming of the festival relies heavily on the discretionary prerogative of the curators.

The primary funders of the festival are embassies, cultural agencies of various countries and the state and central governmental departments. Though the festival also looks at corporate and private sponsorship, it is limited and pursued with caution. From experience, it has been found that often private agencies tend to have a vested interest in the creative programming of the festival. On one occasion, a very interesting work was not considered as the work was seen to be as 'anti-USA' and one of the private sponsors had important business relations with the USA. Also in the 2009 biennial, the team was faced with a crisis when the world was hit by recession and a number of private sponsors backed out after committing to be partners.

An important aspect while programming is keeping in mind the conditions for performance. In India, many venues are not technically well equipped and there is a lack of trained technicians. Most venues have a venue manager and a technician-in-charge who are responsible for the maintenance of the space. But they do not have a team of technicians under them who can help with performance set-ups. Thus the onus lies on the festival's technical team to bring together a team that consists of a light designer, sound engineer, media artists and a set designer. Due to this mismatch between expectation and reality, sometimes the festival has had to forgo cutting-edge performances from being included in the programme. The 2009 biennial had planned for a very interesting performance, "Norman, a tribute to Norman McLaren" by

Lemieux Pilon 4D Art (Montreal). Unfortunately, the performance could not make it to the final list because the festival team could not commit to the stringent technical requirements of the visiting company. In contrast, the famed Indian ingenuity has often stood up and answered the challenge of many a difficult situation. The Norwegian company, Frikar's "Jamsiis" featured live music from instruments carved out of Norwegian glaciers. When they toured Bangalore in the 2011 biennial, the festival team conjured up a Norwegian cave with its own ice mountain — in a mobile refrigeration truck and several industrial size ice blocks — out of which the instruments were created and stored. Though comparison with the original is not possible, local audiences were still wowed by the music created by water, the very same that ran through their taps!



Performance by Sandip Polepally and Sudeep Bhattacharya. Photo credit: Attakkalari



Scenes from the Attakkalari India Biennial. Photo credit: Attakkalari

A major issue during the biennial is the management of multiple venues for performances. Urban sprawl has resulted in venues that are scattered across the city, and it is too much to ask of audiences to negotiate traffic snarls at rush hour just to hop from one venue to the other. The 2009 biennial had simultaneous shows over the ten days; learning from that experience, the programme in the 2011 edition was much more relaxed, giving people ample time to travel across the city.

The festival has now come of age: it brings together 150–200 artists each year. Over the last six editions, the biennial is proud to have hosted dance companies such as Dance Theatre CcadoO (South Korea), Nicole Seiler and Cie Phillippe Saire (Switzerland), Iraqi Bodies (Sweden), Maqamat Dance Theatre (Lebanon), Jonah Bokaer (USA), Fabien Prioville

and Samir Akika (Germany), Tiago Guedes (Portugal) and Brouhaha (UK), to name a few.

Apart from main stage performances, site-specific works that engage with city life and architecture are an essential part of the festival programme. The idea behind programming them is to spread the reach of the festival to different locations in the city, and consequently, to involve many more people in the festival. For instance, the inaugural event is a site-specific or promenade performance. These on-site works broadly follow the festival theme. Artists engaging in these works are asked to interpret the theme of the festival and create works around it. In 2009 the theme of the Festival was *Mapping New Territories*. City-based dancers interpreted this as ‘City on the Move’ and showcased works on the various changes in the city, its people and its

culture. For example, *Walls Closing In*, performed in a noisy pub, showed how as the city’s limits expanded daily, it has become impossible to find a quiet, personal corner.

Learning programmes form an essential part of the festival. Master classes for dancers by visiting artists are conducted to create a cross-cultural, cross-genre, free exchange. There are also specific outreach activities planned to reach out to students from schools and colleges. In 2009, a series of workshops were designed to develop critical writing skills of aspiring journalists: students of Journalism and Mass Communication. In India over the years, the quality of writing and the space dedicated for covering the arts has been declining. The students researched, reviewed and interviewed performing artists. This translated in to a self-edited and managed daily newsletter for the ten days of the festival.

The festival also hosts a series of ancillary programmes every year. In 2011, they included a week-long choreography laboratory for young choreographers; *Dance on Camera* — a section on films dedicated to dance; a 3-day seminar on *Body, Performance and Writing*; and an intensive programme for South Asian journalists on dance appreciation. All ancillary programmes have an open call for applications. A selection panel then decides on the works to be shown at the festival.

The festival programme always attempts at having some shows for younger audiences. Art exposure to children in urban India is extremely limited, be it dance, theatre or the fine arts. The biennial is a great opportunity to give to the young a peek into the immense possibilities of art. For instance, this edition featured *The Japanese Garden-Children Cheering Carpet*, a performance from Italy that made use of a projected 'carpet' on stage with visual and tactile sensors. Children from the audience were invited on stage to explore the carpet, which created a world of magical sounds and visuals.

The biennial is attempting to bring contemporary dance within the domain of India's mainstream cultural space. The process is full of challenges, some minor and some major. The current thought is to focus on the younger generation of dancers and choreographers from India and South Asia. In 2011 the

festival showcased the works of 15 young choreographers from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Iran, Singapore and Hong Kong. Apart from performing they also attended a week-long choreography laboratory where a panel of mentors gave them feedback on their work. This was a very unique experience for a group of young artists from Iran. Dance and dancing have been subjected to severe restrictions in their country, resulting in their erstwhile learning being mainly from the internet, and their performances in clandestine gatherings on hilltops.

Over the years, the biennial has carved a niche for itself in the dance arena. Artists and presenters from all over the world have come together to present their work, share their experiences, exchange ideas, explore new territories and throw open a dynamic space for creative expression through performance and discussions.

The team is now working towards co-commissioning works to be presented at the next festival. The hope is to build a performance network of dance organisations cutting across regions and cultures, which will partner in producing and touring with these works.

Reflections

- What festival in your country was recently founded? And what impact does it have?
- How would a festival manager review the relevance and impact of a new festival?
- How can you involve visiting overseas artists with the communities in the festival's location?

FESTIVALS IN CHINA

by Mu Qian

Although China has many traditional festivals that date back to centuries ago, performing arts festivals are something new in China.

In 1960, the Shanghai Spring Festival was founded as one of China's first arts festivals, modelled after the Prague Spring Festival of the former Czechoslovakia, thanks to China's good relationship with Central and Eastern European countries.

But political movements soon engulfed all cultural events in China, and art festivals disappeared from public life until the 1980s. Since then, the first

programmes including music, dance, drama, acrobatics, traditional opera, and puppetry.

In China, most large-scale arts festivals are organised by the government and produced by state-run troupes. Some of the major governmental festivals are China Shanghai International Arts Festival (www.artsbird.com), Meet in Beijing Arts Festival (www.meetinbeijing.org.cn), Asia Arts Festival and Nanning Folk Songs Festival (www.flyingsong.com).

Apart from the China Art Festival which is devoted to Chinese performing

performances that are programmed by different organisations in Shanghai during the period of the festival in September and October, and lacks overall curatorial concepts.

The performing arts fair of the festival has become the largest in China, providing a platform for both Chinese artists to go abroad and international artists to enter China. In 2012 the fair was attended by over 400 representatives from more than 250 organisations of 36 countries. At least 118 programmes achieved an initial intent of cooperation.

In the early years, festivals were solely governmental events in China, but festivals by private organisers have begun to appear since the late 1990s, often in the names of gala, music week, or art biweekly.

Running festivals is a complicated process in China. Organisers have to get approvals from a lot of government departments, including the local bureaus of culture, public security, and fire control. Any delay in the work of these departments could result in the abortion of a festival. In addition, all foreign artists have to submit their set list and song lyrics in advance to the Ministry of Culture that is in charge of issuing permits for international artists to perform in China.

“In the early years, festivals were solely governmental events in China, and it was virtually impossible for anyone other than the government to organise a festival.”

major festival is the China Art Festival, which was founded in 1987.

Initiated by the Ministry of Culture, the China Art Festival is now held every three years, hosted by rotating regional governments. Its tenth edition will be held in 17 cities in Shandong province in 2013.

With the aims of “prospering socialist culture and art”, “strengthening social stability” and “reviving national spirit”, the China Art Festival presents

arts, most other festivals include works from abroad, but the lack of professional programming often makes it difficult for international acts to be included.

Meet in Beijing Arts Festival and Asia Arts Festival are mainly diplomatic events, with most performers invited through inter-country cultural exchange programmes.

China Shanghai International Arts Festival is more market-oriented, but often simply puts together

“China is providing more opportunities for international artists and art managers. For the time being, it is important to find the right partners to work with in China. Co-commission and co-production are good ways to tap into Chinese festivals. China might seem difficult, but once trust is established, things can be much smoother than they seem to be.”

Founded by artist Huang Rui, the Dashanzi International Art Festival was born in the Dashanzi (798) Art District of Beijing in 2004. Held in different spaces of the Dashanzi Art District, an area of Bauhaus-style factory workshops, the festival covered visual arts, design, dance, drama, performance, music, and film.

It was held annually for three years, until Huang was expelled from the art district because of his conflicts with the proprietor. Huang changed the name of the festival to Dangdai International Art Festival and went on to hold it a fourth time at spaces outside the Dashanzi Art District, but without the traffic in the Dashanzi Art District, the festival's popularity decreased greatly and the festival ceased to exist after the fourth one.

Similar to the Dashanzi International Art Festival, the Fringe Shanghai was a non-governmental festival that consisted of diverse programmes. Founded by a group of art workers in Shanghai in 2006, it received support from companies and foreign consulates, and presented cutting-edge

works from local and international artists. Although the festival received approval from the government, official media largely ignored the festival, making it hard for the events to get wide attention. A second edition of Fringe Shanghai was held in 2008, but the event has not been organised since then.

Some privately-run festivals are still persisting in China, like the Crossing Festival (www.ccdworkstation.com) in Beijing and 2Pi Festival in Hangzhou, but usually at an underground level.

The lack of support from the government means the lack of a channel for promotion, which results in the difficulty in finding sponsorship. That's the main reason why independent art festivals usually fail to survive in China.

Since the mid-2000s, commercial music festivals have been growing rapidly in China. Music festivals began to appear in China only in the late 1990s but the number has reached over 100 in 2011.

These commercial music festivals are usually held outdoors during Chinese public holidays, such as the May Day

holiday (three days around 1 May) and National Holidays (usually 1 to 7 October), and in the summer time when many people are on vacation. Rock and pop are the main genres.

In competing for audiences, Chinese music festivals are trying to programme more international acts. Sinead O'Connor played at Holisland festival (www.hlif.cc) in 2010, and Mr. Big performed at Midi festival (www.midifestival.com) in 2011, among others.

Music festivals are tolerated by the government because they spur tourism, but there is still much risk for these festivals due to unstable governmental policies.

Three days before the Modern Sky Music Festival (festival.modernsky.com) kicked off in 2009, organisers announced that all 14 international bands were cancelled from the event's programme. No reason was given, but the festival's overlapping of time with the 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China seems to have played a role.

The Midi Music Festival, the longest-running rock festival in China, was postponed at least three times, because of the SARS virus, a stampede incident in Beijing's outskirts, and the Olympic Games. In 2011 the Big Love Music Festival (www.chinabiglove.com), set to be held in Mianyang of Sichuan province during the National Day holiday, was cancelled because the local government changed its mind and would not provide a venue.

In China, governmental festivals usually serve propagandist purposes and pay little attention to the artistic side, while private festivals are more audience-oriented but often fail to survive. Under such circumstances, a third type of festival was born and seems to be doing better. This third kind, which falls in between governmental and private festivals, is usually under the name of the government but is run privately.

The Beijing Music Festival (www.bmf.org.cn), which is devoted to classical music, is officially presented by the Ministry of Culture and the Beijing Municipal Government, but was founded and run by conductor Yu Long. Because of the government support, the festival is widely covered by mainstream media, and has been able to attract sponsorship from major Chinese and international companies. Yu's own expertise as a globally active conductor enables the event to be of international standard, making it one of China's best-run festivals. The Beijing Music Festival has commissioned a number of works from international composers, including Symphony No.8 by Krzysztof Penderecki and *Ruin and Memory* by Howard Shore.

In 2010, the Beijing Music Festival presented three operas in just one week: avant-garde artist Zhang Huan's rendition of Handel's *Semele*, Zhou Long's *Madame White Snake* (co-commissioned by Beijing Music Festival and Opera Boston) and Ye Xiaogang's *Song of Farewell* (commissioned by Beijing Music Festival).

Another example of a 'government-supported, privately-run' festival is the World Music Shanghai (www.worldmusicshanghai.com), which was founded in 2008 as part of the Shanghai World Expo. The organising committee successfully corresponded to the spirit of the World Expo, under which it ran the festival for three consecutive years. After that, the festival has been living on with the support of some other governmental organisations like the Shanghai International Culture Association. In 2012, the festival was held across the city in different spaces of commercial properties. International artists who have performed at the festival include Zakir Hussain, Huun-Huur-Tu and Amadou & Mariam.

Although the Fringe Shanghai no longer exists, two other fringe festivals have come into being in China: the Shenzhen International Fringe Festival (www.szfringe.org) and the Beijing Fringe Festival (www.beijingff.com). The former was initiated by a private design company but supported by the cultural bureau of Shenzhen's Nanshan district, while the latter was founded by theatre director Meng Jinghui and sponsored by Beijing Federation of Literary and Art Circles.

In 2011 the Beijing Fringe Festival included a part called Avignon Festival le off in Beijing, which presented six works

“In China, governmental festivals usually serve political purposes and pay little attention to the artistic side, while private festivals are more audience-oriented but often fail to survive. Under such circumstances, a third type of festival has evolved.”

from the Avignon Festival of France. There were also works from Germany, UK, Spain, United States, Netherlands, Japan, Scotland, Switzerland, and Denmark.

For international art workers, it is this third type of festival, supported by the government and run by professionals, that are the easiest to cooperate with, although working with Chinese festivals still requires time and patience.

Chinese authorities are strict with the content of international artists' performances. One has to bear in mind that works that challenge the political status quo of China will not be allowed. Nudity is also forbidden.

Many foreign cultural institutions have branches in China, such as the British Council, Goethe Institute and Instituto Cervantes. They are often helpful in providing sponsorship and consulting on how to bring programmes to China.

At the 2012's annual session of the National People's Congress, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said China will further promote reform and development in its cultural system, and provide a large quantity of high-quality cultural products to meet people's demand.

This seems to be a positive factor for Chinese festivals. As China integrates with the world economy and culture more deeply, it is foreseeable that there will be more international festivals in China in the future.

Another positive factor is China's craze for building grand theatres. After the National Center for the Performing Arts, Shanghai Grand Theatre and Guangzhou Opera House, cities across China are building luxurious performing arts venues to show off their competence. All major Chinese cities either have built or are building their grand theatres, and on the Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta, China's most economically developed areas, many smaller cities have built top-level theatres. These venues are all looking for programmes, and some of them are already doing their own festivals.

Some of them are also looking for expertise in programming. The Yujiapu Arts Center, scheduled to open in 2015 in the

Binhai New Area of Tianjin, has made agreements with the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, which will provide professional consulting toward programming and operations.

China is providing more opportunities for international artists and art managers. For the time being, it is important to find the right partners to work with in China. Co-commission and co-production are good ways to tap into Chinese festivals. China might seem difficult, but once trust is established, things can be much smoother than they seem to be.

Weblinks

Shanghai International Arts Festival: <http://www.artsbird.com>

Meet in Beijing Arts Festival: <http://www.meetinbeijing.org.cn>

Asia Arts Festival and Nanning Folk Songs Festival:
<http://www.flyingsong.com>

Crossing Festival: <http://www.ccdworkstation.com>

Holisland Festival: <http://www.hlif.cc>

Midi Festival: <http://www.midifestival.com>

Big Love Music Festival:

Beijing Music Festival: <http://www.bmf.org.cn>

World Music Shanghai: <http://www.worldmusicshanghai.com>

Shenzhen International Fringe Festival: <http://www.szfringe.org>

Beijing Fringe Festival: <http://www.beijingff.com>

Reflections

- What festival models work the best in your country?
- How is the government, or the governmental authorities, involved with or affect the festivals in your country?
- What is the difference between “privately-run” and “publicly-run” festivals?
- What do you think is important when working with festivals in China?

NEW MEDIA FESTIVALS IN THE NETHERLANDS

by Hans van Rompaey

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GGOBOT. Photo credit: Arnon Coenen

The Indescribable Experience, Impossible to Imitate: A Conversation with the Directors of Four Media Festivals

As organised and flat as the Netherlands is, so diverse, rich and complete is its offering of media festivals. With more than twenty-five media and cross-discipline events, each with its own profile and target group, and distributed across the land. They provide a platform for artists, genres, and movements which enquire into and research new technologies, opening up and challenging their original applications. Unlike other festivals, these are the true junctions between technology, art, politics, maker, and audience. They focus on stimulating development, sharing knowledge, provoking thought and posing important questions. Yet media art continues to find it hard to communicate both its beauty and importance to government and public. Time, then, to pay more attention to this amazing

source of inspiration. A conversation with four representatives of the field — Lucas van der Velden (Sonic Acts), Marije van de Vall (Media Art Friesland), Frens Frijns (STRP) and Joost Heijthuisen (Incubate) — about the importance of media festivals, the current situation, and how they aim to confront an uncertain future in an innovative way.

Everyone's lives are, for instance, fundamentally affected by the existence of GPS, the security and structure of digital data, and the ubiquitous presence of images and sound. The focus of media art consequently goes beyond the purely aesthetic or symbolic: there is a direct relation between 'contemporary life' and the question of how technology influences our lives.

Technologies are both the tools and the subject of media artists which they turn towards an audience — an audience that is far more numerous than those who want to dismiss media art as marginal or niche would believe. Media Art Friesland attracts more than 5000 visitors annually, Sonic Acts grew with its last edition to 7000 visitors, more than 18000 people went to Today'sArt in The Hague, the last STRP attracted more than 30000 people. Moreover, these are extraordinarily diverse audiences. Lucas van der Velden (Sonic Acts) notes: “An American visitor once said, this is not just a cross-disciplinary festival, it's also cross-generational: people aged 20 to 70 who are interested in long-term developments. Our public is absolutely not elitist. The people who know the least are often the most surprised — because they've never experienced anything like it.” This is also the greatest challenge facing media art: reaching people and drawing them in. Van der Velden says: “The experience of media art is strongly defined in terms of time and space, in the same way that you have to walk across a whole city to get a sense of what is there: you can't simply show a picture of it.”

In 2010 we held an evening entitled Acoustic Spaces. Ten experimental audio performances flowed seamlessly into each other over the course of four hours. The audience sat in a dark Paradiso in Amsterdam. The room was filled to the brim; no one wanted to leave. Yet nothing sounded anything like a song or pop music. There was a field recording of an airport, a journey through a city, sounds of nature, and all this culminated in a recording of a thunderstorm with cracks of lightning so loud they really shocked people — you saw the room literally jump. And yet people didn't respond by saying, “That was too loud”. The intensity of the sound caused them to be seized by an intangible sense of euphoria. This could never have been achieved if they had just been listening to a recording

on a computer. But in the right setting something happens to an audience. That indescribable experience, impossible to imitate, that you have to experience first hand — that is

“That indescribable experience,
impossible to imitate, that you
have to experience first hand
— that is what fascinates us”

what fascinates us. About a pop concert you can say they played this song or that, and that's why it was great. But this doesn't explain what the song did to you — you do not tell people that story. When you are unable to grasp what you hear, but you try to articulate that in words, that is when you start to tell your own story and that's when the emotions rise to the surface.”

Media art can be as exciting or accessible as pop music and many people don't even realise that it addresses or uses technologies and subjects that are extraordinarily close to the everyday lives of ordinary people. But try to explain that in three catchy one-liners in a primetime chat-show interview. With the festival STRP, Frens Frijns tries, at least in part, to close the gulf between popular culture and media art. An accessible, but relevant music programme draws the visitors in who then visit the accompanying exhibition. “Besides this we have also learned to emphasise certain things and to actively seek out our target groups through a multi-pronged communications policy: we aim the music programme at the mainstream media, educational elements are promoted through schools and colleges and so on... But it remains hard.”

Making the Otherwise Invisible Visible

With the exception of the NIMk (Netherlands Media Art Institute), there is no permanent infrastructure in the Netherlands, in the form of buildings, museums or institutions, that focuses entirely on media art. Organisations for other art disciplines (visual arts, stage arts) only offer occasional exhibition opportunities. Production-oriented media organisations/institutions such as V2_, Waag Society or Mediamatic — the so-called media labs — primarily focus on production and the constant search for the purpose of new technologies, the possibilities, the dangers, and the impact. Consequently, the festivals are the presentation moments par excellence, the moments when the sector interacts with itself and others, gives shape to its development and accelerates it: festival as both catalyst and accelerator.

“New media art has a long-held inclination to separate itself from art in general and to say: we are the new media and all the other arts are old,” explains Lucas van der Velden. “However, the distinction has now become more diffused and ‘traditional’ artists are using new media more and more. Look at prominent artists like Ai WeiWei and Olafur Eliasson.” Media art is now shown more and more often at other festivals—Tweetaakt theatre festival, the Holland Festival, and Lowlands, all programme media art. Marije van de Vall, organiser of Media Art Friesland: “In the real world too the domain of media art is no longer so clearly defined. It’s happening all around you, everywhere you go — in fashion, shop design, theatre, music — everyone is making films on their phones, remixes, mash-ups.”

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Much of this kind of self-expression has long since become completely normal for ordinary people. It’s easy to forget that the PC has only been around for thirty years and the smart phone for just five. This threatens to make media art banal, even though “pure” media festivals really do perform an important service. They are able to examine issues in far greater depth, they dare to experiment and seek out new festival formats.

Joost Heijthuisen responds to this evolution with his Incubate festival in Tilburg, which concentrates on multi-disciplinary independent culture: music, dance, visual art. What links Incubate to media art festivals is the use of technology as a tool to create art. He consequently focuses on crowd sourcing — the festival is renowned for involving its audiences in all areas of organisation and programming. “We call it open DNA,” Heijthuisen explains. “Our audience helps us to write the policy plan, our website is compiled from contributions from visitors who often know more about a niche-genre or artist than we do. This generates a very special social dynamic.”

But Frens Frijns, director of SRTP Festival in Eindhoven, takes yet another angle. With 30,000 people at a single location, STRP is probably the largest media festival in the Netherlands. With an electronic music programme, DJs and famous dance acts like Underworld, SRTP attracts a broad public, which then has access to an extensive media art exhibition. In this way the visitor is taken by the hand and surprised. And with success. “Ninety per cent of our visitors also go to the exhibition,” says Frijns. “We focus on the beauty of media art. There are many wonderful things that remained in a niche but which are suitable for a wider audience. Our programme

should not short-change the experienced viewer, but it has to be interesting in reality, not just conceptually or on paper: the layperson should be allowed to experience something on the spot, to enjoy, and to understand it as well.”

The Field Task of the Media

There are two themes that keep recurring when you talk to organisers about media art: making the unique experience accessible and striving towards greater public awareness of the role of technology in our society. Says Lucas van der Velden: “You can roughly divide media art into experience-oriented, politically-engaged, and purely technology — and gadget-focused: there is a new iPhone — we have to do something with it. We concentrate primarily on the first kind.”

The festival *Incubate*, on the other hand, places technology clearly within its social dynamic, thereby opening itself up to experimentation and seeking the future content or format for a festival. It forces people to think about their own role and how they might use the technology. “This is why we work with a different overarching theme each year,” explains Joost Heijthuijsen. “Audience input is impossible if there is no identity or direction that stems from the content.” Heijthuisen is also often asked to advise governments on crowd sourcing. If you do not have a clear goal, crowd sourcing soon leads to a Babel-like confusion. This role — the raising of awareness in relation to digitalisation and technology — seems to be a direction that more and more festivals want to go in. The *Media Art Festival* in Leeuwarden — whose future existence is uncertain due to evaporating financial resources — focused exclusively until now on the

development of talented academy students. But now it also wants to work specifically with businesses, science, education and ordinary, intrigued citizens. No more art for art’s sake, but art as a tool for producing applied products. Marije van de Vall says: “If you are able to make people aware of this process, you can take a step towards understanding more difficult artworks. Over the last few years we have often held guided tours for young people. These were completely disinterested school children, but if you can get them to react, they come to realise that they are able understand and that this ‘vague’ media art actually refers to numerous things that are familiar to them. For example, we were standing beside an artwork by Jan Lange (graduate from Artez Enschede). An installation with nine slide projectors which projected colours onto a screen. Their first reaction was: so easy, so what? Then you ask them what they can see in the work. Someone said “a draughtboard, stones that can be moved around.” The boy who said this thought he was saying something stupid, but that is what it was about: moving, repositioning, space. The link with pixels and thereby the internet, was soon made — and that they all did know about. Then you ask them: do you still have slide projectors in the classroom? No. They’d never seen one. So, what do you think the artist wants to say by using one? And so you take

them a little further, step at a time and then you see their interest increasing.”

Participation is also a good way to stimulate their grasp and enthusiasm: the project *Mash My Bits Up* is a collaboration between five organisations from Leeuwarden, which challenges young people to manipulate images and sound and to send them to each other. Van de Vall: “You open a door for them. This is what we want to do at a different level, by drawing the link to applied products in order to fuel businesses’ appreciation for media art and vice versa: people are able to learn from each other.”

This link between media art and education, or economics, is being drawn more often, but is perhaps still too little explored by people who see media art as art with a capital A and nothing more. But how does it work? What happens when artists work with businesses — does it really matter if anything is really generated? STRP festival has taken on a pioneering role within media art in this respect.

Its director, Frens Frijns: “STRP’s physical location — Eindhoven, the links with the technology sector in the region — presented us with unique opportunities. We worked with Eindhoven University of Technology, Philips and many others. As a result, artist Edwin van der Heide is making an artwork for the coming *S RTP*



Urban Explorers. Photo credit: Tim Leguijt

festival using acoustic panels full of LEDs which have recently been developed by Philips Large Luminous Surfaces. The internationally renowned Danish artist Olafur Eliasson is also currently using them to build an artwork. Last year we presented a project by Philips Lighting at STRP — a test environment around ambient lighting in which the creative bureau Little Mountain was responsible for the artistic content.” This year STRP has hooked festival artist Daan Roosengaarde up with Philips Lighting to produce a project in Shanghai called *Nighttime in the Sky*, for which STRP — if it is ready on time — will be allowed to present the European try-out. “This is what I call the field-lab task of the festival,” says Frijns. “If we present an experiment like this at the festival it gets seen by thousands of people, whereas the companies are only able to show a small number of people around their labs. And the audience — some of whom are students — get really excited. We are going to hold a recruitment event at the next festival. There’s a lot of enthusiasm for the idea.”

For Frijns, the democratisation of media art and the raising of public awareness of the connection between the technology, industry and daily life is one of the main tasks of his festival. To do this he focuses largely on the young. “This year we will receive more than 4,000 school children. I am

opening five extra days to accommodate them. That costs us money, despite the subsidies — which are now threatened.”

Lucas van der Velden (*Sonic Acts*) jumps in: “You could say there are lots of media festivals, too many compared with other countries, but in relation to our society it is both logical and important. The Netherlands is one of the most densely cabled countries in the world, it occupies a pioneering position in technology, and in many respects is a testing ground for the world. A country that technologically develops so rapidly should be asking itself more questions about that technology: in education, defence, healthcare, science... We have to continue to look critically at the benefits of this and not simply do things because they can be done. And this is where there is an important role for media art and e-culture in general. Unfortunately, e-culture is being severely hit by cuts in government spending precisely at the moment more money should be going in that direction. It is as if the fact that everyone is walking around with an iPod and buying products full of chips is being denied. Many social developments are about privacy and social interaction and a lot of media art addresses these subjects. Research into the impact of technology on our society needs its own space, now more than ever.”

Thinking and Acting in the Greater Interest of the Sector

Despite the many and valuable sounds of support, the continuing existence of numerous media festivals is under pressure. The government appears to have chosen in favour of cultural heritage conservation, and is consequently putting at risk the task of the media festival as a free space for creativity. It would be wonderful if the role of these festivals in the chain of knowledge production were to be recognised and acknowledged. Nonetheless, shrinking financial resources also brings a (self-)critical look at the role and future of media festivals. The quest for the meaning and relevance of festivals within the media art production chain and research into potentially new presentation models and innovative organisational structures are needed. *Sonic Acts*, *Incubate* and *STRP*, as well as *Media Art Friesland*, are all in their own way examples of how festivals may think about this future and adjust their policies accordingly, especially now the seven established media labs and media-art organisations (V2_, Waag Society, NIMk, Mediamatic) are being removed from the basic infrastructure and threaten to disappear altogether. At the same time, the future of labs that have no structural funding is exceptionally uncertain. None of this will make the task of scouting for new talent and good work any easier.

Lucas van der Velden: “What we programme for the first time in the Netherlands is often presented a few years later at STRP where it reaches a new audience. This is why it is really good that STRP exists. Yet they receive very little recognition from the inner circle of media art for the role they play. The continued existence of an event like STRP is important because it has wide appeal and this enables it to make media art relevant to a broader public. We do not think quite enough about the wider significance for the sector.”

This is endorsed by Frens Frijns, director of STRP. “We all need to look at this: think about what position we occupy within the development of media art? It used to be the

media labs, which are now threatened, that provided new makers with the opportunity to develop. In future, this role will have to be in part filled by the festivals. I want to talk even more with the high-tech industry and to link artistic projects to industry, so that businesses can see what they may do with this target group and tailor projects accordingly. More self-production and co-production. That’s where there is most room for manoeuvre. Everyone will have to adopt a piece of the field, otherwise the development of new makers and media art as a whole will become destabilised — and that would be disastrous for the sector.”

Marije van de Vall agrees: “We are now the only one in the North, but it would be good to look at the regional distribution and the location for these kinds of festivals in a broader context. Who is concerned with developing talent? Who brings the big names to the Netherlands? Who seeks contact with big business? It’s inefficient to try to do everything.”

Other opportunities lie in collaborations with other festivals, in other genres which could provide platforms for the promotion of media art or which could complement each other in terms of content. Media art components to such festivals as *Picnic* or *Lowlands* would open up new audiences.

“The quest for the meaning and relevance of festivals within the media art production chain and research into potentially new presentation models; and, innovative organisational structures are needed.”

Joost Heijthuisen (*Incubate*): “We often work with festivals that do things very differently, in terms of genre, but who are, none the less, kindred spirits. Take the *Brabant WMF Mundial* — we developed a sustainability project with them. We also learn a lot about sponsoring, marketing or production

from other festivals in our region, like *SRTP* and the dance event *Extrema*. That's where opportunities lie."

What is certain is that the relevance of media art in contemporary, technology-driven society is growing. Festivals like *STRP*, *Incubate* or *Media Art Friesland* explicitly seek out content-led collaborations with businesses and know-how in their regions, while their own contribution to the national and international image of such cities as Groningen, Eindhoven or Tilburg — although difficult to calculate in numbers — is beyond dispute. And yet media art and its festivals are entering an uncertain era. "It would seem there is a shake-out going on in the cultural sector. Distinguishing yourself from others, questioning yourself is becoming important," Joost Heijthuisen decides. "In order to attract audiences, but also sponsors. Running acceptable financial risks is the most that can be achieved. Subsidies and sponsoring are not rights. It takes time to build them up and to demonstrate each time that you're worth the investment. We are trying to build up a sustainable ecosystem with sustainable connections. This takes time."

Perhaps this is precisely what media festivals are most in need of: time. Time to develop and crystallise as (part of) a sector. Time to nurture understanding, appreciation and awareness among government and audiences of the importance of artistic approaches to and engaged reflection upon technology in our lives. And to raise the awareness to such a level that no one can avoid it. Or would want to.

Reflections

- Are there strategies of engagement in this article that a more conventional arts festival could use or adapt from?
- How can multidisciplinary approaches help in attracting different audiences?
- How could crowdsourcing approaches be effectively integrated in your festival?
- How does your festival make a unique experience accessible and strive towards greater public awareness of the role of technology in society?
- Is there a place for new media festivals in your country? Why/why not?



**SERVING
THE PUBLIC?**

INTRODUCTION: WHICH PUBLIC DO WE SERVE AND HOW?

by Audrey Wong

In this section, once again we look into specific contexts and countries in Europe and Asia.

The study of new typologies of festivals by Ramona Laczko David reveals that even festivals with artistic and cultural content are expanding their scope of interest to incorporate broader political, social, and environmental concerns, while new festival models are concurrently emerging out of the specific interests of certain segments of society: such as green or environmental festivals and scientific festivals. The article reminds us that the festival landscape is constantly changing, and it changes in response to how the public and the environment they live in, are evolving. Today, when we often find and connect with our own communities of shared interest through online media, it is also easier for us to cross-over between these communities too — resulting in a cross-disciplinary mode of thinking, and such cross-disciplinary modes of thinking and acting are increasingly reflected in festivals as well.

Toby To's article on two festivals in Thailand is an interesting contrast to David's article. The types of festivals described in both articles can be said to be 'niche' in that they serve specific communities; however, while many new festivals of the type described by David are likely to be seen in urban settings, To describes festivals that are distinctly rooted in the rural — at least, not in a major urban centre. However, in a similar manner to the emergence of Indian festivals described in the section *Making A Festival: The Context*, these two Thai festivals were the product of passionate individuals, or a group of passionate individuals, who began with personal convictions about first, the artistic work they were doing, and secondly, the value of not just sharing the work with the community around them but of including the community in the work. To's article reminds us to pay attention to who comes to the festival and who the festival is for; and how the community in the festival are also part of the resources of the festival, rather than simply being an 'audience' who attends.

Katelijan Verstraete takes us back to a highly-urbanised setting — Singapore, a modern city with a multicultural population, where she interviewed representatives from three key

festivals. Questions are raised here about who the Singapore public is for these festivals, and whether and how Singapore festivals play a part in social cohesion for a country with diverse ethnic, religious and language communities. There is also a broader question here: how conscious are programmers of these social, cultural and linguistic differences, and should they consciously incorporate these differences in the programming they provide for the public?

These articles provide only a snapshot of what programmers around the world are doing as they look to planning festivals that are relevant and break new artistic ground. The discussion on how festivals serve the public (or not) is endless, and there are different perspectives on this issue. Robyn Archer's article in the first section provides an interesting counterpoint to the voices here as well. What's your perspective?

EXPLORING NEW FESTIVAL TYPOLOGIES IN EUROPE

by Ramona Laczko David

In recent years there has been an emergence of a more specialised type of festival in a great part due to the growing attention on the ability of festivals to engage with new audiences. These festivals focus on cross sectors such as environment, science, contemporary music and human rights.

A few years back these manifestations were fringe events included in the programming of major festivals around Europe in an attempt to attract larger participation from the public. In contrast with their previous 'hosts', the new festival typologies are not necessarily driven anymore by a cultural aspect in their programming. Commonly, they find their inspiration in social or political aspects of contemporary life such as gender issues, the relationship between arts and community reflected in new technologies and the design of the urban space, issues of identity and ethnic minorities and intercultural dialogue, to name just a few.

A higher importance is also given to the creative process within the programming of these festivals and organisers encourage new productions, create a meeting space for professionals as well as provide training opportunities for young artists. Thus, they target audiences that have been less present on the cultural scene and have a particular interest in the more specialised topic of the festival. In addition, programmers adopt innovative organisational forms, advocating for reduced environmental impact or for sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyles.

Another feature of these festivals is the use of public spaces that are not usually exploited by major iconic festivals. This choice of location often contributes to the development of contemporary forms of artistic expressions that re-interpret and bring closer to the public aspects of traditional festive manifestations such as circus, folk music and dance and

street theatre. (For example, *La Merce Festival* in Barcelona, Spain, has integrated within its programming the *Barcelona Arts de Carrer*, a festival dedicated to street arts events.) Often, abandoned buildings of old factories, ruined cultural heritage sites or dysfunctional public properties are also exploited by these festivals. As a consequence, performances are adapted to these venues, challenging the programming of mainstream festivals and attracting a more diverse and curious public to experiment with new

“In their artistic journey, the audiences are encouraged to find their own “role” in the framework of the festival and engage more actively with the programme.”

forms of art. In their artistic journey, the audiences are encouraged to find their own role in the framework of the festival and engage more actively with the programme.

Another specificity of these festivals is the interdisciplinary programming they adopt. Hence so-called 'intellectual themes' like science, history and memory, philosophy, literature, architecture, emigration and globalisation are represented through diverse events within the framework of one festival. The programming includes activities such as workshops, panels, public debates joined by visual arts exhibitions and installations, performances or film screenings related to the topic.

Following this introduction of the main features which distinguish these new types of festivals, the following sections of this paper will analyse four different typologies and their relationship to audience development (based on a previous research conducted for the European Festival Research Project, 2010 edition, Poznan, Poland).

Green or Environmental Festivals

The festivals in this category focus on climate change and environmental issues in three different patterns, attracting a diverse range of public:

A) *Environmental topic approached as a research or focus discipline itself*

These types of festivals are initiated usually by activist NGOs in collaboration with research institutions, government agencies and universities. Choosing various locations in the city, a science museum or research institution normally closed for wide audiences, they attract a more specialised public than traditional artistic festivals. Their main objective is to build up knowledge and induce sustainable lifestyle behaviour through customised events that bring together artists with scientists or various professionals. Examples in this category could be the *Il Festival della Biodiversita* (Milano, Italy) and *L'energia spiegata–Festival dell'Energia* (Lecce, Italy).

B) *Environment embedded in the theme of a particular artistic festival*

These festivals are initiated by cultural organisations and their primary focus is on the artistic dimension of their programming and not on knowledge building. The audiences of these festivals are the usual artistic festival participants and people interested in environmental issues who are willing to adopt the position of the festival towards the topic and are not so interested in detailed scientific facts. Examples of this type of festivals are 2010 edition of *Transmediale Festival* (Berlin, Germany) and *International Environmental Film Festival* (Barcelona, Spain).

C) *Environment as festival management style*

This pattern is specific to music festivals organised in large open air spaces, where specific attention is given to aspects like transportation to the site, waste and recycling activities, water management on site, noise reduction and more. Frequented usually by large masses of people, the organisers try to raise awareness on environmental issues and educate their audiences. Participants in the festival learn to behave in a more environmentally friendly way and with each edition, new 'experiments' are tried out by the organisers to reduce the impact on the environment of these massive artistic events. Examples of this type of festival include *Sziget Festival* (Hungary) and *Paléo Festival Nyon* (Switzerland).

Scientific Festivals

Initiated by science research institutions and universities, scientific festivals have a strong interdisciplinary focus and rely on diverse hands-on activities. The artistic dimension of certain events included in the programme functions only to bridge science to everyday life behaviours or phenomena and appropriate an otherwise difficult academic discourse that reduces accessibility and interest of large audiences. The organisers attract new audiences by programming events through which participants gain insights into latest scientific discoveries, attend a large number of free events and receive useful information to improve their everyday life. Some of the popular festivals in this category are the *British Science Festival* (2010 Edition, Birmingham, UK) and the *Printemps des Sciences* (University Cities, Belgium).

Creative Festivals

By adopting in their programming a key cultural discipline such as architecture, visual arts, literature and poetry, philosophy or journalism, creative festivals are initiated mainly by cultural organisations. I have called them 'creative' because most of the time they manifest themselves as a 'festival of ideas' and the organiser seeks to broaden the perspective of their audiences through interactive events like public forums, debates, reading or writing workshops (in case of literary festivals), combined with concerts, performances and visual art exhibitions. As observed by Aleksandra Jovicevic (participant in the 2010 research workshop of the European Festival Research Project) in her presentation of two book festivals in Italy (*Between the Possible and the Imaginary* (January 2010) and *Festival of Books and Reading* (March 2010):

"These festivals are presented as a source of resistance by the wider society to the media dictate of trivia — as decentralised and marginal events they represent a counterpoint to an overwhelming new populism of the Italian society. They promote a quality debate, otherwise absent in the wider Italian society and they could become subversive because they assert alternative modalities of thinking and debating. These festivals are in effect engaged in education and the emancipation of an audience and create the only space in which intellectuals can exist as public figures."

Socio-political Festivals

More familiar in large metropolitan areas — and reflecting on social and political issues of contemporary society — social-political festivals revolve mainly around topics such as gender, sexual orientation, migration, integration, collective identity, ethnicity or minorities.

Here I distinguish between two main patterns:

- *The socio-political dimension translated in the organisation of community development events initiated by local civil societies, advocacy groups and NGOs*

These types of festivals occur in cities with increasing number of immigrants and the topics are derived from everyday life issues. Their objective is to enhance the feeling of belonging to a community and they are oriented against xenophobia or homophobia. Focusing on local artists and cultural resources, they attract a mixed audience based not so much on individual participation, but more on the participation of whole families, local community, friends of local artists, immigrants and their local associations, activists and their supporters, people with special needs and disabilities. The cross-sectorial approach is a core feature in the programming of these festivals with organisers opening the door to different local public or private organisations to present their work and encourage participation: women associations, immigration centres, employment agencies, to name just a few. Examples of this type of festivals are *Naufragi-Festival della fragilita metropolitana* (Bologna, Italy) and *Festival des migrations des cultures et de la citoyenneté* (Luxembourg).

- *Theme/topic of an artistic festival reflecting on socio-political issues*

Initiated by cultural organisations with enforced public support, these festivals focus primarily on developing an artistic vision by adopting competitive international programming, reflecting on aspects of cultural diversity, globalisation and its effects on the community and the arts and culture scene. They address primarily a cultural public and by commissioning specific contemporary artistic works that foster collaboration between international artists, they try to target groups that are usually unrepresented in other artistic events throughout the year. Examples following this pattern are: *Aarhus Festival* (Denmark),

addressing the topic of ‘Neighbours’ in the 2010 edition, *Senza Frontiere–Without Borders Film Festival* (Rome, Italy), and *Khamoro–World Roma Festival* (Prague, Czech Republic).

Conclusion

“The main objective (of festivals) is not to create a ‘faithful’ public, but to contribute to the development of a knowledge society, perpetuate intellectual understanding and act as channels for dissemination of information.”

The continuously changing landscape of festivals due to sudden changes in funding policies at local or international levels, or the growing complexity of festival programming, makes it difficult to draw very specific festival typologies and corresponding target audiences. Some festival typologies described above fail to reach their second or third edition and some are intended from the beginning as one-off events in order to tackle certain issues the society is confronted with at a particular moment in time. Some are initiated by local cultural organisations that aim to raise visibility around their activities throughout the year and gain new audiences for the same. Cities awarded the title of *European Capital of Culture* initiate specifically for the cultural year a series of festivals that in consequent years lose their funding and unless they adopt a new festival formula, they also remain one-off events.

Because of their fragile existence, the audiences of these festivals are easily absorbed by the other artistic events happening along the year. However, their main objective is not to create a 'faithful' public, but to contribute to the development of a knowledge society, perpetuate intellectual understanding and act as channels for dissemination of information. They sometimes fulfil a demystification role (in particular, for science festivals) and most often their events are constructed around debates and public forums in order to attract people's participation.

Although they do not follow the traditional 'canons', and in spite of the criticism they have received from scholars and researchers when it comes to assessing their artistic value, these festivals have the merit of increasing the participation of different segments of the public, encouraging cross disciplinary projects, engaging with a larger number of stakeholders and adapting their programming to different ardent issues of the society more rapidly.

Reflections

- What new festivals are there in your country and what needs do they respond to?
- How can festivals reflect better on the importance of public space in society?
- How can the creative process of the making of a festival become more visible?
- How do festivals influence intellectual and cultural discourses in society?
- Can you detect new movements and social changes that might lead to a new festival or festivals in your country or city?

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Weblinks

La Mercè–Festival de Barcelona: <http://www.bcn.cat/merce/en/index.shtml>

Il Festival della Biodiversità :<http://www.festivalbiodiversita.it/>

L’energia spiegata–Festival dell’Energia: <http://www.festivaldellenergia.it/>

Transmediale Festival: <http://www.transmediale.de/>

International Environmental Film Festival: <http://www.ficma.com/index.php?l=en>

Sziget Festival: http://www.sziget.hu/festival_english#.T7OSsdmK6gY

Paléo Festival Nyon: <http://yeah.paleo.ch/>

British Science Festival, 2010 Edition: <http://www.britishscienceassociation.org/web/BritishScienceFestival/>

Printemps des Sciences: <http://www.printempsdessciences.be/>

Naufragi-Festival della fragilità metropolitane (only in Italian): http://www.naufragi.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=136&Itemid=479

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FESTIVALS AND COMMUNITIES: TWO THAI CASE STUDIES

by Toby To



Aunt Laong performing her dance in Chet Samien, Thailand

Introduction

Despite the lack of government support towards the performing arts in Thailand, various artists and organisers are striving to create arts festivals for and with their respective communities. Although limited in technical and financial resources, some of these events thrive with successes. They have created unique festival models with excellent audience turnout, an immense sense of festivity, and a rewarding performance and exchange experience for international artists.

Two cases of Thailand in the context of the festivals and their communities will be shared here. The first case, *Pathumthani International Theatre Festival*, is an event created by the Moradokmai Theatre Troupe to connect the different facets

of their work. The second one is about Chet Samien, a village of Ratchaburi province, which has emerged over the past four years as a vibrant hub for arts festivals.

Pathumthani International Theatre Festival

Imagine performances beside rice fields, an opening night parade in farm trucks through the neighbourhood, morning drills before sunrise. Imagine artists performing for students from all over Thailand, and students performing for artists from all over the world. There, you have arrived at *Pathumthani International Theatre Festival* in the province of Pathumthani of Thailand.

The festival is organised by the Moradokmai Theatre Troupe, a group created by one of the towering figures in contemporary Thai theatre, Janaprakal “Kru Chang” Chandruang. Founded in 1995, Moradokmai began as a typical theatre company with its rented office and studio space, and presented several productions throughout the year. Members mostly relied on other jobs in television or film to support their life as stage thespians.

An incessant search for theatre’s purpose

“Around 2000, Moradokmai started to question the purpose of making theatre. Kru Chang believes that there is more duty in making theatre than mere self-expression, that theatre is a way to heal and to bring awareness to oneself and others,” explained Pobchan “Ju” Leelasartsuntorn, the general director of Moradokmai, about what she described as a paradigm shift of the company.

To implement this vision, Moradokmai developed three main facets of work. The first area is its focus on the younger generation. School halls all over Thailand, instead of theatres in Bangkok, became the main venues for Moradokmai performances. Moradokmai facilitated the development of a network of young dramatists from over 40 schools to create theatre works that dealt with contemporary issues. Friends, relatives and monks are usually invited to the performance and the post-performance discussion.

Secondly, Moradokmai underwent a transformation within its organisation. With the members' growing sense of disenchantment with materialism and their desires to focus on creating theatrical works, the group purchased a piece of land outside of Bangkok in Pathumthani province and spent two years to develop the no-man's-land into a foundation for the theatre community.



Riverside stage in Chet Samien, Thailand

Here, members lead a very simple, Thai way of life and make theatre together. Everyone learns to do everything, from preparing meals to growing vegetables to building houses and theatre, from acting to music to technical work. They wake up before sunrise to polish their theatre skills. No television is in sight in order to encourage interpersonal communication. No one receives a salary and income from projects goes to the maintenance and development of the community. At the same time, the community is also ready to help individual members with their problems whenever necessary.

Pobchan "Ju" Leelasartsuntorn comments: "This is real life, and not a fairy tale. It was very hard in the beginning since this is a new way of living for all of us. There were members who left and there were times we experienced difficulties in making ends meet."

Things have improved these days and the community does not only manage to maintain the simple operation of the community, but is also capable of developing more initiatives. A small, free Moradokmai Home School programme was established to have about 20 students live and study with the Moradokmai members.

The final area of work is international exchange. Moradokmai has been sharing its performances and methodology with the

international arts communities, and often meet artists who are very keen to work and perform with them in Thailand. Such international exchange has also facilitated a network to help Moradokmai's initiatives.

In recent developments, the *Pathumthani International Theatre Festival* will be renamed as *Moradokmai International Theatre Festival*, and will be held in both Pathumthani and Loei provinces.

The festival as a meeting place

It was within these contexts that Pathumthani International Theatre Festival came into being as a platform to bring together these three facets in Moradokmai's work and communities. After a few months' intensive preparation, the first festival happened in 2008. Over 300 students from all over Thailand, and over 100 performers from various countries gathered in Pathumthani for this ten-day, from-dawn-till-dark theatre fiesta, where everyone is both artist as well as spectator.

With an opening that paraded the artists and students through the nearby villages in farm trucks, the festival went on to present performances from Thailand's student theatre troupes, as well as workshops and performances by overseas artists. Artists were invited to give comments to students and students met the artists in post-performance discussions. The forms of performances included a physical theatre, puppetry, music, folk theatre, dance theatre, traditional theatre and clowning. Participants rose before sunrise to practice morning drills and got together to play music after the performances were over at night. To conclude, the festival, a traditional Thai *Wai Khru* (paying tributes to teachers) ceremony was hosted in which all students and artists took part in customary rituals to honour all participating artists.

Through the festival, the participating artists gained a hands-on understanding of the Moradokmai Theatre Troupe, the unique community it created and the young people in Thailand. The 300 young Thai participants, most of whom probably never had a chance to see productions from overseas in their life, not only got to watch, but also work with artists from different cultural backgrounds.

The next edition of the Festival will have the new name of Moradokmai International Theatre Festival, and is scheduled to be held in January/ February 2014 in both Pathum Thani and Pakchom. Pakchom (in Loei province) is where another plan of creating a much bigger theatre community of over 200 rais (80 acres) is in progress. Plans include a university and the creation of a community for international artists.

Chet Samien and Its Festivals

Chet Samien, a farming village by the idyllic Mae Klong River in Ratchaburi province, has now gained a nationwide reputation for its vibrant arts scene that has positively affected the local community in terms of heritage preservation, sustainable development, community empowerment and economic improvement.

The driving force behind this change is a Chet Samien local, Manop Meejamrat. Manop is a director/choreographer with Bangkok's Patravadi Theatre, and a Silapathorn Award-winning artist (a national award from Thailand's Office of Contemporary Arts and Culture). Upon the success of his career, he decided to work to contribute to the development of his home town, Chet Samien.

Arts and community

In 2007, Manop built his arts centre and homestay facility, Suan Silp Baandin (Art Garden of Earth Huts), where he provides free classes for local young people to learn various forms of arts — music, dance and painting. With the young performers, he created the Chet Samien Band. The versatility and discipline of the young performers captured the attention of an audience beyond Chet Samien in their appearance in *Eclipse*, a Patravadi Theatre production also directed by Manop Meejamrat.

“I believe that art contributes to the development of young people, by instilling discipline and a sense of achievement through perfecting something by learning, repetition and hard work. And by hosting art festivals, locals also learn different aspects of organisation, from publicity to backstage management,” Manop explained.

In 2008, Manop started the monthly arts festival, *All About Arts*, on the last Saturday and Sunday of every month. The small open-air festival takes place at an over-a-hundred-year-old market place, where rows of wooden shop houses embrace the cacophony of aromas from various food stalls. Opening music and dance gigs by local villagers started under the shade of a *bodhi* tree. In addition, a riverside space provides not only the stage for the monthly highlights, but also a backdrop comprising the enchanting sunset along the Mae Klong River.

Transcending boundaries

The event is characteristically eclectic. A typical evening of *All About Arts* features a folk dance performance by

octogenarian Aunt Laong, performing her Burmese Axe Dance, accompanied by musicians from the village. Special performances by Thai or international artists will be staged by the riverside stage, where hundreds of local people will gather. Performances of various genres are staged to an inquisitive audience. Once during a site-specific multimedia *butoh* performance by Tetsuro Fukuhara, the spectators were guided to the foundation structure below the community hall, then to a performance inside a super-elastic tube structure, and at last to the riverside stage for the finale. Manop himself once staged a performance ending in his fleeting image on a boat, with huge lanterns flying into the night sky from the other side of the river.

Manop recounted the achievements of the arts festival:

“The festival has improved the life of the locals in a lot of ways. Firstly, food-sellers at the market, instead of making 300 baht a day, now make ten times more on a good day. Secondly, regular meetings and preparations of the festival have encouraged the normally shy villagers to discuss village matters in an open and civilised manner. Recently we have stopped the monthly event to protest the district government bringing in a franchised chain convenience store. Finally, the festival has made the village well-known nationwide and has become the model for cultural development. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has also promoted our village as a cultural destination now. That boosts a certain sense of pride and identity among the people.”

Growing big

With the success of the monthly *All About Arts*, the event has involved into larger editions with bigger programmes. In 2009, the Patravadi Theatre's Fringe Festival was held in Chet Samien and was honoured with the presence of HRH Srirasmi and Prince Dipankorn Rasmijoti. In the winter of 2010, Chet Samien Arts Festival, an event spanning seven weekends from November to January, was launched.

Another version of the festival happened on the Saturdays and Sundays between 27 November 2011 and 31 January 2012. The festival featured traditional performing art forms on one night and contemporary performances on the other.

Conclusion

“ If you have the desire to do something, go ahead and do it in whatever way you can; then learn from it. If you are always waiting for funding and all the right conditions, nothing will get done. ”

Although the situation in Thai public arts funding is not looking bright for the near future, it was refreshing to meet Ju and Manop to talk about their small but beautiful festivals. For a worried arts manager like myself, who is always concerned about the resources of making a festival, a few inspiring words from Ju still rings in my mind:

“If you have the desire to do something, go ahead and do it whatever way you can; then learn from it. If you are always waiting for funding and all the right conditions, nothing will get done.”

Resources themselves do not promise a successful festival, whereas imagination and perseverance do.

Reflections

- What, for you, constitutes a successful festival?
- Comparing the Thai case studies to the examples in the article “Exploring New Festival Typologies in Europe”, what are the similarities and differences between the creation and emergence of new festivals in these two contexts?

SINGAPORE: FESTIVALS FOR ALL?

by Katelijn Verstraete

Introduction

This article is based on short interviews¹ with three important festival organisers in Singapore: *The Necessary Stage*, *The Esplanade* and *Singapore Arts Festival*. It aims to shed light on how they approach programming in a fast changing multicultural and multilingual society and how they build strategies to encourage participation and promote arts and culture in Singapore vis-à-vis Singapore's cultural policy.

Background

Singapore is a densely populated small city-state in Asia with a population that reached 5.183 million in 2011, of which around 36% are foreigners.² The composition of the population has expanded in numbers as well as in diversity, distinguished not only by ethnicity, but also by cultures and sub-cultures within ethnic groups. So the city is both ethnically and culturally diverse. The Singapore identity has evolved in this complex multicultural (multi-religious and multi-racial) and multilingual³ construct. Discussions on ethnicity are however still sensitive in a society where ethnic Chinese are a majority and the Malay and Indian communities a minority. This links back to the turbulent history of Singapore in the 1960s when attempts were made to disrupt racial harmony. Hence social cohesion is high on the agenda of the government.

The 2011 Arts and Culture Statistics Report published by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) shows the vibrancy of the cultural scene and the engagement of Singapore's population in culture. More than 92 arts and

cultural activities are taking place in Singapore every day. Attendance of non-ticketed arts and cultural events hit a high of more than 20 million in 2010. Interest in tertiary arts education courses has doubled since 2004 and financial support to the arts has continued to grow over the past few years. The arts and cultural sector employs more than 24,000 people and contributes more than \$1.2 billion worth of value-add to the economy.⁴ Arts and culture thus played an important role in developing Singapore into an attractive global city.

The aspiration of Singapore to be a global city attracting foreign talent while looking for a distinct notion of Singaporean-ness has raised a lot of questions related to ideas about nationhood which also changes perceptions of Singapore arts and culture. MICA commissioned *The Arts and Culture Review (ACSR)* in 2010 to respond to this and to look at Singapore's cultural strategies for 2025 via public consultation.⁵

"To bring arts and culture to everyone, everywhere and every day and to build capabilities to achieve excellence."

The ACSR Final Report⁶ reflects the general message of the government that more efforts need to be done by the government to engage citizens to co-create Singapore. The report articulates two priority areas: to bring arts and culture to everyone, everywhere and every day and to build capabilities to achieve excellence. The report opened up discussions⁷ on what makes up an arts audience and public for the

arts and if audience numbers are the only indicators of the value of the arts. Reaching untapped audiences is one of the strategies to achieve the 2025 objective.

¹ Written interviews were conducted with Benson Puah and Melissa Lim in March 2012. An oral interview with Low Kee Hong was conducted in April 2012.

² <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/themes/people/popinbrief2011.pdf>

³ There are 4 official languages in Singapore: English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil. English is predominant in all legislative, bureaucratic and judicial matters, tertiary education institutions, and major commercial transactions.

⁴ <http://app.mica.gov.sg/Data/0/SingaporeCulturalStatistics2011.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.acsr.sg/introduction.aspx>

⁶ <http://www.acsr.sg/download.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.substation.org/target-audiences/>

Against this backdrop a proliferation of events and activities under the umbrella of ‘festivals’ has emerged in the last ten years giving visibility to the arts not just in Singapore but also regionally and globally. How are these festivals places for promoting intercultural dialogue and attracting international tourists? And what is the relationship of festivals with the audience in Singapore? Are they ‘festivals for all’ or for ‘the elite’? Three approaches emerged through the interviews, as the festival organisers were questioned on how they programme for a multicultural audience in a fast changing environment.

The M1 Singapore Fringe Festival: Social Engagement through the Arts

One approach is the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival, an annual festival of theatre, dance, music, visual arts and mixed media created and presented by Singaporean and international artists. They are organised by the theatre company The Necessary Stage spearheaded by Alvin Tan, Haresh Sharma and Melissa Lim. The festival focuses on different themes every year such as faith, family and entertainment. The festival aims to bring the best of contemporary, cutting-edge and socially-engaged local and international works to the Singapore audience. The festival is set to be a creative centre, with the twin purpose of innovation and discussion; a platform for meaningful and provocative art to engage our increasingly connected and complex world.⁸ The M1 Singapore Fringe Festival is a civil society initiative and receives sponsorship to cover one thirds of its costs from the title sponsor M1. The rest is sourced through other corporate or institutional sponsors as well as grants and ticket sales.

The Fringe actively involves the artistic community by conducting an open call and the organisers source work which they find intriguing and relevant to the chosen theme for the



Opening of Kalaa Utsavam, Outdoor Theatre, 2011

year, as well as what they feel will resonate with their audiences.

In terms of audience development, the fact that the Fringe has a theme for each edition helps in that audiences are able to see how art responds to the chosen theme, and how they themselves would then respond to the work and the theme too. There are also other forms of engagement with the audiences, such as post-show dialogues at all live performances, so that there is active and direct interaction between audience members and the artists. “We believe in positive engagement and such a strategy to allow for exchange aids in audience understanding and appreciation of the works presented, as well as provide feedback for artists which may be useful for future presentations,” says Melissa Lim, the festival director.

The Fringe has also become more attuned to social media engagement with audiences and artists alike, and this allows

⁸ <http://www.necessary.org/#/m1/>



The Esplanade Theatres in Singapore. Photo credit: Hidetaka Mori

“We do not make any conscious effort to reflect Singapore’s ethnic diversity in our planning.”

them to develop a more immediate and casual form of engagement with both parties, as well as helps in marketing and publicising the Fringe.

The Fringe programming strategy is not consciously based on ethnic diversity “because it is the quality and relevance of the work itself that is more important, rather than ensuring that there is ‘ethnic diversity’ within our programming” says Melissa

Lim. She mentions: “Granted, works presented in the various mother tongues and/or pertaining to issues specific to particular ethnic groups are welcome, but we do not make any conscious effort to reflect Singapore’s ethnic diversity in our planning”. What they seek to ensure is that non-English language works are presented with subtitles. “It is important to remember that Singapore’s main working language is English, so we need to ensure that audiences can access the presented works comfortably,” argues Melissa. Multilingual approaches broaden up the Fringe audiences and allow for better intercultural understanding.

Over the years, the Fringe hasn’t deviated much from its approach

towards audience development; instead it has refined and added on to the process. “We should also never underestimate audiences by believing that there is some sort of segregation of needs between diverse cultural groups. Yes, we need to be culturally sensitive, and yes, we do need to provide adequate information about the works to audiences so that all can gain access to it. However, I believe that audiences by and large — regardless of cultural background — can relate to universal themes presented and grappled with through art, all in rather similar fashions,” explains Melissa. As such, the Fringe’s approach to reach ‘all’ is by creating themes that would resonate to a larger audience and are relevant in the Singaporean context.

The Esplanade Festivals: Serving What Audiences Want?

A very different approach towards the festivals is the model of the Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay. This performing arts and entertainment centre is subsidised by the government and is market-oriented. It was opened in 2002 and is now directed by Benson Puah who is also the CEO of the National Arts Council. Since its opening, its vision has been to be an arts centre for everyone. Benson Puah says: “Singapore is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. There is a wide range of socio-economic and age groups and they all enjoy different art forms. This meant we had to cater to a wide range of differing tastes.”



What's Your Move event at the da:ns Festival 2011 in Singapore

Against this backdrop, the Esplanade arts manager opted to organise a number of festivals throughout the year. Mr Puah further explains their strategy: “This festival format reaps a number of benefits. Firstly, we can aggregate different kinds of events in one place for greater impact. Within a festival structure, we can create different programmes for different tastes. For example, we can mix popular art forms with traditional and experimental forms, under one festival banner. All this also leads to greater marketing efficiency.”

Where possible, the festivals organised by the Esplanade are tied in with the lives and celebrations of our people. For example, *Huayi-Chinese Festival of Arts and Moonfest-A Mid-Autumn Celebration* go hand-in-hand with celebrations by the Chinese community. *Huayi* raises the curtain on Lunar New Year celebrations while *Moonfest* marks Mid-Autumn celebrations. *Pesta Raya-Malay Festival of Arts* is held in conjunction with Hari Raya for the Malay community, while *Kalaa Utsavam-Indian Festival of Arts* is tied in with Deepavali celebrations for the Indian community. This enables these communities to celebrate these special occasions through the arts. Other festivals are tied in to specific events, e.g. the *Yfest* festival is tied in with Youth Day celebrations while *Octoburst* goes hand in hand with Children’s Day as it celebrates childhood. “Once a festival becomes established and people trust the quality of its programming (as opposed to single presentations), they are more open to taking some risks,” explains Mr Puah. “For instance, at our annual *Mosaic Music Festival*, we had a number of festival-goers commenting that although they did not know some of the artists, they bought tickets anyway because it was part of *Mosaic Music Festival*. And they subsequently went on to enjoy the show. A festival format also gives the Esplanade the leeway to have a good mix of ticketed and free programmes, thereby making the arts more accessible to more people. Festivals are also a great

avenue for us to commission new works. Part of the process includes incorporating a component of arts education for a wider understanding of the arts by the community. This is done through elements such as arts workshops.”

“The context in which festival celebrations are held should always relate back to the community, and not to the artist. ”

The Esplanade festivals are held at specific times of the year. This allows the venue to build a year-long arts calendar. The element of predictability enables people to plan and look forward to specific festivals.

Mr Puah mentions that they have not changed their programming approach but rather built on their strategy, adding new festivals when they identified gaps and refining their existing range of festivals to keep them continually relevant to the various communities whom the festivals serve: “The first rule of thumb for festival organisers when starting a festival is to be clear about the purpose of the festival and how it plans to connect with the community and bring its members together. The larger issue to bear in mind here is the context in which festival celebrations are held should always relate back to the community, and not to the artist. If festivals can, from the onset, connect with the community and be inclusive, then that is a good start. Thereafter, festival organisers must always keep in touch with the community whom they seek to serve.”

And given there are so many different communities in Singapore, a range of festivals have been set up to reach all of them through a parallel approach.

The Singapore Arts Festival: The People's Festival?

A third approach is the multidisciplinary annual Singapore Arts Festival first set up in 1977 as a national arts festival. Initiated and organised by the National Arts Council, it is one of the most significant arts events not only in Singapore but also in the region. Over the last three decades the Festival has played a symbiotic and catalytic role in the development of the artistic and cultural life in Singapore. The festival has influenced local artists as well as increased public awareness and demand for the arts. With the explosion of the general cultural offer in Singapore especially in the last ten years, questions around the positioning of the Singapore Arts Festival have emerged as it can no longer subscribe to the original objectives of 35 years ago to inject cultural vibrancy to Singapore and to introduce works from around the world.

The festival programming saw a key turning point in 2010 as it embarked on a new leadership of Low Kee Hong. Key changes and initiatives include turning this international arts platform into a *Creation and People's Festival*. "Unique content from Asia and engagement with community are two key thrusts in the festival now and beyond," explains Mr Low.

The Festival has a vital year-long participation programme called *com.mune*, to sustain the Festival's engagement with the public beyond individual shows staged during the Festival period. The *com.mune* events and activities were tailored for four groups: new audiences — people who may not have encountered the arts; arts lovers — people who buy tickets to performances; arts makers — artists and teachers who inspire their students through the arts; and arts volunteers — people who have the heart to make a difference.⁹

Audience engagement and reaching out to the larger community does not mean the Festival is presenting projects in the 'heartlands'¹⁰ and cater only for mass

audiences. Mr Low says: "Our strategy is to engage artists who want to create projects directly with the community,

"As a curator, we slowly disappear in the process and we instil a sense of pride, curiosity with the community."

create a sense of ownership of the festival with the community right from the start. The community gets experience in the artistic enterprise first hand and we open up something that

was never possible before. In some way, as a curator, we slowly disappear in the process and we instil a sense of pride, curiosity with the community. By doing these projects we open up the thinking about community and engage with new audiences. In the end if Singapore does not want this festival, than we don't do it. A festival is more than people going to a festival. If there is no interest from 'heartlanders', than we should seriously rethink it."

The Singapore Arts Festival does not programme along ethnic lines. They focus on the artists first, beyond multi-ethnic considerations, as this is as such already part of Singapore. Mr Low continues: "You can't confine it into a ghetto thinking. If we present ethnic specific work than we programme it to see how it can be translated to a current audience, a current thinking. Culture is always dynamic. We are more interested in translation and evolution than to say this is authentic or original."

How the festival will evolve is still a question. The place of the festival must reflect current changes. A festival does not exist in a vacuum. How Singapore Arts Festival evolves will depend on how the festival is positioned in relation to new directions of cultural policy.

⁹ <http://www.nac.gov.sg/events/singapore-arts-festival>

¹⁰ Heartlands are the suburban towns where approximately 85% of the Singaporeans live: making their home in HDB flats, housing built by a government body called the Housing Development Board.

Reflections on Programming Festivals in Multicultural Singapore

Singapore offers a myriad of festivals and cultural events to its multicultural population. Reaching a large and multicultural public through a festival is a challenge and an opportunity. Though the daily life in Singapore is very multicultural, I observe that Singaporeans are not necessarily very familiar with each other's art forms.

This is partially due to a language divide which creates a cultural divide. Hence certain art forms might be more 'easy' to present in festival forms such as English language theatre. Although subtitling makes each other's culture more accessible, I do not necessarily observe a strong curiosity for discovering theatre in languages not familiar to a specific audience. Perhaps festivals in Singapore can find ways to stimulate a stronger interest in 'the other'?

Dance faces challenges in reaching large and diverse crowds. I assume this is linked to the accessibility of dance as a form to reach audience beyond the usual suspects. Music seems to have the biggest potential not only at attracting more audience but also a more diverse public. Even though the public's inclination might still be to follow their cultural preferences, free concerts at festivals open up opportunities for intercultural curiosity.

Given these complexities, festival organisers in Singapore take different approaches in their festival programming. The M1 Singapore Fringe Festival and the Singapore Arts Festival reach their public via specific themes and are more artist-driven. The Esplanade has a more ethnically driven programming with parallel festivals to cater to specific audiences, hence potentially attracting a less multicultural crowd (apart from the children's and music festivals). Is this also out of market concern? But the Esplanade reaches a large and diverse public through their free events.

If the arts is a way to stimulate social cohesion and intercultural understanding, more multicultural

programming presenting the unique fusion of cultures in Singapore could perhaps be more promoted. Government support is certainly crucial in shaping a policy that supports this notion of 'togetherness' in Singapore. Perhaps serving the artists by stimulating them to think and create more multicultural work

"More multicultural programming presenting the unique fusion of cultures in Singapore could perhaps be more promoted."

would serve better a multicultural public. On the other hand, arts creation should be organic and emerge from artists' concerns; in which case, perhaps the

question to ask is, are Singapore artists creating works addressing multiculturalism, and are these works being programmed or commissioned into festivals?

The announcement in August 2012 that the Ministry of Information, Culture and the Arts will be abolished and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth created in November 2012 might indicate where the arts will head for in Singapore. The word 'arts' has vanished and 'community' appeared. Would community arts be the answer to reaching new and more audiences and creating more social cohesion? Does it mean that the arts have to serve the community first? And in which way will this new direction influence festivals? The shift has brought up the question by artists and arts practitioners who would like to see that the government's attention to their pursuits for artistic excellence are not affected.¹¹

At the same time, the National Arts Council has announced that the Singapore Arts Festival will take a one year break in 2013 and is undertaking a review of the Festival with the appointment of a review committee.

It is certainly an interesting moment for the arts in Singapore to reflect on "serving artists serves the public" and to see how the ecology of festivals in this multicultural global city will evolve in accordance with a changing environment.

¹¹ <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1217227/1/html>

Reflections

- Which different approaches towards festival programming can you observe in your country?
- What is the relationship between a festival and its audience in your country?
- How can festival programmers create a balance between artist-driven and audience-driven programming?
- What is the status of community arts in your country and how is it picked up by festivals?
- How can festivals speak to a diverse and multicultural community/society?

Weblinks

The Necessary Stage: <http://www.necessary.org/#/m1/>

Singapore Arts Festival: <http://www.singaporeartsfest.com/>

The Esplanade–Theatres on the Bay:
<http://www.esplanade.com/index.jsp>

Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts:
<http://app.mica.gov.sg/>

National Arts Council Singapore: <http://www.nac.gov.sg/>

WorldCP–International Database of Cultural Policies :
<http://www.worldcp.org/>



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BUILDING FOR
YOUNG FESTIVAL
MANAGERS**

INTRODUCTION: IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE A FESTIVAL

by Audrey Wong

What is the role and responsibility of the festival manager in today's world? This is the theme of this section and it is a necessary reflection for anyone working in the area of festivals — or in any kind of public arts programming.

Ultimately, in any kind of artistic undertaking, it is the people who make things work, people who inspire others to make a start, or to continue a legacy, or to serve a public, or serve the artists. Artists, arts managers, crew, and audiences are the people who form a festival! It is therefore important to pay attention to people, and important for the festival manager to pay attention to himself/herself. Going beyond the skills and competencies required to be an arts manager, are there intangible qualities that are needed? How do we cultivate these qualities so that we can carry out the work better?

The good news is that we are not alone in our work. Various networks can be forged, or already exist, and they are incredible pool of 'people resource' which we can tap on.

Perhaps I can return here to the term 'resilience' which was introduced by Robyn Archer in the first paper. It is also important for the festival manager to be "resilient", to maintain his/her sense of mission and purpose despite obstacles and challenges in a changing world. What does 'resilient' mean to you? What do you think helps you to become more effective as a festival manager, programmer or director? Who do you think can help you on your way?

A FESTIVAL MANAGER'S JOB EVOLVES ALONG WITH THE FESTIVAL

by Daniela Mişcov

A festival should be a “Think Big” project, in which visions find their home to grow, especially when the festival answers important needs of the local community

This happened with the *100, 1000, 1000000 Stories International Theatre Festival for Children* in Bucharest, Romania, which started in 2005, from the need to provide the community of Bucharest with a new theatre offering comprising different kinds of theatrical styles, thus enabling audiences and artists to connect to the larger world of theatre. In order to accomplish such a challenging objective, a festival manager must have dedication, passion and vision; otherwise this need cannot be determined and satisfied at a high level.

When I began work on the inaugural 2005 festival as Manager of International Relations, I had previous experience working on smaller projects built around a couple of activities, some made on the basis of local partnerships. Yet I had strong memories of extraordinary performances seen around the world that I very much wanted to be able to show to children and artists in Romania, because these performances were of high artistic quality and also very different from theatre for children in Romania. And I thought that this is what a festival is meant for: to bring in challenges, to bring about new things, to stir up emulation for different styles of theatre making. Last but not least, knowledge of cultural management helped me structure my ideas and visions so that my vision and ideas would continue to gain cultural relevance and size. Also, it is important to be permanently connected to the market trends of cultural ideas and know which are relevant to your project so as to make it successful. It is also vital to keep in mind that a festival should have a recognised profile so as to be competitive. At the same time, a good manager must keep a strong relationship with the home community and audience.

The *100, 1000, 1000000 Stories festival* was created in 2005 from the need to provide parents, children and artists with a

more generous and diverse theatrical choice, because at that time in Bucharest there was no other similar event organised by a professional theatre. Romania, a country located in South Eastern Europe (bordering Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine and Moldova; crossed in the middle by the Carpathian mountains and bordered to the southeast by the Black Sea), was geographically and politically behind the Iron Curtain and part of the communist bloc until 1989.

Dialogue and cooperation was strangled and European and international exchange happened only once in a while on happy chance. To imagine and initiate an international theatre festival in Romania before 1989 was totally out of the question, owing to the fact that the mobility of artists was reduced in the extreme. The great majority of Romanian artists rarely, if ever, attended events across the border. Information also circulated with difficulty, usually via personal channels. The prevalent style of theatre for children in Romania and in the region was mostly old fashioned. Hence after 1989, there was an urgent need to reconnect Romanian artists with the world circuit of values, trends, issues and concerns.

In 2005 in Bucharest, the capital of 2 million people, a total of 43,000 children from 0 to 15 years of age could participate in a limited number of artistic activities offered by three professional dramatic state theatres, a puppet theatre, one circus and one operetta theatre, compared with 15 adult theatres, subsidized by the state, plus a growing number of independent theatre companies, performing in unconventional venues. But most of these performing arts institutions with programmes for children offered the same type of theatre: adaptations of fairy tales from the 19th century (Grimm, Andersen, Perrault). This is because of the historical and political-cultural context of the country for 50 years (after the king abdicated in 1947, the communist regime brought about by the Russians takeover lasted until December 1989 when Ceausescu's communist regime was overthrown by force through a bloody revolution).

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At the same time through their readings, games and research, children in Bucharest felt the need to relate with topics and concerns other than the old stories, and they longed to see other kinds of art than that which their parents and grandparents had seen when they were children. But theatre for children in

Romania had been stopped in time. At least this was the case in 2005 when the festival began. Now after a few years, the situation has started to change a bit and the largest change has been brought about by the introduction of a new type of theatre (also the newest in Europe): theatre for 0–3 year olds, or theatre for early age (or babies).

My participation in international events and festivals after 1994, when I started my work in theatre for children, enabled me to have a much larger picture about what happens in the world of theatre with respect to repertory and style: contemporary plays for different age groups, theatre shows done in many ways other than the style of musical comedy, like object theatre, dance theatre, early age theatre. Within these categories, I also discovered many other ways of making theatre, combining language arts, through various disciplines and arts: film, graphics, modern dance, modern or classical music, video, photomontages and live painting.

A festival should be the very embodiment of a ‘Think Big’ vision, and it is easier when one knows that in this way one responds to the real needs of the community, a need noticed many times before and confirmed with each and every trip to theatre events abroad. Although I watched interesting and beautiful shows and events, I wanted to be able to show my new friends abroad that Romanian theatre has also something to offer. Consequently, I had to set up a dialogue and bring about some change.

How does one orient oneself in a global space so vast: how to choose, how to communicate, how to know who is who and where, especially when you’re at the beginning? My chance came through getting in contact with ASSITEJ, a worldwide network in the field, and as well as meeting new friends and colleagues at events abroad. Also useful was a regional network, Epicentre, who made the first approaches through projects promoting events for children and youth theatre in Central and South Eastern Europe. With their full support, the *100, 1000, 1000000 Stories festival* was promoted and the calls for proposals were launched.

At the first edition, I managed to showcase an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, performed by Croat Theatre Mala Scena, seen at a children's festival in Zagreb during 2004. At the same festival in Croatia, I saw a brilliant Russian performance done in the great tradition of Russian drama theatre, *Kashtanka*, presented by Ekaterinburg Theatre (which was invited to our Bucharest festival in 2007), as well as, *The Colours of Water*, by the Italian company La Baracca, one of the most prestigious theatre companies in the world working for the 0–3 years of age group (this production was presented in the 2007 Bucharest festival where it took the award for best show for 0–3 years). Following this dialogue, Teatrul Ion Creanga, the producer of the festival, became project partner with La Baracca in the framework of the European network, "Small Size, big citizens", coordinated by La Baracca.

This was possible thanks to the early age programme that the company, Teatrul Ion Creanga, funded one year before in 2004. Last but not least, my participation in the Zagreb festival, which inspired my work on international collaborations, took place as part of a project coordinated by a regional network based in Zagreb, Epicentre Through Epicentre, I got to know and meet the members of the executive committee of a big international network organisation in the field of theatre for children, ASSITEJ International. The contact with these three networks and

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participation in their activities was a crucial step for me in building a broad and clear vision of what is happening in the world in the area of theatre for children. I became aware about the equal importance of Asian theatre. So in 2007 we invited the best performance for Korean children, *Gamoonjang*, a national version of King Lear, which won the best acting award at our festival.

My involvement with Teatrul Ion Creanga and participating in various networks showed me the great importance of connecting the Bucharest festival with the international arena through mobility, exchange and partnerships, as well as the necessity for the festival to be open to actual trends and issues. For instance since 2005, the Bucharest festival has included and expanded the 0–3 age section in its programming: in the first edition, only one early age show was presented; the last few editions of the festival have featured some very good four to six productions in this section.

Concrete daily practice: How to make big visions become reality

What I wanted to bring to the Bucharest festival was facilitated by the contacts maintained with people, sustaining correspondence, answering emails. It all seems very basic, but how many of us are in the habit of responding to messages, even those that merely transmit information about an event, a tour, a festival, a performance? All these messages are priceless for a manager of international relations.

A festival manager is born of concrete and complex practice and of continuous learning, practising on a daily basis the intrinsic abilities and skills of the job. First and foremost, I consider being a good communicator and networking as fundamental to the job of festival manager.

What is networking? Good networking is about excellent communication and the sharing of valuable information. Building and maintaining relationships. Raising the profile of oneself and others, making connections. To do this, you must continue to disseminate information about yourself, your work and also about others and their work, not leaving any interesting information to pass unused or unshared with others.

In addition, one must like to communicate with others (and not consider the task a waste of time) as well as be able to communicate with others. Besides basic communication skills, one should know English and, as much as possible, a couple of other languages too: French, Spanish, Italian, and German, for example. This will enable the manager to make contact with artists in other regions where theatre is considered artistically excellent and well represented.

There are many other interesting events, performances and personalities outside the Anglophone expression space. This means that a manager and his/her assistants who know languages other than English and their own native language

are richer. The French, Spanish, Italian and German theatre cultural fields are extremely rich in festival events and projects. The manager who can communicate in at least one of these languages has the chance of entering into a relationship with the community and producing remarkable things.

Can there be a good festival manager without the desire to go out, travel, meet people and do what they must so as to discover foreign projects with all their ramifications? Travelling is essential and as important as communication. Travelling is to know and draw one's inspiration from other festivals. Travelling is meant for exchange and cooperation, for meeting other

visions and promoting one's own vision. So where to travel and what to attend?

If you're a good networker and communicator, if you like to travel, you can very quickly understand where to go and what events you should not miss. It is like a geographical map: once you become a tourist learning to pilot yourself, you know where you are and where you want to go and also how. The main events are very well promoted and are always

on networking sites. Once you have participated in an event, you have entered the organiser's mailing lists and the mailing lists of other festival organisers whom you met at the event, which means that from that moment on, you will be receiving constant invitations to all their events. If you are active and responsive, if you have a major event, if you have a say in the business and in the field, if you are a person with a concept, a vision and some knowledge, then you will soon be a landmark on the map of the festival organisers. If you want your festival to be included on the main events map from the moment you attend an event, you have to schedule and book your events to attend a year ahead and stick to it.

“A festival manager is born of concrete and complex practice and of continuous learning, practising on a daily basis the intrinsic abilities and skills of the job. First and foremost, I consider being a good communicator and networking as fundamental to the job of festival manager.”

Best practice model: Attend famous festivals in the field

Inspiration arises from seeing what others have been doing very well for a longer time than oneself as well as participating in discussions of all kinds, both formal and informal. If you want to be a good festival manager, then you need to know what the map and calendar of important events in the field are. You must document thoroughly and try to attend as many events as you can. Try to take part in these events, share your experience, get to know the organisers, their visions, the audience, the venues, take photos and take notes to distribute at home to your team. Make yourself known to everybody simply by actually being there and trying to have a real dialogue with people; give life to a conversation and share your ideas.

It is much easier to make connections and find what is best if you are a member of a representative network in the field as all the important festivals are promoted there by means of newsletters and websites and through social networks like Facebook, which have special pages dedicated to festivals and other international events (e.g. seminars, congresses, round tables). But there are always small and

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interesting festivals in regions not reached in the centre of interest. They should not be omitted. Everything must be carefully considered and evaluated. I think that at the beginning of a career, every festival manager has been inspired by a beautiful and well-made event attended either in his country or abroad. I was inspired by festivals in big cities such as Zagreb, Bologna, Seoul, Dresden, Helsinki, Vienna, and in small towns like Aberystwyth in Wales, and Horn in Austria or Lund in Sweden, or Kuusankoski in Finland.



Event in Bucharest

Give an active role to all contacts taken home

Once back home, the contacts you have made abroad will become your base of work. You will receive constant information and material from these colleagues. In return, you must send constant information to them. By so doing, you will create a strong database for your festival, keeping in mind that a good manager always communicates, continues to learn and is always on the move. Slowly over time, you will build a solid network of relationships, friends and colleagues. You will need to continually sustain this network of contacts. Being a good festival manager is a full-time, year-long job. All the performances (*Kashtanka*, *Henry V*, *Colours of Water*) and well-known personalities in the field (festival directors and programmers, actors, directors, storytellers, teatrologists and curators) that I wanted to invite and bring to the Bucharest festival, were facilitated by the contacts that I maintained through emails and post.

At home: Whom to work and cooperate with, apart from the festival team?

The festival continuously develops relationships and partnerships not only abroad, but also locally. In this way the event has more visibility and becomes important for more people, thereby giving rise to more funding resources.

Naturally from the financial, promotional and logistical point of view, the best organisation of participation in the festival of performances and artists or festival programmers is arrived at by partnering with foreign cultural institutes (e.g. Swedish Institute, British Council, Goethe Institute, Cervantes Institute, French Institute, Delegation Wallonie Brussels, Italian Institute, Polish Institute, Austrian Cultural Forum, Czech Institute), embassies (e.g. the embassies of France, Finland, Ireland, Israel and the Russian Federation) and the embassies or diplomatic offices of your own country abroad. Thus far, performances, artists and programmers from 22 countries in Europe (Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, France, Slovenia, Poland, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia, Croatia, Moldova, Serbia, Hungary) as well as Korea, Israel, India, and Cameroon have been featured in the *100, 1000, 1000000 Stories festival*.

Beside partners and sponsors, it is vital to bring young people within your team of collaborators, either on a voluntary basis or through partnerships with educational institutions where

they study, like the Bucharest festival had with the Theatre University. The students add passion and energy, while the festival provides a breeding ground for future talent, instructing students about what is required in the theatre market. In our festival, young teatrologist students were employed as guides and translators for foreign guests and groups. Later on, some of them have become employees of the company in the PR Department and further developed their skills through working for the festival.

A wish and a goal: Making a festival part of a network

In the age of communication, an arts festival (in our case, a theatre festival) is in itself an example of communication. A festival should get a prominent profile on the agenda of important international events. Thus, a good manager must know how to promote the festival: how to open it to many networks in a competitive market and with limited funding resources, while always thinking about what is in the interest of the festival to enable it to grow.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the *100, 1000, 1000000 Stories International Theatre Festival for Children* in Bucharest was fortunate to benefit from the information I collected and the international contacts I developed through the existence of three networks: Epicentre, dedicated to mobility and theatre projects in the region of Central and South-eastern Europe; Small Size, an European network of theatres for children of 0–3 years; and ASSITEJ International, the world's largest most important association of theatres for children and youth.

Besides promoting the festival, a good manager uses these contacts and networks to develop the respective art and best practice (i.e. in our case, theatre for children and young people and professionals in this field) as well as the knowledge and practice of the associated partners (e.g. children and parents, schools and kindergartens staff represented by teachers). By constantly sharing information, the arts manager ultimately promotes the festival, contributing every day to its importance and visibility at home and worldwide.

“In the age of communication, an arts festival (in our case, a theatre festival) is in itself an example of communication.”

A festival manager's job evolves along with the festival

Like any other job, being a festival manager is a job in which the requirements and challenges change with time. New knowledge is gained, perspectives change, and so does the festival as it needs to adapt to an ever-changing context. So what new things does a festival manager learn that make the festival evolve?

The best way to be a good festival manager is to keep the value of your work and festival high. Be in close contact with developments in your area of interest. If you work in theatre for children, then you should keep up-to-date with what is happening in the field, constantly researching books, magazines, and studies. Be aware of successful projects that received grants from various organisations and programmes. Promote your work through all mediums (e.g. the internet, publications) with worldwide access. Be curious, eager, receptive and open. Surround yourself with enthusiastic people. Want what is best for your festival. Always continue to dream, even when the festival became famous, known and appreciated. Find talented co-workers and partners. Strive to always include something new, innovative, experimental and/or interdisciplinary in your programming. Working in a team, you must be a repository of ideas and proposals from all members, ranging from the festival director to colleagues in all other structures, especially if they have new proposals, contacts and information.

A festival manager constantly faces challenges from the socio-economic context: funding cuts may happen, or you may discover that other festivals are happening in the region at the same period as your event. Finding the best solutions to maintain high standards for one's festival is also a good way for a festival manager to keep fit in terms of management skills and practice. Consequently, your knowledge of cultural management should always be updated and be put to work in a project as daily practice is the best teacher. Cultural management enables one to have a consistent and logical vision, to uphold strategy, to be organised and efficient, to 'Think Big', as well as to act locally in a good way.

Such data helped me to structure my ideas and visions, allowing them to gain cultural relevance and grow in scope. While working for the *100, 1000, 1000000 Stories* festival, I continually asked myself vital cultural management questions, such as:

- What do you want to achieve?
- What are the needs of your organisation?
- What are the needs of your community?
- What are the needs of theatre for children in Romania?
- What are the needs of artists, teachers and audience?
- What are the needs of children?
- What is the mission of your festival?
- What is the festival project about?
- What activities do you need to accomplish in order to meet your objectives?

All the time, these key words and phrases helped me structure and follow my vision and turn it into reality through the development and execution of project initiation documents, log frames, planning cycles, GAPP (Generally Accepted Practices and Processes) analyses, Gantt charts, critical path analyses and charts, leadership skills, team management, strategy tools, time management, communication plans and skills, as well as support-building. Apart from attending relevant courses, I discovered that www.mindtools.com was a rich and useful resource for all managers who want to make best of their careers. I am a member of this resource site and always read their newsletters that constantly offer new, exciting and interesting insights and information.

In my view, a festival manager cannot just depend on his/her ideas, inspiration, connections and talent to succeed. It is essential for a festival manager to cultivate cultural management skills that will allow him/her to organise an excellent cultural project that suits the needs of that particular field and community as well as enable the manager to accomplish his/her career goals.

“Be curious, eager, receptive and open. Surround yourself with enthusiastic people. Want what is best for your festival. Always continue to dream, even when the festival became famous, known and appreciated.”

Reflections

- What are essential qualities of a festival manager?
- What are essential tasks as a festival manager?
- What are the technical skills and competencies required of a festival manager?
- How do you position your festival in a competitive market?
- What are the essential questions you need to ask yourself as a festival manager?

CASE STUDY ON CO-PRODUCTION: *NIJINSKY SIAM*

by Judith Staines, Sophie Travers & M. J. Chung

This case study is reproduced with the kind permission of the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) and Korea Arts Management Service (KAMS). It was first published in the [International Co-Production Manual: The journey which is full of surprises](#), researched and edited by Judith Staines, Sophie Travers and M. J. Chung. The publication can be downloaded from <http://www.ietm.org/>.

Nijinsky Siam (2010)

Dance

Thailand-Singapore-Germany

Co-production: Singapore Arts Festival (Singapore); Theater der Welt 2010 (Germany); supported by Zürcher Theater Spektakel (Switzerland) and Noorderzon/Grand Theatre Groningen (Netherlands). In this autobiographical Shadow Dance Theatre, Pichet Klunchun, the choreographer and maestro of Thai *khon* dance, evokes another maestro, Vaslav Nijinsky, the extraordinary and legendary choreographer. Nijinsky danced with the Ballets Russes at the Paris Opera, where he made his debut as a choreographer with *Afternoon of a Faun*. That controversial production made its mark across Europe and is considered the moment when modern ballet was born. Pichet Klunchun came across pictures of the production: its poses and costumes reminded him strongly of traditional *khon* dance. In fact, Nijinsky had seen a performance in Saint Petersburg given by a visiting Siamese dance group. Pichet Klunchun does not want to know why, but rather how his dead colleague had copied this language of gesture.

Websites: <http://www.pklifework.com/WorkPages/Nijinsky%20Siam.html>
<http://www.pklifework.com/>

Interviewees: Pichet Klunchun, Pichet Klunchun Dance Company (Thailand); Frie Leysen, Head of Programme, Theater der Welt 2010 (Germany); Low Kee Hong, General Manager, Singapore Arts Festival (Singapore)

Pichet Klunchun, Pichet Klunchun Dance Company (Thailand)

I met Frie Leysen at Theater der Welt in 2008/2009 and shared my idea of creating *Nijinsky Siam* with her. She got interested. In 2009, my producer, Tang Fu Kuen, proposed this project to Low Kee Hong in Singapore and he also was interested. During that time, Tang Fu Kuen was also trying to find more parties for co-producing the production.

All the co-producing partners have been good friends for many years. I met Frie Leysen in Bangkok back in 2006. At that time she was director of Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels and

invited me to perform there. We kept in touch. Low Kee Hong is also a good friend that I have known since 2003. They both have seen my work and I believe that they had trust in my work; that was why, when I proposed to them the plan of *Nijinsky Siam*, they decided to co-produce the production without hesitation. Furthermore, both of them have been working with Asian and European artists for a long time, so they had a good perspective about work in both cultures. The concept of *Nijinsky Siam* is a cross-culture (Asian and European) work. As a result, it was suitable for both continents.

On working internationally

My only objective is I want to share my country's art form with others in order to create understanding among different cultures. I found that working internationally was more effective than in my own country.

The main objective of this particular project was for me to learn about how he created what he did in *La danse siamoise*. The more I worked with Nijinsky's choreography from the photographs of him in *La danse siamoise*, I acknowledged and learned surprising facts and got more interested in him. Nijinsky saw the beauty of Thai Classical Dance and developed that beauty to become his own perfect beauty. I believe that looking at Thai Classical Dance from the outsider's point of view allowed him to see a side that was impossible for an insider to see. Moreover, I wanted to do the research about the touring of Thai Classical Dance Troupe, the Bud Mahinot Dance Company that went to Europe back in the 1900s.

The main phases

We discussed the details of the concept, the production and budget. After that we discussed the technical rider and the development of the production. Frie Leysen also came to Bangkok to observe the rehearsal and gave feedback.

The co-producers shared the production fees that allowed me to create the piece. The production fees are equally split three-ways between Singapore Arts Festival, Theater der Welt and Zürcher Theater Spektakel together with Noorderzon/Grand Theatre Groningen. When we performed at their festivals, they paid for the performance fees, travel costs, per diems and accommodation.

The contract is always complicated and has to be read carefully. However, I never had to revise it at the last stage. I would do the negotiation before starting the contract.

In terms of communications, using email is very convenient. During the period before the show is presented, communication is usually very busy and time consuming.

Difficulties

- *Different stages affect the technical set-up and performance.* The theatre size must be right for the show — not too small, not too big. This show has a particular setting that is quite

complicated. If I found the theatre was not quite perfect for the show, I let my lighting designer talk to the technical crew to see what we could do to solve the problem.

- *Logistic of travelling.* When we go on tour in many countries, we must plan the flight clearly to fit the travel schedule. We had 5 people in the team and everything had to be planned ahead and checked carefully before the tickets were issued. One more thing is about the visa, we had to apply for a business visa and it is not so easy or convenient. During this process, I had to be in contact with the organisers very much in advance to prepare the support document for the visa. After that we had to plan the time to apply and get the visa in time for the departures.

- *Time difference between Thailand and the countries where we were in affects dancers.* It was quite hard to adjust to jet lag. The first 2 days were very tiring. I normally had to have the whole team flown in 3 days before a show date in order to recover from the time difference and have enough time to set up, rehearse and get ready for the show.

Achievements

First, I learned about Nijinsky and the techniques that he used in *La danse siamoise*. Another important thing is that I have developed *Shadow Puppet* to be used for a new purpose rather than only presenting the *Ramayana Story*. I bring Nijinsky back in the form of a shadow puppet while other dancers brought him back by dancing. I think this is a new approach to bring him back that really makes me feel good.

- I learned what Nijinsky saw in Thai Classical Dance.
- I saw Thai Classical Dance much deeper through Nijinsky's works.
- I saw myself and some feeling of Nijinsky; I felt the connection between him and myself during the time I performed on stage.

Advice

In this globalised world, it is not difficult to be known or interesting [internationally]. The most important thing that I want to suggest to artists is to focus on the work that they are doing and make it perfect and good quality. Once the work is good, the opportunity will come.

Frie Leysen, Theater der Welt 2010 (Germany)

The starting point for this co-production was, as it is always, the artist himself and the project he wanted to realise. I know Pichet and his work for some years now, and presented him several times in Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels, that I directed till 2006. The subject he wanted to develop in this production — the influence of traditional Thai dance on Nijinsky's Siam ballet—was more than interesting.

In terms of partners, I had indeed worked with Pichet before. But with the Singapore Festival, it was the first time. I invited a production I had seen in the festival, but this was a re-creation, separate from the festival.

In Theater der Welt 2010, we co-produced 16 productions. I'm convinced that festivals have an important role to play in the creation of new work, as well as presenting existing work. Co-production means a financial support, often necessary to create new work, but more than that. It means also looking for other partners, and thus other presenters and other audiences. It can mean support for the organisation, feedback during the creation process, if needed and/or wanted by the artist.

Presenting creations in the festival is, of course, a risky thing: you don't know what will come out. This implies another relation with the audience: you cannot guarantee a masterpiece. But what you can guarantee is that this is an important artist, who has a vision and a personal artistic language. It appeals to the sense of adventure and curiosity of the audience, a complicity with the artists. In short, it's the opposite of a consumer-attitude. By the way, I don't like commissions and co-commissions: it is the artist who decides what he/she wants to talk about, not the programmers and festival directors.

A lot of co-productions today are set up to be able to get European subsidies. Europe requires networking and international collaboration. In itself positive, but sometimes it might lead to artificial collaborations.

There is also some criticism of 'festival-circuit co-productions'. If a festival presents only this type of work, it is clearly a proof of lack of vision and inspiration. But it illustrates also the economic need to collaborate in producing new work. Most festivals don't have the means any more to produce on their own. And, what is positive, these collaborations guarantee the

artists a number of presentation platforms, before the work is finished. Another trend would certainly be the international creations with artists from different countries and cultures, set up by curators and programmers. Most of the time, they are artificial, superficial and bad.

Objectives of the project

- First of all, to present Pichet in Theater der Welt: he is one of the most interesting choreographers in Asia at the moment.
- Secondly: to support his new creation.
- And thirdly, the look of an Asian choreographer at a great Western artist, who was himself influenced by Asian traditional dance.

Theater der Welt wanted to be a real opener to the world, and present contemporary works from all over the world.

The main phases

- Discussing the content
- Discussing budget
- Planning and organisation
- Search for other co-producers
- Follow up of the creation by mail
- Attending rehearsals
- Follow up of all this

Honestly, I did not have so much contact with the Singapore Festival. Pichet has his own structure and manager and a rehearsal space in Bangkok, where everything was coordinated. Tang Fu Kuen also supported him during the rehearsals and assisted him a lot during the research period, when Pichet was studying Nijinsky.

Everything was centralised in Bangkok. The contract was between us and Pichet, not between all the co-producers. Since we know each other well, and trust each other, everything went smoothly.

Communications

Since Bangkok is not really around the corner, communication happened a lot via email and phone. But at a certain moment, when Pichet thought he had a first rough base, I went especially to Bangkok to see rehearsals and discuss with him.

A co-producer stepped out at a very late moment. It is important that co-producers stick together with the artist at these moments, and try to find solutions together. The achievement was that a great artist created a great work.

Learning and advice

- There is no key formula for co-producing. Every co-production is different, and all depends on the needs of the artist.
- Give the artist full trust and let him determine what kind of support he/she needs. But follow rehearsal process closely.
- Don't try to invent everything yourself, don't set up 'clever' international co-productions. But listen to the artist, once you trust him/her. Let the artist decide on how, where, with whom to work. Stand by the artist, follow up closely, but respect his/her freedom. And certainly, don't think you're the artist and you know how things should be done.
- And when things turn out not so well, stick together.

Low Kee Hong, Singapore Arts Festival (Singapore)

This project was brought to us by Tang Fu Kuen (dramaturg and producer working with Pichet) and Pichet Kluncken in autumn 2009. It was a project that worked for us conceptually for the 2010 edition of the Singapore Arts Festival. I have also known Pichet for a long time and have been following his work very closely. He is an artist we believe in investing in and so we're always open to be kept up to date on his new projects.

When the project was brought to us, we were informed that they were also in discussion with Theater der Welt to co-commission the piece. So strictly, this is not a co-production relationship with Theater der Welt. Frie and I did not have much discussion on the work together with Pichet and Fu Kuen, rather I believe we had separate discussions.

On international co-productions

These days resources are always limited and of course one of the most immediate advantages of co-commissioning is to share creation costs with partners, i.e. festivals, art centres or other presenting institutions. The space of co-production takes on a very different mode usually involving the conception of the idea with artists and partners. That said, our job as curators and artistic directors of festivals is to serve the ideas of the artists. Together, we try to create an environment conducive for artists to explore the work. In the process, we may also try to find more opportunities for the work to be seen by audiences in different markets. It all comes down to identifying and believing in the artists you want to support.

Co-investing in artistic projects with partners is to stretch our programming dollars. It gets more expensive to make a new show now and coming together allows artistic projects and artists the space to focus on making the work. It is also a result of dialogue with your colleagues about artists we have similar interests in so that we can pull together resources to support their work because we believe in them.

The main objectives of the project

Nijinsky Siam was an important phase for Pichet in his career and we wanted to be there for him. I am more interested in his continued development than any particular project per se.

It needs to start with the artist and end with the artist. The idea must emerge from an artistic impulse and for me this comes from a conversation with the artist. Our role is to ask questions to clarify these artistic ideas and when something is seeded and relevant to our festivals we move to encourage the creation process usually with resources either through residencies, creation seed monies, workshops, etc. After this first phase, when the ideas are more developed and clearer drafts signal the possibility of getting the work up, we move into funding the actual production of the piece. Throughout the process, all parties are engaged in a dialogue in order to clarify the work and idea.

Once the project proposal is clear, we may start to interest other partners keen to co-invest or present the work. Each time a piece is presented is an additional opportunity to fine-tune the work. Of course, it also ensures that more audiences get to encounter the work.

Roles and responsibilities

The artist is responsible and in control of making the work. We provide the supporting structures from resources to dramaturgical discussions to clarify the piece.

We have two contracts for this situation. One with our partner and one we sign collectively with the artist. The first contract details each party's commitment to the project and other ancillary terms and conditions mutually agreed upon. The second details the role of the artist, the work, and terms and conditions related to the first and subsequent presentations.

When we all operate in different countries and time zones, communications are not always easy. The thousands of emails attest to a constant to and fro to maintain the communication channels. Being able to Skype has helped a great deal to sort things out quickly when a face to face is not possible. I personally still prefer being in the same room and planning trips together so that we can meet personally.

Learning and achievements

- As with any project when we work with artists and partners, it is about deepening the relationship and trust so that we are on the same page as we work together to raise the discourse and push the boundaries of how art engages in ways of seeing.
- As with any creation project there are a couple of things I am always conscious of:
 - Sufficient time for the artist to develop the work
 - Built-in platforms for the artist to share the work with audiences to fine-tune the piece
- Maintaining an honest and constant dialogue with everyone involved so that we are all on the same page

Reflections

- Why are co-productions important?
- If you would set up a co-production, how would you go about it?
- What are advantages of working internationally?
- What are the risks of co-producing an entirely new work by an artist in a festival? Why did these festival programmers take the risk?

Advice

I don't profess to know everything about co-productions as I am still learning. Hence, I am not sure if I am qualified to give any advice. I am however acutely aware that there is no single model. It is all about the partnerships you build and the nature of that relationship. And they vary from creation to creation. I suppose it is about sharing of information so that we can learn from each other possible processes that could be relevant and applicable.

EFA: A NETWORK FOR ADVOCACY, TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

by Kathrin Deventer

The European Festivals Association participated in the launch of the African Festival Network (AFRIFESTNET) in April 2012, 8 years after the Association of Asian Performing Arts Festivals was set up by 15 festivals, and 60 years after the founding of the European Festivals Association. Learning from each other's practices, strengths and weaknesses, and contributing to capacity building belongs to the core tasks of all these festival associations and member networks in general: a network is all about making the work of its members better. EFA has been doing that for 60 years — and has extended its mission to the younger generation of festival directors through its Atelier for Young Festival Managers: the festival leaders of the future.

What Is EFA's Mission?

The European Festivals Association (EFA) is the umbrella organisation for festivals across Europe and beyond. It was founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1952 upon the joint initiative of the eminent conductor Igor Markevitch and Swiss philosopher Denis de Rougemont. Since its foundation, the Association has grown from 15 festivals into a dynamic network representing more than 100 music, dance, theatre and multidisciplinary festivals, national festivals associations and cultural organisations from 40 countries.

The main aim of EFA is to raise awareness of festivals and the important role they play in society and for cultural cooperation around the world.

EFA is a platform where people can meet, network, collaborate, exchange ideas and extend their horizons. The network brings together festivals from across Europe and the world, from Scandinavia to Central and Southern Europe and countries around the Mediterranean, from Russia to the Arab world to Asia and South America.

The members of EFA share significant artistic, cultural, social and political objectives, a passion for the arts, an openness to the world and a spirit of interculturality and innovation.

“A network is all about making the work of its members better.”

Each festival, be it a niche event or a large, established institution, has its own specific context. But all strive to generate a collective, stimulating and joyful atmosphere among audiences and artists.

EFA initiates and implements a wide array of international activities — from communication to knowledge sharing to advocacy. Beyond its membership, EFA collaborates with festival organisations in Asia (e.g. the Association of Asian Performing Arts Festivals), in the Arab world (e.g. FestArab), in Africa (e.g. the newly founded African Festival Association), and further afield.

Together with its members, EFA reaches out to artists, the media, politicians, cultural actors, colleagues, cultural researchers and the general public. New initiatives were launched when EFA moved from Switzerland to Belgium in 2004 that have created new dynamics for EFA, for festivals and for the arts and cultural sector in Europe and around the world. Expertise, training, advocacy and lobbying are the building blocks of all projects. It is in this light that capacity building became a priority in EFA's work plan.

Why Does EFA Engage in Training?

What emerged from contacts with festivals, cultural managers and responsible operators from the festival field is the insufficient possibilities for training in the festival sector focusing on the aspect of 'programming' and the conceptualisation phase of a festival. While much has been taught in terms of 'arts management', the 'art' of programming, curatorial impulses and their related consequences have not been fully integrated. This applies for festival management all over the

world and is surprising considering the boom of festivals we witnessed in the last decades.

The professional category of the 'festival manager' has emerged which requires certain competences. These competences need to be transformed into a framework of training content. This need in mind, EFA launched the Atelier for Young Festival Managers in 2006, with its origins in first workshops dating back to 1999 and 2000 in Estoril (Portugal) and Geneva (Switzerland).

The idea behind is to allow the next generation of festival makers and programmers to network and gain from the experience of festival directors with remarkable parcours. "To create these connections between participants and presenters under the umbrella of EFA is essential: networking itself represents an important aspect of the quality of an excellent festival," stresses Darko Brlek, President of the European Festivals Association, Artistic and General Director of the Ljubljana Festival and himself sharing his year-long expertise with Atelier participants.

"While much has been taught in terms of 'arts management', the 'art' of programming, curatorial impulses and their related consequences have not been fully integrated."



*Budapest Spring Festival
Photo credit: Andrea Felvegi*

What Is the Atelier All About?

The Atelier for Young Festival Managers is a unique, intense and rigorous 7-day training programme. Addressed at emerging artistic festival directors worldwide, the Atelier follows the motto “The true role of a festival is to help artists to dare, to engage in new projects”, a phrase coined by Bernard Faivre d’Arcier (former Director Festival d’Avignon).

The Atelier enables young festival managers to develop new projects, build up a strong network and meet an exceptional group of leading artistic directors of pioneering international festivals.

“The fact that knowledge is valuable may be clear. It has a value, and it is power, and above all: it bears a responsibility.

Knowledge must be transferred, held on to and made useful to others and to coming generations of festival makers [...] Yet a specialised education in ‘festival making’ seems nowhere to be found,” underlines Hugo De Greef, Coordinator of the Atelier, in his introduction in EFA BOOKS 3: *Cahier de l’Atelier*.

The Atelier is about formulating experiences and passing on knowledge to a next generation of festival makers: knowledge about the arts, artists and festival formulas, thematically focusing on the very essence of arts festivals – the art and the artist.

The presenters involved in the Atelier are festival directors who are leading or who led festivals; they are (or were) also responsible for the general running of festivals, including tasks like communication, production or budget. As presenters in the Atelier, they are invited to share their experience, their motivation and explanations of their artistic choices in regard of the Atelier’s mission.

“The Atelier is about formulating experiences and passing on knowledge to a next generation of festival makers: knowledge about the arts, artists and festival formulas, thematically focusing on the very essence of arts festivals – the art and the artist.”

These experienced festival operators, professionals and artists give lectures, lead workshops and take part in round tables and debates — all of them spending some days with the participants for face-to-face contacts and discussions. Participants have confirmed their fascination by success

stories while at the same time they learn from failures.

“Being able to listen to people from all over the world offered me an incredible wider prospective. We were blessed to have incredibly renowned mentors with us for the whole week, speaking about their festivals and their experiences. The networking opportunities

of the Atelier are immense and I believe I have made strong contacts, which will help me building my festival. I found myself thinking less as a European and more and more as a global citizen,” said Cristina Goletti, participant of the Atelier IZMIR 2011.

After four editions, the list of mentors and presenters includes festival luminaries such as: Robyn Archer (Creative Director The Centenary of Canberra, 2013, Artistic Director of The Light in Winter – Australia); Norman Armour (Executive Director PuSH International Performing Arts Festival – Canada); Steve Austen (Felix Meritis Foundation – The Netherlands); Darko Brlek (EFA President, Artistic and General Director Ljubljana Festival – Slovenia); Seok Kyu Choi (Creative Producer AsiaNow Productions, Jongno-gu – South Korea); Hugo De Greef (former EFA Secretary General, Director European Capital of Culture Bruges 2002; Co-Founder Kaaitheater – Belgium); Bernard Faivre d’Arcier



Dubrovnik Summer Festival: Opening Ceremony

(President Biennale de la Danse de Lyon, former Director Festival d'Avignon – France); Rose Fenton (International Arts Producer and Advisor – UK); Ching-Lee Goh (Executive and Artistic Director CultureLink Singapore, former Director Singapore Arts Festival – Singapore); Agnes Havas (Mezzo Opera Festival – Hungary); Gavin Henderson (Dartington International Summer School – UK); Nele Hertling (Member of the Strategy Group “A Soul for Europe”, former Director Hebbel-Theatre, General Manager European Capital of Culture Berlin 1988 – Germany); Tzvetelina Iossifova (Red House for Culture and Debate – Bulgaria); Nevenka Koprivsek (Mladi Levi Festival – Slovenia); Wai-Lap Kwong (Programme Director Guangdong Modern Dance Festival – China); Gundega Laivina (New Theatre Institute of Latvia – Latvia); Grace Lang (Programme Director Hong Kong Festival Society – China); Sir Brian McMaster (former Director Edinburgh International Festival – UK); Michal Mertzynski (Director MaltaFestival in Poznan – Poland); Jonathan Mills (Director Edinburgh International Festival – UK); Gerard Mortier (General Director Teatro Real de

Madrid, former Director Salzburger Festspiele, former Director Ruhr Triennale – Belgium); Mark Russell (Festival Under the Radar – USA); Marie-Agnès Sevestre (Festival des Francophonies en Limousin – France); Galin Stoev (Fingerprint Company – Belgium/Bulgaria); Tom Stromberg (Impulse Festival – Germany); Fruzsina Szép (Programme Director Sziget Festival in Budapest, founding Director of the Hungarian Music Export Office – Hungary); and Carla van Zon (Artistic Director Auckland Arts Festival, former Director Creative New Zealand – New Zealand).

“I am honoured to have been invited to attend this atelier and have to say that as in all good programs of any kind, it’s always a two-way process. As mentors and presenters we get at least as much out of the participants as they may get out of us. It’s a privilege to be allowed into the presence of youthful energy and ambition, and I’ve learned a lot from these gifted young people,” said Robyn Archer in her opening speech of the Atelier Singapore, the first edition of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers held in Asia. And she continued:

“The Atelier will keep growing, and deserves strong support: it’s a truism to say that young people hold the keys to the future, but rapidly changing global demographics and shifting parameters of mobility demand that those, like the mentors in this programme, who have been so fortunate in their careers, address issues of succession and intergenerational change in an open and direct way. We can do this very effectively through the Atelier. (...) Capacity building amongst the young is clearly essential and urgent (...), but it’s something required in all places. All of us, one way or another, are involved in mentorship in our own countries, in informal ways and as an adjunct to our professional structures; but the Atelier is special.”

Next to high-level reflections in small topic-based working groups, lectures and debates, practical activities and case studies, interactive exchanges based on papers that participants prepare for the Atelier, informal talks and contacts with artists and with leading cultural institutions from the region create an outstanding opportunity to link insights gained in the working groups with the respective environment.

Every Atelier is characterised by its hosting city and its festivals. Participants get to know the facets of the cultural diverse city hosting the Atelier, which is a core part of the Atelier. “As an artistic director, you have to be politically, socially and environmentally aware, as much as you are artistically aware, because you are here to be the continuum of memory for your community,” said Jonathan Mills, Director of the Edinburgh International Festival.

The Atelier enjoys world-wide attention of politicians and foundations, and the support of numerous governmental agencies, which confirms the success of this initiative in the international cultural scene. The international dimension is one of the Atelier’s key features. This dimension has to be present in the professional approach and policy of a festival and is an essential topic in management training. Furthermore, through this international dimension, the Atelier encourages a joint reflection on the role of festivals in today’s globalising societies: 146 alumni and 27 mentors and presenters are the best ambassadors of a joint vision and need for the development of festivals’ management.

“As an artistic director, you have to be politically, socially and environmentally aware, as much as you are artistically aware, because you are here to be the continuum of memory for your community.”

After two European editions, Görlitz/Germany (2006) and Varna/Bulgaria (2009), the third edition of the Atelier took place from 14–21 May 2011 in Singapore. EFA organised this first edition of the Atelier in Asia together with LASALLE College of Arts, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Association of Asian Performing Arts Festivals (AAPAF), the Singapore International Arts Festival and CultureLink Singapore and it showed that the topics discussed in the Asian framework are meeting the same echo as in the two previous editions in Europe. A first concrete co-production at network level took place.

The Future of the Atelier

Based on these success stories and on the great interest in the Atelier for Young Festival Managers of networks, foundations, partners, public authorities, and other stakeholders worldwide, the Atelier for Young Festival Managers is ambitious to extend its scope. The European Festivals Association will engage further in the future and take this training programme in the festival field to the next level, especially by extending the geographic range of the host, time-format possibilities and partnerships. Concrete arrangements with new hosts for Atelier editions in 2013, 2014 and 2015 have been made in order to offer this training opportunity to an enlarging group of young, dynamic and passionate festival makers worldwide. In this context, EFA is exchanging with its partners in

Africa, North and South America, and in the Arab world. Information is being published on EFA's constantly updated website at www.atelierforyoungfestivalmanagers.eu.

Europe-Asia Festival Links

The links with AAPAF date back to the beginning of the millennium when EFA strongly supported the set-up of an Asian festival association. Based on EFA's own statutes, AAPAF was founded in 2004 in order to foster the exchange between festivals from both continents and allow learning from each other's experiences.

EFA and AAPAF have — in their respective network — brought together festivals from across Europe, Asia and the world — regardless of political boundaries or borders.

Arts and culture have played, and will continue to play an important role in the exchanges between the two continents and its people. In the past decades, festivals have made key

contribution to this process and today build a strong element in the development of mutual understanding.

Festivals have a transformative power in our societies and trigger social harmony. By providing audiences access to a diversity of artists, artistic and cultural ideas and projects, festivals help improve the quality of life. In the framework of EFA's 2010 *Open the Door* project and under the motto *Festivals: Open Doors. Open Minds. Build Societies!*, the European Festivals Association and the Association of Asian Performing Arts Festivals jointly called upon the force of festivals all over the world to contribute to awareness-raising and to the recognition of festivals' transformative power.

The variety of inherent values that culture and international cultural collaboration bring about must become a focal point of Asia-Europe relations. Given the deserved recognition, arts and culture form a chance to support the development of a cultural Europe, a cultural Asia and an exchange that is enriching for both continents.



Participants at the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011 at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore

Raising Awareness

Following these considerations, it is worth shedding light on another important task of a network: to inform politics about what is going on in the cultural sector and in the arts, and to allow a better, informed policy making. This was the vision for EFA of Denis de Rougemont from the very beginning: “The Association will enable us to create a real European community, a united Europe. A common cultural basis means no uniformity, though, it is a unity of diversity and this principle allows European culture to engage in a fruitful dialogue with other cultures.”

An important reason for establishing EFA was undoubtedly linked to the creation and development of the European Community after the Second World War. Europe was built as a unit, certainly as an economic and monetary unit and already partly as a political unit. The cultural sector felt the need to unite on a European level partly because of the creation of a new societal reality, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. A second reason for initiating EFA after the Second World War and carrying on its mission until today is the desire to reinforce festivals internationally within similar fields of interest, artistic disciplines, presentation forms or expertise. Network members are looking for added values by joining structural relationships with colleagues from other countries and continents who are active in the same or in similar fields.

With the move to Brussels in 2004, EFA started embracing broader sectoral questions and tried to position festivals in that cultural and artistic framework. EFA itself became a member of other cultural networks, such as International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM), Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe (Pearle), Culture Action Europe and others — to position festivals in this cultural debate and support other networks that acted in other fields linked to other kinds of practices in the sector.

The need to support the arts is reflected in many EFA initiatives, such as the Atelier or the EFA BOOKS series that EFA also launched in 2006 to contribute to the cultural debate in Europe. In 2007, EFA organised a conference on *Cultural Networks at Work*, also in collaboration with another network, namely the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA). The conference concluded with a declaration



Musical Hair at Festival Ljubljana. Photo credit: Miha Fras

of intent to create a *European House for Culture* in Brussels, which was eventually launched in 2009.

The European House for Culture is an offer to bring forward a dialogue between the cultural sector, other sectors and different levels of different policies. The arts and cultural sector has to develop an authoritative voice and set up a structured consultation process — as other sectors in Europe already do, by organising themselves within a certain constitution — to influence the political decision-making process, helping to shape the agenda of the decision-making process itself. The stronger this voice is and the better the process itself is developed in terms of content and visibility, the more effective it will be. The European House for Culture is one step in the direction of a stronger, more prominent positioning of arts and culture in the European decision-making process. The mission of the European House for Culture is to advocate for the place of culture in Europe and the world, to strengthen the power of the cultural sector, to enhance the visibility of its position and to create new dynamics within the sector in order to influence the decision-making process. The aims

“The arts and cultural sector has to develop an authoritative voice and set up a structured consultation process... to influence the political decision-making process.”

are to create synergies, to individualise common interests, join forces and offer a home — or an embassy — to networks and initiatives in the field of culture, in order to stimulate dialogue and interaction between cultural networks.

The European House for Culture is the physical manifestation of the wish to be linked with each other, to present as much as possible, to communicate — and to understand the political mechanisms. If we engage more in these alliances, if we are more aware of our wider societal roles and if also we — the secretariats — are claiming this role more and more from our networks that gave us the mandate, we can speak of the maturity of the sector, and not get lost in the trap of keeping ourselves busy with our immediate problems. It is about the responsibility of networks and of individuals at the same time.

“Still so much to be done,” said Denis de Rougemont. EFA will continue to join forces with sister festival networks worldwide in making people aware of the important role festivals play in societies today, and in developing a joint understanding of the power arts have on every single individual.

Reflections

- How do networks contribute to building capacity?
- What networks are you part of, or what networks are you aware of, which can help you as a festival manager in the local, regional and global contexts?
- What role can networks play in influencing cultural policy?

REFLECTIONS ON THE ATELIER FOR YOUNG FESTIVAL MANAGERS

by Hugo De Greef

Remarkable: The best possible format for presenting whatever cultural offer is vital for its success, especially if the cultural product itself has good value. The quality becomes clear when the presentation of the cultural product is strong. A festival has to be programmed in a smoothly, accessible format. A theatre season does not only have to be outstanding in every presented play, but above all, it needs one narrative. A specific concert series does better at the box office during the fall and another series during spring time.

The phrasing, the positioning and the presentation to an audience capable of having an open mind not only enables a clearly understood work of art to have a great power of expression, but also presents the opportunity to maximise the authentic value of the artwork. Defective work or sloppy wording can cause the best quality art to fail. At that point there is nothing left to sell but hot air as a case of misinterpretation between the artwork and the audience.

For now, let's assume that it is a good idea to confront young festival managers with their more experienced co-workers, to create a dialogue that makes room to exchange experiences and to amass knowledge. Secondly, let's assume the combination of young and experienced talents having different nationalities will create an added value. Could this create something? Will the act of simply combing experience and curiosity from all over the world bring us something exciting? Most certainly. However, it remains to be seen how maximal profit can be created in this specific context. At this point, searching, and especially finding, the answers becomes interesting.

These are the questions we ask ourselves whilst conceiving the Atelier for Young Festival Managers. In a certain way, the

Atelier has found a format in which some facts simply work. The act of just bringing together young festival managers and experts suddenly becomes something very unique. I continue by going more deeply into the main aspects that characterise the Atelier. I'm looking myself for the explanation behind

this uniqueness. I chose the word 'uniqueness' instead of 'better' or 'the best'. The Atelier wants to be a standard for quality in comparison to the various equally valuable yet similar initiatives developed by many other colleagues.

And yes, in the meantime we witness the birth of more and more festivals, year after year. In this way we shortly will have a permanent festival over the

entire European territory. And as I understand, it might be the same reality soon in Asia and in other parts of the world. One can speak of a 'baby boom'. The future promises to be very beautiful, indeed. This festival future will be a 'bright one'.

In the past two to three decades, the 'phenomenon' of the festival has grown rapidly, especially in Europe and elsewhere. It has boomed in almost all artistic disciplines, as well as in their many diverse forms: music (from classic to all kinds of contemporary: world music, electronic, rock and pop), performing arts, literature, film and all possible hybrid forms. New concepts, such as cultural capitals or similar urban or regional large-scale cultural events, have seen the light of day. Big exhibitions, focused on mass tourism, integrate themselves into broad formulas offering all kinds of performances, exactly to assume 'a festival identification' in order to attract an even larger audience.

Cities, regions and countries are aware that festivals are attractive in promoting that city, region or country. The place — the city, the region — the festival identifies itself with in a positive manner. And at the same time,



Opening lecture at the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011 in Singapore

it entertains the local population, whether it caters to large numbers or not. The mere fact that a festive cultural event is taking place in one's own community reflects upon the inhabitants. It nurtures pride.

Of course the growing number of festivals, as well as the extra-cultural importance they create, is essential in the development of the Atelier. The Atelier attracts a lot of (young) people who want to learn more about this phenomenon. The art of making a festival or simply experiencing it from the inside creates both fascination as well as passion. It goes without saying that the possibility to get to know these insights or exploring as much as possible is very appealing.

What are the key elements that the Atelier works with? Which ingredients bestow quality to this unique initiative?

The main aspects are clear: there is the constant changing, but always precisely chosen, location; there is the 7-day-long time span; there is the collection of unique, individual quality experiences; there is the exclusive attention on the programme of a festival and the interaction with the creating artist; there is a strong emphasis on key issues such as internationalisation and concrete globalisation. Such elements constitute the width of the concept. The depth does not consist of individual issues but can be more interpreted as a mixture of different influences (e.g. globalisation). Another example is the basic assumption that festivals are places for innovation. But most importantly, each participant writes a paper on an idea for a festival he or she wishes to create. This assignment is evaluated on the programming, the creation, the artists, the artistic production, etc. The participants present and discuss their paper during the 7-day programme.

Since the organisation of the first Atelier in 2006 we have chosen locations that have a historical meaning. This has always been and will always be a central element in the Atelier concept. At the start, we mostly considered a European city with a tangible history. Back in 2006, the Atelier was still called the *European Atelier for Young Festival Managers*. It was necessary for the participants to become familiar with the city very quickly. It was important to rapidly create a certain feeling of 'a home base' with the location.

Our first choice, Görlitz (2006), was a great hit. Görlitz is a small historical city connecting Germany and Poland on the Neisse River, representing a European division that is hopefully forever in the past, but that carries a lot of recent



Brainstorming session at the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011 in Singapore

memories. For the same reason we arrived in Varna (2009) by the Black Sea. But also Singapore (2011) and Izmir (2011) are cities whose history and meaning were definitely of significant value to our participants. We are sure that Ljubljana (2012) will create added value as well. With locations such as Singapore and Izmir, we moved further away from the European borders. Therefore, the "European Atelier" soon turned into the "Atelier". We certainly intend to continue with these varying locations between Europe and the rest of the world. Concrete plans have been made for organising Ateliers in Africa, South America, Russia, etc. in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

So, the city plays an important role in the Atelier, especially the cultural city. We make sure that the cultural aspects of the city manifest themselves. Therefore, every night we organise working sessions in one of the cultural hot spots the city has to offer. We also take the workable quality into account whilst booking hotel accommodation and working space for the daily sessions. We make sure that the city, the atelier spaces, the cultural venues in the evenings, the hotels, etc. can contribute to create the best possible working environment in the best suiting surroundings. Travelling back and forth is part of the cultural experience whereas the working sessions require intense efforts from the Atelier participants. It is quite possible that the participants in the Atelier in Görlitz, Varna or Izmir will never return to these cities. Consequently, their memory of the Atelier perfectly links up with their memory of a historical place: a city they once visited, because of that particular Atelier.

Perhaps the most essential aspect of the format is the duration: 7 days. Not a week, but 7 days. Of course I know one week consists of 7 days. What we want to focus on is the individual

days instead of on one week. We work out constructive programmes in a way that the work completed during the first day can be further elaborated in the course of the next day. We don't plan a fixed one-week programme. We finally are one week together.

At least until now. There is a possibility our training expands to 6 or maybe 8 or 9 days. It continues to be a work-in-progress. You feel it is a system that works. The individuals, who come together on the first night for the (most of time rather official) opening session, day after day slowly become a close group. After 3 or 4 days the group develops its personal dynamic. This is the dynamic the Atelier anticipates and that determines the spirit of the last days, even of the entire programme. By the end we succeed in developing a complete programme. Every year, we have different groups and every Atelier is therefore very different. And therefore we count with days to arrive at one week.

Besides the city and the 7 days, there are the shared, high-level experiences right away. From the start, from the first preparations, it has been most important that the sessions were introduced, lead and completed by the 'best in the business' and preferably 'the best with the most experience'. There is no other place that offers such focused possibility to pass on past experiences and to learn from others' experiences.

However, the main task is to provide appropriate training with plenty of room to meet this rather essential need. Education, training, and transfer of knowledge are necessary to professionalise the multitudes of emerging festivals. The appropriate institutions (universities, colleges, art schools) have to assume responsibility, in addition to the growing — albeit in many different forms — sector of training programmes in 'art management'. There is perhaps one recurrent characteristic: they all focus on the proper market without not necessary an international, valuable dimension. One of the most essential properties of festivals, however locally focussed they may be, is the international dimension. Although this dimension needs not be reflected in the programme, it is certainly present in the professional approach and policy, and therefore a sure topic in management training. We therefore expect that sooner or later — at least — several initiatives will pop up. It cannot be otherwise. Then something like a quality reference for festival makers may come into being.

Who is available to exchange thoughts with these young people day after day? The success of the Atelier depends on the perfect choice of these qualified people. I invite all readers to visit the website of the European Festivals Association and to quietly look through the list of experienced festival leaders that have already collaborated in the Atelier. You will find a very impressive group. Besides these people being the absolute best in the business, there is also mutual recognition and a big part of them we can even call 'our friends'. This helps a lot! Nele Hertling clearly noticed at the end of the first Atelier in Görlitz: "It's while we worked always together in good trust and as friends..." It's also worth mentioning that these colleagues hardly ever meet as intensely on the subject of their profession, with their colleagues, with a young generation. Also here, the duration depends on the quality of the collaboration.

In a nutshell it all comes down to the place, the city, the duration — thus the 7 days and the collection of quality experiences. All these aspects combined contribute to — both concepts are in place here — internationalisation and globalisation.

Nevertheless, the true meaning of the Atelier is reserved in the actual 'programming a festival'. The paper every participant has to write (and which is shared with all participants) in the run-up of the Atelier, is the point of departure that creates a very personal link with the participants. In the briefing for preparing the papers all participants are asked to present their artistic ideas about a festival: "Describe... a programming aspect of a festival,



Discussion at LASALLE College of the Arts during the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011

a new festival, a new model for an old festival, a series of programming events. Explain the context in which your proposed project will take place (geographical, regional, local.)” They are specifically asked to stress their vision/passion/dream.

After four Ateliers and about 140 participants, the collection of ideas, propositions and concepts becomes enormous. A mass of creativity from which, I am sure, only reading them can already be a true inspiration for the upcoming festival directors.

These papers ennoble the work behind the organisation of the Atelier. Every participant identifies himself or herself with a clear artistic choice. The participants present themselves with an engagement — a passion even — for a festival programme. Before being asked one simple question, he or she can endlessly discuss choices, contexts and motivations. Whenever needed and explicitly when being put on the agenda, the paper continues to be the subject of discussion throughout the entire 7-day programme. It never leaves the table and becomes the manual of the Atelier.

All the initiatives of EFA are evidently situated in international contexts, given the name and the history of the organisation. The European framework is the first and direct surrounding area. Nevertheless from the start of the first edition of the Atelier in Görlitz, the international interest seemed to be worldwide. The first Atelier immediately attracted participants coming from Europe, Asia and the United States. Later on Africa, Russia and South America joined the programme. The



Participants at the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011 at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore

Atelier soon became a globalised reality. This globalisation does not only translate to the participants and the communication on the Atelier, but also to the organisation of the Atelier, even outside of Europe. As I mentioned before, the first Atelier in Asia was held in Singapore in 2011. Over the coming years we will organise Ateliers in Africa, in the Arab world, in Russia and so on.

Of course this influences the concept itself. The festival approach is situated within the aspect of globalisation. Especially in the case of festivals, the local context directly affects a global artistic event. This contact often creates a conflict, an interesting field of tension, an exquisite starting point for the Atelier participants. It creates an obvious opportunity within the Atelier framework for participants to position their ideas and test their ambitions in a global framework. Participants come from all over the world and their dialogue becomes meaningful because of the local-global relation. If I was asked what the real heart of an art festival is, I would answer: it is all

about innovation. Let's never forget that festivals are the heralds of innovation in art itself. What must keep us intrigued is the question how to optimise and how to elaborate ways for invention. Which are, first of all, the most appropriate ways for festivals to be alert festivals of culture and arts, and to play their social and economic role and hence to be useful to tourism. Therefore, there is — on the condition: innovation as part of the meaning and motivation — a future for festivals. And, by definition, this future will also be a 'bright one'.

There is a point in having the programme, the artist, the creation, the co-production as subjects for discussion. That is a reason why the Atelier takes the statement from the former festival director of the Festival d'Avignon, Bernard Faivre d'Arcier, as its starting point: “Car le vrai rôle d'un festival est d'aider les artistes à oser, à entreprendre des projets...” (“The real role of a festival is to help artists to dare, to work on projects...”).

An alert and contemporary festival may only define itself as such if it permanently chooses, with respect to

the contents and by means of its programme, for ‘innovation’, and if it is in fact open to repeated ‘changes’. Therefore, one must rather judge “each festival on its own merits” as it is continuously striving for the most exciting, the most surprising. In other words, to judge them as festivals looking for a permanent contemporary quality and yet are prepared for changes. Whether it is a completely experimental dance performance or it is in finding new forms to introduce an audience to dance. Whether it is a keen production of a classical theatre text or it is rather the endeavour to make international texts accessible to the public. Whether it is rather a new interpretation of a classic composition of, for example Stravinsky or Bach, or if one strengthens the quality by putting the production and presentation on an international level. Or is it merely rephrasing the offer that will create a larger or a different kind of audience?

The variety of festival themes, topics, and points of view is even larger when you include all the plans the Atelier participants wrote down in their papers.

In short, each festival that is concerned with dealing in a permanent way with ‘innovation’ has a future in store. But festivals consciously specialising by making a clear-cut choice of, for example, one single discipline, also have a future. In

contrast, the larger festivals will only survive if they turn into urban multidisciplinary events. And for these larger festivals, the model, for instance, of the *European Capital of Culture* must be taken seriously.

The idea that culture has — besides its own agenda to promote the importance of art and culture — an unequalled role in profiling, upgrading and augmenting the aura of towns and regions has drawn much attention and has been extremely recognised during the last decades. Regions and towns are looking for cultural projects that will make these places exceptional compared to others, possibly competing tourist towns or simply in order to save these towns from oblivion. In this context, architecture plays a major role, architecture as a sustainable urban component. Great architectural projects to host a cultural event or initiative are often the first and strongest points of interest. Museums, concert halls! Let’s only think about the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the new Pompidou Museum in Metz, the new Louvre and new Guggenheim and new concert hall in Abu Dhabi, the new concert halls in Porto or Bruges, or the new museum by Frank Gehry in the unsightly little German town of Herford.

And look how the cultural infrastructure rises in the Asian world — almost only striking architecture. There is no city in South Korea, Japan or China that stands without great architectural plans to build a new museum, a theatre or a concert hall. However, the question remains whether this will continue to be of service for the local artistic sector.

The same question also applies to festivals. There is a growing disproportion between what determines the quality of a festival and what a festival may generate for a community. Festivals have become mere products of the ‘cultural industry’. Too soon, one forgets that exactly the intrinsic quality of a festival optimises



Networking at the Atelier for Young Festival Managers 2011

the marginal phenomena and maximises the chances of a sustainable result. Thus, the stronger the contents, the larger the economic and commercial effects will be. Festivals nourishing a high artistic quality, however niche-oriented, will be more successful in the long run as a 'cultural industry' product as well.

Anyway, it is still an adventure. Festivals will always be an adventure. Definitely, the Atelier will forever be an adventure. Next to the vital key issues the Atelier embraces, innovation must forever be fixed in the agenda.

“What does it mean to be part of a network? It means that instead of being just red dots, we can (and want to) be linked together by threads. Dots are the people, the values, the ideas and attitudes that each of us carries inside while moving, growing, evolving. The threads are the networking activities — planned or spontaneous — that we decide to engage in and can be supported by a variety of tools.”

~Matina Magkou (Participant of
Atelier for Young Festival Managers,
Izmir, October 2011)



CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION: FINAL REFLECTIONS

by Audrey Wong

This publication provides some perspectives on the on-going issues and challenges faced by festival managers and organisers in Asia and Europe. Obviously, there are many more perspectives and many more festival organisers whose voices could not be included in this publication. Also, this publication only included views from Asia and Europe; festivals on other continents are not included. There is thus more room for documentation and writing about the whys and hows of festival organisation and programming.

The publishers hope that you, the reader, find these texts interesting as well as challenging. The texts are intended to prompt further reflection and research.

Artists engage in reflection and deep research as they make ‘meaning’ through their works. It is good too, for festival managers to reflect on their own practice — whether they are programmers, facilitators, communicators, marketers, or administrators — because the work of ‘making the arts’ happen or ‘making festivals happen’ requires rigour and resilience, in addition to skills. Ultimately, our work is the creation of meaning through the presentation and facilitation of arts and culture in our communities and societies.

CONTRIBUTORS

Audrey Wong

Audrey Wong is Programme Leader of the MA Arts and Cultural Management Programme at LASALLE College of the Arts, one of the main supporting partners for this publication and the 2011 Atelier for Young Festival Managers. She was a practising arts manager and programmer as Artistic Co-director of The Substation, an independent arts centre in Singapore (2000–2009). She holds an MA in English from the National University of Singapore and an MA in Arts Administration & Cultural Policy from Goldsmiths College, University of London. In 2003, with co-director Lee Weng Choy, she launched The Substation's Associate Artists programme to help local artists sustain their practice.

Audrey has an interest in nurturing emerging artists, cultural policy, contemporary theatre and audience development. One of her on-going projects is the HAO Summit for young art curators and managers, the brainchild of artist/curator Khairuddin Hori and supported by The Substation. In 2009, she was nominated by the arts community for a Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) post, and served as Singapore's first 'arts' NMP (July 2009–March 2011).

Daniela Mişcov

Daniela Miscov believes that children need art of high quality, theatre and education. Exposing children to the arts and providing them with education has been at the centre of her work. After four years teaching children and adolescents in a rural area, she decided to start a new career as a dramaturge and tour organiser for a famous Bucharest theatre company renowned for its innovative and challenging productions: Teatrul Lucia Sturdza Bulandra. She then moved to Teatrul Ion Creanga, the biggest professional theatre company for children in Romania, where she worked for 17 years as dramaturge, tour organiser and project coordinator.

Daniela is currently setting up an association, Artelier D, Proiecte pentru Copii, to organise experimental art and theatre projects for children in kindergartens, nurseries, schools and unconventional venues. Daniela graduated from Bucharest University where she studied Romanian, English and American literature, linguistics, pedagogy and folklore.

Hans van Rompaey

Hans Van Rompaey (1971, Antwerp) has his roots in the music industry. He worked for one of the largest Dutch festivals, A Campingflight to Lowlands Paradise, from 2002 until 2007. Since the beginning of 2008, he runs his company FIRMA, specialising in marketing consultancy and project management. With FIRMA, he helped organise festivals such as STRP and the Amsterdam Comedy Festival.

Hugo De Greef

Hugo de Greef participated as a mentor in the 2011 Atelier for Young Festival Managers. De Greef was General Director of the Flagey Art Center (2007–2011) and Secretary General of the European Festivals Association (2004–2008). His distinguished career in the cultural sector includes: Founder and Director (1977–1997) of the Kaaithheater (Brussels); Co-Founder of IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting); President of PARTS (since January 2003), a Brussels dance school founded by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. In the 80s and 90s during the Kaaithheater period, he produced performing artists, such as Jan Lauwers & Needcompany, Jan Fabre, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Josse Depauw, The Wooster Group, among many others. De Greef was artistic advisor of the Flanders Festival (1998/1999), Art Director of Brussels, European Capital of Culture 2000 (1998) and Director of Brugge, European Capital of Culture 2002 (1998–2003).

Katelijan Verstraete

Katelijan Verstraete is currently Director, Arts and Creative Industries (East Asia) at the British Council. She was the Deputy Director of the Cultural Exchange Department at the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) until August 2012. In the last 17 years she has built up an extensive experience and network in the field of cultural management, international cultural cooperation between Asia and Europe, cultural policy dialogue, cultural portals and on the intersections between arts and education, sustainable development and health. She co-founded in 1999 BizArt, the first autonomous art space in Shanghai. She developed between 2003 and 2007 the communication, training and Asia projects for the International Network of Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) and

managed the www.On-the-Move.org project on mobility information for artists. Katelijn was the main advisor and co-author of *Europe-China Cultural Compass: An Orientation for Cultural Cooperation between Europe and China* published by the EUNIC network in China. Katelijn holds an MA degree in Sinology and an MA in Marketing Management.

Kathrin Deventer

Since 2008, Kathrin Deventer has been Secretary General of the European Festivals Association (EFA), one of the main supporting partners for this publication and the 2011 Atelier for Young Festival Managers. She has a political science background and worked for Genoa, European Capital of Culture 2004. She is a co-founding member of the European House for Culture set up in Brussels in 2008, contributes to the Access to Culture Platform in particular through the Working Group on “Audiences/Participation”, and is a Strategy Group member of “A Soul for Europe”. As a convinced European and with expertise in the cultural dimension of citizenship, she is a frequent speaker at conferences in Europe and beyond.

Mu Qian

Mu Qian was a participant at the 2011 Atelier for Young Festival Managers. He graduated from the China Conservatory with a Master’s degree in musicology. Mu Qian is devoted to the promotion of traditional and contemporary Chinese music. He is co-founder of Pentatonic Workshop (www.pentatonicworkshop.org), an independent NPO working in the areas of art, culture and community, and has curated concerts like “Beijing Folk Rock” (featuring Yang Yi and Wild Children, 2003 Hong Kong Arts Festival and 2004 Singapore Arts Festival), “Songs from the Grasslands”(featuring Hanggai and IZ, 2011 Hong Kong Arts Festival), and “Soul of Dolan”(featuring the music of Dolan Muqam, 2008 and 2012 World Music Shanghai).

As a music and culture critic, Mu Qian has written a large number of articles for such media as China Daily and www.ftchinese.com. He is also the Chinese translator of Alan P. Merriam’s *Anthropology of Music*.

Ramona Laczko David

Ramona Laczko David has worked in film, arts and culture

websites, international artistic collaborations, festival programming and cultural policy research. She is a former Project Officer at the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) where she managed the film.culture360.org website that was launched in 2010. She was also in charge of film collaborations between filmmakers and professionals from Asia and Europe as well as supporting projects in heritage and cultural policy.

Before joining ASEF, she worked at the Interarts Foundation (Barcelona, Spain), where she helped organise the Euro-African Campus for Cultural Cooperation and the International Seminar on Cultural Diplomacy.

She was selected to participate as a young expert in the international capacity building programme “U40 — Cultural Diversity 2030” initiated by the German Commission for UNESCO. Her case study on how websites can serve as tools promoting cultural diversity was published by the German National Commission for UNESCO in *Mapping Cultural Diversity – Good Practices from Around the World*.

Ramona holds a Master’s degree in Arts and Heritage: Policy, Management and Education from Maastricht University in the Netherlands.

Robyn Archer

Robyn Archer was the keynote speaker at the 2011 Atelier for Young Festival Managers. She is a singer, writer, director, artistic director and public advocate of the Arts. In all of these roles her reach is global. In 2010, she has given concerts in Honolulu, Adelaide and Port Fairy; in February 2011, she has sung Brecht in his birthplace, Augsburg, at the Brecht and Music Festival. She is in demand throughout the world as a speaker on the Arts and recent destinations have been Varna (Bulgaria), Perth and all the points east in Australia, Vancouver, Prague, Seoul, London, and Gent; there are new invitations to Jeju (Korea), Glasgow, Sydney, Townsville, Makay, and Yolgnu Land (Australia).

Robyn is currently the Creative Director of the Centenary of Canberra (2013) and Artistic Director of the Light in Winter which she created for Federation Square in Melbourne. She devised the programme for the Fifth World Summit on Arts and Culture (Melbourne, 2011) and advised on the National

Gallery of Victoria's 150th celebrations in 2011. She was appointed as Adjunct Professor to the University of Canberra.

Robyn is an Officer of the Order of Australia, Chevalier du l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France), Officer of the Crown (Belgium) and holds honorary doctorates from Flinders and Sydney Universities.

Shiva Pathak

Shiva Pathak was a participant at the 2011 Atelier for Young Festival Managers. She is a freelance consultant and arts manager based out of Bangalore, India. She has worked on various projects with arts organisations in India such as Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, India Foundation for the Arts, Jagriti, Ranga Shankara, Sangam House and Toto Funds the Arts.

She also has a keen interest in theatre and has worked in several productions as actor and production manager.

She has been the Festival Coordinator of the Attakkalari India Biennial for the last two editions (2009 and 2011) and is currently working on the 2013 edition.

Shivangi Ambani

Shivangi Ambani is Assistant Manager for Outreach at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai, India. She writes regularly about arts and heritage management issues for publications across India, Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong. She has previously completed a curatorial internship with the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore, and worked as an arts and culture correspondent for DNA Newspaper, India. She holds a Master's Degree in Arts Administration from the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

Toby To

Toby To was a participant at the 2011 Atelier for Young Festival Managers. Based in Bangkok, he is a full-time lecturer at Srinakharinwirot University International College for Sustainability Studies, and an independent arts management consultant. He co-founded Hong Kong's On & On Theatre Workshop, and was International Programme Director with Patravadi Theatre from 2008 to 2011, during which he curated the Fringe Festivals in Bangkok, Ratchaburi and Hua Hin.

PUBLISHERS



Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which currently comprises of 49 member states plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat (www.aseminfoboard.org). ASEF was established in February 1997 by the participating governments of ASEM and has since engaged about 17,000 direct participants through about 600 projects in the realms of human rights and governance, economy and society, environment, arts and culture, and education. (www.asef.org)

European Festivals Association

The European Festivals Association: 60 Years On!

The European Festivals Association (EFA) celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2012. Since its foundation in 1952, EFA has grown into a dynamic network representing today 111 music, dance, theatre and multidisciplinary festivals, national festival associations and cultural organisations from 42 countries. EFA is one of the oldest cultural networks in Europe: 60 years of connecting festivals from across Europe and the world — in a globalised world, festivals bridge boundaries; 60 years of active participation, artistic co-operation, professional development and action for the arts. EFA's aim is to **raise awareness** of festivals and the important role they play in society and for cultural cooperation around the world. EFA initiates and implements a wide array of **international activities**, such as the Atelier for Young Festival Managers, the European House for Culture or the EFA BOOKS series. EFA collaborates with festival organisations in Asia, in the Arab world, in Africa and further afield. (www.efa-aef.eu)



LASALLE College of the Arts

Founded in 1984 by De La Salle educator, Brother Joseph McNally, LASALLE College of the Arts is a specialist tertiary institution leading contemporary arts education in fine art, design, media and performing arts in the Asia Pacific. Contemporary in focus and innovative in approach, LASALLE has been nurturing some of Singapore's leading creative practitioners. It offers the most comprehensive range of 26 diploma and degree awards in design, fine arts, film, media arts, fashion, dance, music, theatre, art history, art therapy and arts management in the region. (www.lasalle.edu.sg)



This publication, *Serving Artists Serves the Public: Programming Arts Festivals in Asia and Europe*, is the fruit of a collaboration between the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the European Festivals Association (EFA) and LASALLE College of the Arts. It originated as a result of their joint efforts to organise the Atelier for Young Festival Managers, an initiative of EFA, which was brought to Asia by Goh Ching-Lee, Founder/Artistic and Executive Director of CultureLink Singapore, and took place for the first time in Asia in May 2011 in Singapore.

The idea for this publication started from the intention to share the experiences and reflections of festival managers, and aspects of artistic programming in particular beyond the young festival managers who were selected to participate in this Atelier, and to serve as 'food for thought' for aspiring festival managers.

