

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

Research in the methods, management, and programming of world
leading teachers and schools of performance.

**Report by Ryk Goddard
2005 Churchill Fellow**

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Introduction

The fellowship enabled me to travel to the United States and Europe in order to research diverse models of training in performance, with a view to establishing a training program in Tasmania.

This report provides an over-view of the different training models I encountered, a summary of other activities undertaken while on the fellowship and ideas about ways to move forward in the next 2 years.

The support of the Churchill Trust has been invaluable for me in expanding my world-view and providing a crucial opportunity for reflection and exposure to new ideas.

The experience would not have been possible without the support of Neil Cameron, Mark Gordon and Annette Downs my referees, the is theatre staff and board, the Churchill Trust staff, Sally from Qantas and my partner.

I extend my sincere thanks to you all for contributing to an incredible journey.

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Executive Summary

The fellowship was undertaken in October/November 2005.

The aim of the Fellowship was to research the methods, management, and programming of world leading teachers and schools of performance to establish a centre for professional development for mid-career and emerging artists.

Exploring five distinct models of training through interviews and participating in workshops I have established a network of advisors for the next stages of developing this project.

Experiencing 25 performances, 15 exhibitions and meeting many artists enriched the core focus of this trip. As an Artistic Director I wear many hats and having a clear research focus gave the experiences of seeing theatre and meeting practitioners an added value.

Recommendations

In the Tasmanian context I recommend the Laboratory model as most likely to deliver the outcomes required. The success of any model will depend on the strength of the ideas of the school combined with a structure that utilises existing resources and is self-sustaining.

Dissemination of ideas and experiences:

- Research and consultancy process for establishment of school with industry groups, business and community.
- Workshops through is theatre ltd. state-wide throughout Tasmania
- Influences to is theatre's programming and performances
- Articles to is theatre's email tree of young people and artists
- Meetings with State Government ministers and arts funding agency staff

Fellowship Program

3 – 8 Oct: Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

Interviews and workshops with Ruth Zaporah
World leading improviser, teacher and author of Action Theatre
www.actiontheater.com

9 – 21 October: Manhattan, New York, USA

Interviews with Carla Peterson, Movement Research,
(www.movementresearch.org)
Linda Herring, Tribeca Performing Arts Centre.

Attending performances and exhibitions

22 – 24 November: Pleasant Valley, Vermont, USA

Interviews with Art Becovsky, CK Dance
Visit to Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival site
www.jacobspillow.org

25 – 31 October: Manhattan, New York, USA

Interviews with: Vallejo Gantner PS_122 (www.ps122.org), Nina Colosi, The Project Room, Chelsea Art Museum, staff of the New York Theatre Academy, students of New York University Theatre Department.

Attending performances and exhibitions.

2 – 14 November: London, Great Britain

Interviews with Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment), Yoshi Oida, Guy Dartnell, Lorna Marshall, Chris Johnston
www.forcedentertainment.com

Performance at Neal's Yard
Workshop with Guy Dartnell

14 – 24 November: Amsterdam, Holland

Interviews with the Artistic Director of Das Arts and Jacques van Eijden,
Institute for Somatic Movement Studies
(www.dasarts.com.nl)

Attending Performances and exhibitions.

Models For Professional Performance Training

The dissemination of training in performance exists on many levels. Some people learn solely by performing with others, some from reading books, exploring ideas and making their own work, some people learn in tertiary institutions and some through attending a range of workshops.

On this research trip I wanted to ask different teachers and organisations how they formulated their practice and why they chose the model they use to share their work.

This research explored post-tertiary environments that focussed on artistic and professional development that advance people in their working life in the arts.

Below is a simplification of the models I explored.

Model One: Freelance Teachers

These teachers develop a personal practice or 'school of thought' they then share through offering workshop series either independently or through institutions, festivals and arts centres.

The people I interviewed have published articles or books of their ideas. They all combine teaching with other roles in the arts such as directing or performing.

Advantages

- No overheads
- Minimal Administration
- Flexible time commitment year to year
- Highly transportable
- The work easily evolves without become static

Disadvantages

- No guarantee of work
- No guarantee of standard of students
- A lot of travel
- Income does not accrue the more people you teach
- A risk Lack of recognition from institutions of a 'body of work.'
- Can only be passed on in complete form by that one teacher.

Model Two: Freelance Teacher with branding, a board and internal certification processes

In this model the teacher brands her body of work (i.e. 'Action Theatre') and establishes that brand as a business, registering and copywriting the brand and associated ideas. Working with a franchise model, people may only teach this work if they have undertaken a training process that is defined by the company board and key artist.

This model is also used a lot in alternative health.

Once certified by the company, the teachers are independent, but remain connected with the core company. This way the ideas can outlive the original artists working life and continue to contribute to their income.

Advantages

- Gives students a clear structure
- Has the freedom of freelancing but creates a community of people engaged with those ideas
- Longevity
- Creates income beyond contact hours of one teacher
- Creates a lasting identity
- Allows the teacher to choose what level of student they teach
- Gives students a 'quality mark'

Disadvantages

- Requires 'freezing' ideas for periods of time to create a sense of curriculum
- Requires monitoring of people you teach over several years
- Requires more administration

Model Three: The Institute - engaging outside the arts to achieve certification and professional networks.

The Institute for Somatic Movement Studies combines aspects of arts and health outcomes. The body of work created is sold to artists, schools, corporations and individuals.

Essentially a highly detailed study of human movement, the work reduces stress, increases creativity and self-awareness and leads to a range of mental and physical health outcomes.

By framing an arts practice as a health process, The Institute is able to access a range of social, managerial and financial avenues normally closed to the arts.

The certification is provided by health based professional association registers creating professional networks and recognition for students.

In the long term, Jacques aims to have his practice recognised by government as an alternative therapy, allowing clients to claim sessions on their health insurance.

Advantages

- Has diverse streams of income
- Creates a professional identity for students beyond that of 'artist'
- Can access students interested in arts and health outcomes
- Remains fully independent whilst being recognisable to business and government

Disadvantages

- Requires detailed curriculum and tight definition of activities into a competencies based curriculum
- Requires a lot of networking to establish and maintain certification
- Requires a single physical base for the 'school'
- Can lose identity of 'arts' practice into health practice

Model Four: The Laboratory

Das Arts is an international postgraduate school whose task is to create the artists of the future. Funded by government as part of its education brief, the school has no earned income.

Das Arts has a visionary curriculum that is the same every year, but allows for great innovation. Each 'block' of study is led by a guest curator who is free to teach however they choose in response to a theme set by the school director who also selects the curators.

The students are from diverse backgrounds, but all have been out of stud and practising for at least 2 years.

This laboratory environment requires students to complete blocks and projects rather than modules or sets of knowledge or skills. There is no fixed idea of what a Das Arts graduate will be or be able to do. Only that they are more open to the world and more focussed in themselves than when they began the training.

The school is heavily funded and pays all students a stipend to attend.

Forced Entertainment is one of the world's most acclaimed contemporary theatre companies. The core artistic team were all at the same regional university (Exeter) where for three years all they did was make new projects collaboratively every five weeks for three years. This model allowed students to practice as artists from the minute they began their studies to the end of their time. There was little time spent on academic work or performance skills training, just on practising as an artist and the skills needed to collaborate, discuss work and make performances. The main learning from this process for Tim was learning to trust process.

On completing their course the team chose another regional town to go and start a theatre company in. Clearly this education gave them freedom to think for themselves. While this is an undergraduate model, the laboratory and practice based nature of their training is at the hub of their originality as a company and as individuals.

Advantages

- Highly structured freedom for students and teachers
- Ability to evolve in a clear framework
- Room for incredible innovation
- No fixed 'school' style
- Student focussed
- Pure arts focus
- Easy to promote

Disadvantages

- High status of school derives in part from its wealth
- Expensive to run
- No Income streams
- Dependant on attracting high status curators
- Hard to satisfy every-one as course is so loosely defined

Model Five: Residential, and Festival models

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival has run since 1933 and is the State's oldest dance festival. Established as a summer retreat for contemporary dancers to share their radical new ideas about movement, the festival is just outside of New York City, set in lush grounds with cottages, performance spaces, café's and studio's.

The Festival runs performances and is used as a launching pad for new companies. There is a professional 'summer school' taught by leading choreographers and spaces for people to explore new ideas.

Young and emerging dancers apply to spend the summer there as an 'intern.' They live on the property and every-one contributes to the cooking, cleaning and building maintenance.

Put simply, after one summer at Jacob's Pillow a dancer should be able to go to New York with a fully established set of relationships to peers, leading choreographers and well known for their abilities (and personality in the kitchen!) It makes graduates 'industry ready' and offers more experienced artists a professional retreat to refresh their ideas.

Dance Theatre Workshops exists to create workshops series and spaces for risk taking for New York's dance community. They program at least two workshops 'festivals' each year and have ongoing performance laboratories. With almost no funding the organization has had a totally different incarnation depending on who has run it.

Advantages

- As a festival this event caters for audiences and artists
- Builds community
- Establishes professional networks leading to employment
Draws on a wealthy local audience of summering New Yorkers
- Diverse income streams
- A totally immersive environment
- Has clear 'on and off season'

Disadvantages

- High cost to establish and maintain (paid for by patrons)
- Requires the 'leading lights' take part
- Relies on proximity to New York
- Would compete with existing festivals
- Costs of participating can be high
- Offers students 'possible' outcomes rather than certification or guaranteed networks

Summary: Schools and laboratories

In reviewing these models I notice there are two main activities going on.

Some models establish a 'school of ideas' that is codified into sets of skills then passed on to students so they can pass them on to others or go on to develop their own practice. The other models create fertile environments that give students experiences as practicing artists, without imposing a particular school of ideas.

Either of these can be delivered in pre or post tertiary environments. The 'schools' create a style of doing art where the 'laboratories' create environments to experiment and explore.

In the Tasmanian context I recommend the Laboratory model as most likely to deliver the outcomes required.

Common elements of success

A total focus on the student experience.

Extensive consultation with peers and students.

The ability to evolve teaching over time.

Clarity in the function of the school or laboratory.

A clearly defined relationship to society.

A clearly defined role within the industry.

A range of supportive partners.

Excellent venues.

Teachers all are leaders in their field as practising artists.

"Really knowing what is needed can only come out of intense investigation, research, analysis and finally understanding of what is going on around you. ...

After all, when you run a school, you are not serving yourself, you are serving your students and through them your society and your culture. The challenge will be ever present as you are confronted with the complex choices about what kind of development you will support in your students."

Ritsaert ten Cate – Founder of Das Arts

The next stages

To establish a school in Tasmania the next steps are:

1.
Establish gaps in training in Australia
Research needs among practising artists
Research needs amongst potential students
2.
Propose models
Cost models
Evaluate models with research groups
Select a model
3.
Develop the model, curriculum, staffing and location.
Build relevant partnerships to support the venture
4.
Pilot the model.

We can never do everything; we are never all that we are capable of being; and in the end we must always make choices, even if in making a choice you must regretfully bypass elements you also know to be good."

Ritsaert ten Cate – Founder of Das Arts

Closer than you think....

On my return I met with Neil Cameron, one of Australia's leading community artists and festival directors now resident in Tasmania. He has already completed stage one of the process above and we are embarking on stage two at the moment.

Model Boundaries

The model must clearly address definable needs for Australian artists
The model must not rely on government funding
The model must support Tasmanian artists of world standard as teachers
The model must have a national appeal
The model must pay at least one staff member a full time wage and support guest artists and session teachers

The ideal model would include:

Minimal administration and insurances
World standard teaching staff
Targeted low-cost marketing
A foundation or board to support the realisation of the school
Partners for venue, travel and accommodation costs

At the time of writing this report I expect stage 2 to be completed by February 2006.

Other Outcomes of the Fellowship

Many of the meetings I had, combined with experiences of watching performances have led to a significant reinforcement of **is theatre's** artistic direction that will benefit the company, artists and audiences in Tasmania.

Before embarking on the Fellowship the Company ran two major review sessions exploring the future directions.

Taking our questions and ideas with me I was able to test ideas on some exceptional minds and confirm that our instincts for development are in keeping with global trends.

The Company also now has an international network of related companies who are maintaining an email dialogue seeking opportunities for collaboration in the future.

These should see is theatre evolve to a more collective artistic structure making works powerfully driven by local issues that connect to global cultural and political trends.