

# THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by - AMANDA PHILLIPS - 2007 Churchill Fellow

THE AUSTRALIA-CHINA COUNCIL CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP

## Cultural education and learning of the arts through dance in Asia

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## INTRODUCTION:

This significant opportunity to research inroads into the value of The Arts (focusing on Dance) in other countries and establish and enhance bilateral relations through the creative industries was made possible by the generous support of the Australia-China Council through this sponsored Churchill Fellowship. I am most grateful for this impacting research grant and look forward to the future developments I can offer as a result of my Fellowship time in South East Asia during April – August 2009, and my time gaining experience in South East Asia since 2004.

Through ongoing work in both Asia and Australia I trust that my understanding of how different societies value The Arts will continue to be informed. I first noticed the prevalent respect for artists and the creative industries, and a strong desire to research and support performance in South East Asia when I represented Australia at the 2004 Cloud Gate 2 and Taipei National University of the Arts' *Young Choreographer's Project* (Taipei). Again in Shanghai in 2005 when a production that I choreographed toured to China (*Chinese Whispers*) I was invited back as the first guest artist and lecturer at the *International Masters Workshop Series* at The Shanghai Theatre Academy later that year and made observations again about the important and revered foothold that The Arts has in this culture.

I have also enjoyed great artistic freedom, research (practical and theoretical) and achievement, within London and Europe, and so my culminating experience led to the premise for my Fellowship research and the vantage point that comes from a decade of international experience, to date:

- Why is art and culture part of a different value system here in Australia compared to my experiences in Europe, UK and Asia?***
- How does this value system operate and how can the Australian creative industries evolve to achieve a healthier status in this country?***
- How is cultural education going to support this process of nurturing a healthier and sustainable creative environment?***

This formative research marks the beginning of a personal and professional investigation into the value of the arts/creative industries across cultures and has provided impetus to grow and nurture both social and cultural sustainability as an international artist and arts advocate.

In his book “ideas for the new millennium”, Peter Ellyard makes the following claim: “Australia has not asked its creative people to play a greater role in generating economic prosperity, nor has it created the processes which would have enabled them to play such a role. Its creative people have been kept on the margins and uncelebrated. There is still something left of the old imperial ‘cultural cringe’, for many of Australia’s most outstanding creative people are better known outside the country than they are in their

own country” (2001, p.95). Ellyard continues by stating that it is time for policy-makers to uphold and recognize “the relative contribution of art to economic as well as to cultural prosperity, and that any innovation culture should incorporate a major role for art” (p.96).

This report to follow includes details of the inaugural Australia-China Council Churchill Fellowship awarded in 2007 and officially undertaken in 2009 due to special circumstances. Again, I thank both The Australia-China Council and The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia for being accommodating in granting the extension of time on this project. I believe that the subject matter is deserving of further research and crucial to address in terms of delivering a world class performing arts industry in Australia that is sustainable and can adapt to the rapid changing technological, social and economic climate.

## **Sites of Study**

**The companies, institutions and arts centres that were sites of study include:**

- Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore
- The Necessary Stage, Singapore
- Stint On Stage, Singapore
- The Substation, Singapore
- Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Hong Kong
- Taipei Artist Village, Taiwan
- Cloud Gate Theatre of Taiwan, Taiwan
- Shanghai Theatre Academy, Shanghai
- Children’s Art Theater, Shanghai
- Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center, Shanghai
- The Central Academy of Drama, Beijing

*Meetings and interviews were also conducted with the following personnel:*

- Independent Artists in all cities (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Shanghai and Beijing)
- Charmaine Toh - Public Affairs Manager, Australian High Commission, Singapore
- Gavin McDougall - Director, Public Affairs Australian Consulate-General, Hong Kong
- Lauren Hu - Media and Culture Manager Economic and Policy Section, Australian Commerce and Industry Office, Taipei

## **Acknowledgements:**

My visit to Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China was made possible through the Australia-China Council and The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust's support.

A sincere thank you to the Australia-China Council Board; Current Australia-China Council Manager, Rachael Cunliffe; Immediate past Australia-China Council Manager Robyn Barlow; The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Board (2007 – current); The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Chief Executive Officer Paul Tys; Senior Executive Officer (Finance and Administration) Louise Stenhouse; and The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Executive Officer (Fellowship), Meg Gilmartin.

Thank you also to the Artists, Managers and Directors who shared their expertise and knowledge with me, and my family and close colleagues for your ongoing support. Thank you also to you, Alexander Waite Mitchell, for traveling this creative road together.

Special thanks and my gratitude is extended to my late Grandparents, who, together with my mother, encouraged me from a young age to be immersed in creativity, cultural education and exchange.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

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### Project Description:

To research and investigate strategies for implementing cultural education and the arts through inclusive systems for dance in Asia.

This Churchill Fellowship considered models for creative and cultural education in Asia that are not available in Australia as a primary focus, with the aim of adding to existing knowledge and strategies for increasing cultural awareness and appreciation of the Arts in Australia. In conjunction with this, I aim to continue exploring and creating artistic and educational exchange opportunities between Australia and China in the Performing Arts arena.

### Highlights:

Fellowship highlights included meeting the following luminaries and personnel within the creative industries:

- **Aubrey Mellor** - Dean of the Faculty of Performing Arts, Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore
- **Alvin Tan** - Artistic Director, The Necessary Stage, and, M1 Singapore Fringe Festival
- **Dr. Anita Donaldson** - Dean of Dance, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
- **Professor Gu Yi An** - Director, Shanghai International Performing Arts Research Centre at The Shanghai Theatre Academy
- **Charmaine Toh** - Public Affairs Manager, Australian High Commission, Singapore;
- **Gavin McDougall** - Director, Public Affairs, Australian Consulate-General, Hong Kong
- **Lauren Hu** - Media and Culture Manager Economic and Policy Section, Australian Commerce and Industry Office, Taipei

Highlights also included: Visiting the central Taipei Cloud Gate Centre, staying at The Taipei Artist Village, presenting as part of the 2009 *Summer Dance Festival* in Taipei, and learning about the Artist Villages. These Artist Villages provide studios, accommodation and platforms for presentation such as *Art and Culture Outreach (ACO)*;

*Cattle Depot Artist Village* in Hong Kong; and, the *Taipei Artist Village* and *Grass Mountain Village*, Taiwan, with plans for more villages in progress.

Other professional highlights included being invited to present at Videotage in Hong Kong; creating a new work (*Fragile Connexions*) and giving a lecture at the *2009 Summer Dance Festival* in Taipei (June 2009), and presenting Dance and Theatre training in a 3-day workshop series that I conducted at the Shanghai Theatre Academy with the Australian Composer and new media artist Alexander Waite Mitchell, entitled *The Interchange Series (for Actors and Dancers)*.

These performance based opportunities that value-added to my Australia-China Council Churchill Fellowship, afforded me the time to consider the processes of intercultural work and research, while creating within a cultural context that is respectful, inspiring and therefore invigorating to artistic practice.

### **Major Lessons:**

A major challenge of addressing cultural education (the development and understanding of culture and cultures; and the importance of The Arts as part of a culture) is establishing a balance between tradition and emergent cultures, and inter-cultural understanding.

Cultural development and understanding between cultures is promoted through arts education and artistic opportunity and practice (although not solely) as there are close associations between cultural evolution and The Arts as outlined in the report “The Arts, Creativity and Cultural Education: an International Perspective” that is based on data collected from almost twenty participating countries.

I uphold the dissemination of knowledge and culture that is passed from one generation to another. I come from an artistic line and my mother, Stephanie Wotzke, introduced me to creativity (learnt skills and experiential ‘open’ creativity) from a young age. Hence the ideals and values I have for art and creativity was instilled within me as part of my formal and informal training and development. Grassroots change and access to the creative industries through the education system breeds a culture and society that positively values and appreciates The Arts.

In the aforementioned report entitled “The Arts, Creativity and Cultural Education: an International Perspective”, it is identified that Australia’s overarching national goal for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century (with reference to the Adelaide Report) is as summarized:

*schooling should be socially just, so that: students are free from discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal*

*and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society; and all students understand the value of cultural and linguistic diversity.*

The prevailing attitude of people within the places that I visited is vastly different to the social norms found in Australia.

In Asia there is an appreciation in both Taipei and mainland China for The Arts that is evident in the way people participate in creativity as a way of life. In Hong Kong and Singapore there is a growing appreciation for The Arts that has been generated in the last decade by enormous injections of funds into infrastructure and in the development of key cultural hubs.

It is widely accepted that Australia offers world-class training in the performing arts, however, unlike the invigorated independent dance scene I have witnessed in S.E Asia (and in the UK and Europe), there is limited ongoing infrastructure for new graduates, emerging and established artists. Hence, there is much scope for building fundamental creative needs for sustainable artistic growth across the performing arts. Arts advocates, Private companies/investors and Federal and State Governments can begin shifting attitudes towards The Arts and artists in Australia and improve the arts eco-system through some of the following strategies:

1. Feeder institutions: In Asia there are many more performing arts companies that have positions for new graduates as institutions are aligned with companies in an active way (due to historic and traditional ties) such as the close association between Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA) and Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan (that also boasts a second company).
2. Political Support and planning of cultural infrastructure as a priority.
3. The development/founding of Artist Villages that support artists through the resources of time, space, presentation and accommodation (Art and Culture Outreach (ACO); Cattle Depot Artist Village, Hong Kong; Taipei Artist Village and Grass Mountain Village, Taiwan).
4. The founding and funding of new graduate companies such as 'Shenti Zhuyi' (founded in June 2009) – supporting graduates from the dance Department of the Shanghai Theatre Academy through financial support and the resources of office and studio space.
5. Free outdoor performances by large scale companies such as Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan – delivering performance across Taiwan to the masses.
6. A history that builds a positive value system for The Arts through centres for performance (music, dance and body-based training) such as the Cloud Gate Schools: lifelong learning centres with over 30 centres (so far) providing classes for children to adults.

The level of support in terms of creative centres with multiple studios for hire is evidence of support and encouragement of growth for the creative industries in the cities I visited during my Churchill Fellowship. In Australia there is a lack of dedicated arts venues for hire that are suitable for performing arts research and development and a tendency to pigeon hole creative practitioners. My experience both in Asia and through my time in Europe and London (1998 – 2003) is that there are multiple centres (with multiple studios available) for creative research and the ability to be able to cross art forms freely without the restrictions of being labeled (a 'dancer' or an 'actor') in the cities I have worked and lived in that are outside of Australia.

Sydney's 'Critical Path' and 'Dancehouse' in Melbourne, both exist to encourage and engage in focused dance research, collaboration and choreographic enquiry. Here in Adelaide, South Australia, this coming together of artists is diminished through limited studios to hire and an absence of a creative hub. Immediately coming to mind are the splendid days I spent in Zurich rehearsing and researching at the Tanzhaus – a seven studio venue. As an artist the resources of time and space are most vital.

### **Ways to positively impact on cultural education in Australia:**

#### **Dissemination:**

Reports on my findings can be shared through the following:

- Research can be submitted and presented to Schools and through the Education Departments within in each Australian State; at International conferences such as the 'World Summit on Arts and Culture' and the next 'World Dance Alliance Global Summit' with a more comprehensive report being submitted to be considered as a scholarly paper for publication.
- Supplying the Internet link for this online report to State and Federal Arts advisors and Ministers in Australia.
- Discussion and debate of this knowledge - shared and discussed at Arts Summits, Lectures and Public Talks that I am offered, and/or create, in the forthcoming years.
- Conversation and advisory role with personnel who are implementing Performing Arts action plans such as 'Dance Plan 2012'.

**Ways to positively impact on cultural education in Australia:  
Implementation:**

***Actively lobbying and/or promoting the following in Australia:***

- Increased resources such as studio space (approach Arts SA; Carclew Youth Arts; Australia Council for the Arts through written communication)
- Establishing Professional workshops for the exchange of ideas and artistic experiment – a creative platform for artists to share and experience studio-based exchange
- Encouraging international connections and cultural exchange through organizations such as The Helpmann Academy where I am a Mentor; and/or as a follow up to the cultural exchange programme I led in Shanghai in 2006 entitled ‘Shifting Horizons’.
- Encouraging increased media coverage of the arts – print, radio and television, by working with my business partner Sidonie Henbest at Felicity Arts and Felicity Publicity (based in South Australia) to lead change
- Raising the profile of The Arts (the creative industries) impact within other industries such as tourism, export and in the corporate sector through acknowledgement and collaboration.
- Discussing the broader concepts of my study within high profile Australian organizations - to connect with the issues to improve the status of The Arts in Australia by discussing values and the need for invigorating cultural education through avenues such as the national dance advocacy body Ausdance; Australia Business Arts Foundation (ABAF); Asialink; and Live Performance Australia (LPA).
- Strengthen and grow collaborative inter-industry opportunities; workplace relations; the promotion of The Arts, sustainability of culture - by pursuing change within policy and strategy through these avenues and aligned organizations.

***And by creating work that:***

- Appeals to a wider audience (such as my 3D stereo live-edit work *3xperimentia: Live Cut* or fulldome creation *Future Memory*) that combines technological innovation.
- Supports and sustains the careers of other artists through commercial viability.
- Challenges, informs and inspires audiences to secure and acknowledge a performing arts work/production as a successful homegrown product and also as a cultural export.

The arts are vital in shaping and paving Australia's future in a dynamic social setting and changing economy. In her article in *The Age*, "Funding the arts in a world of rapid change" (January 10, 2005), Jennifer Bott the former CEO of the Australia Council for the Arts states that "diversity, adaptability, an outward-looking mentality, risk taking and team playing, and innovation...are the building blocks of the new economies shaping the world. The changes we're planning will ensure the council continues to play a central role in building Australia's unique cultural identity, and a wider embrace of the arts."

[\[http://www.theage.com.au/news/Opinion/Funding-the-arts-in-a-world-of-rapid-change/2005/01/09/1105205975479.html?oneclick=true\]](http://www.theage.com.au/news/Opinion/Funding-the-arts-in-a-world-of-rapid-change/2005/01/09/1105205975479.html?oneclick=true)

## **PROGRAMME: 2009**

### **April 2009 Singapore**

- Aubrey Mellor, Dean of the faculty of Performing Arts, Lasalle College of the Arts
- Alvin Tan, Artistic Director, The Necessary Stage & M1 Singapore Fringe
- Charmaine Toh, Public Affairs Manager, Australian High Commission
- Nicole Stinton, Artistic Director, Stint On Stage
- Audrey Wong, Co-Artistic Director, The Substation

### **April 2009 Hong Kong**

- Dr. Anita Donaldson, Dean of Dance, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
- Jaime Redfern, Head of Modern Dance, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
- Gavin McDougall Director, Public Affairs, Australian Consulate-General, Hong Kong
- Ellen Pau, Chairperson, Videotage
- Alvis Choi, Project Coordinator, Videotage

### **May - June 2009 Taiwan (focus on Taipei and Kaoshiung)**

- Lee Ching-Chun, Rehearsal Director, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan; Course Director, Cloud Gate Centres
- Su Yao Hua, Director of the Taipei Artist Village and Grass Mountain Artist Village
- Lauren Hu - Media and Culture Manager Economic and Policy Section, Australian Commerce and Industry Office, Taipei

### **July 2009 Beijing**

- Wang Yang, Central Academy of Drama (Graduate of Directing Course)

### **July – August 2009 Shanghai**

- Professor Gu Yi An, Director, Shanghai International Performing Arts Research Centre; Freelance Director, Children's Art Theater
- Professor Han Sheng, Vice President, Shanghai Theatre Academy
- Wang Yang, Independent Director, Dramatic Arts Centre

## MAIN BODY – Overview of Churchill Fellowship

The process of learning reveals the needs, directions and values that a society deems necessary to ensure its own continuity (Dewey, 1916, p3).

Biesta, (1996) describes the transmission of knowledge, values, attitudes, and culture as both the process and outcome of education - concepts that are ambivalent. However, the idea of education being two different sides of the same coin readily fits with the suggestions made by Dewey, who also points out that education is the means of “social continuity of life” (Dewey, 1916 p3).

An elaboration of this quality strongly suggests that education is not necessarily only a formal process, as it is also the transmission of thoughts, feelings, actions, ideals, expectations and social standards by which group members structure their living, and which are passed on from one generation to the next (Dewey, 1916 p4).

Rothstein (1991, p24) expands further on this concept, adding that the establishment and maintenance of the educational system in a capitalist society is the reproduction of the social and economic conditions of each generation, through government intervention. Smelser (1963, p8) points out that political force in a society works to serve economic demands.

Although the original study of values was conceived in philosophical terms, scientific studies in the field of psychology and sociology changed in 1951 when social scientists, Vernon, Allport and Lindsey linked ordinary activities, such as watching a movie, voting and reading the paper to value concepts (Debats & Bartelds, n.d).

Recent studies have demonstrated that a relationship exists between values, attitudes and behaviours (McCarty & Shrum, 2000). Values also assist in assessing life satisfaction (Brown, & Crace, 1996) and there is considerable evidence that decisions people make are influenced by their values (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Koop, 1991; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987, cited in Brown and Crace, 1996). Rohan (2000) points out that the manner in which people prioritise their values is an important predictor of their behavioural decisions and general attitudes to life.

For instance, throughout life, people seek to gratify their need for intimacy, in relationships, which are influenced by their age, personality and the dynamics of instrumental and expressive values of friendship (Kon, 1973, 1974, cited in Kon & Losenkov, 2001). Their relationships are likely to reflect social or common group norms including religion, language, sport, politics and career interests (Crandall, Schiffhauser & Harvey, 1997) as well as general patterns of values and interests (Newcomb, 1961 cited in Crandall, Schiffhaue & Harvey, 1997).

My fellowship led me to the most revered performing arts institutions and companies in South East Asia and I met the people heading and developing this infrastructure in South East Asia with a background and history belonging to each country. Lasalle College of the Arts, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and the Shanghai Theatre Academy have sound and progressive performing arts facilities, training and staff. The dance programmes often reflect a balance of the traditional dance and contemporary training – for instance Chinese Opera training and Western training in Modern Dance.

## CONCLUSIONS:

The project has been necessary to gain insight into arts companies, organizations and centres in Asia to have firsthand knowledge of comparative models of sustainable arts practice. The implementation of cultural education introduces a change of attitude and appreciation towards the Arts in Australia at a grass roots level through the emphasis of The Arts in education, private Dance schools, and through research, strategies, forward planning and the media.

Australia needs to build a new framework to improve and enhance cultural education in this country – especially now with new immigrants and increasing globalization - to improve understanding within our culture and to include other cultures as part of bicultural and intercultural learning.

This research is very timely as at State and Federal level in Australia it is recognized that the creative industries is key to economic growth, and there is a surge of restructuring that is currently taking place in terms of funding, to support and grow The Arts (for example Dance Plan 2012). Directly, part of this is also about changing values and attitudes towards The Arts by increasing cultural education.

The models that I have researched in Asia embrace cultural education. The international exchange opportunities to meet artists within an Artists' Village, and the opportunity to experience a lifelong connection to culture that is promoted through the visual and performing arts training and exchange at the Cloud Gate Centres, is a solid contributor within the Taiwanese culture.

This area of investigation deserves further thought and research as The Arts and creativity become a larger part of our education system here in Australia. It is not the implementation of a new arts and culture model that will deliver the changes and enhancement in our society that in turn will garner a wider appreciation for The Arts and creativity, but the values that are found in the trial and error of allowing people of all ages to learn and experience from cultural education and creativity (directly and indirectly) through intercultural exchange.

Because of rapid social changes it should not be assumed that basic values underpinning education are common to all people, nor that the same kind of learning for all students will result in the development of students to their fullest potential (Johnson 1963, p25).

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Jennifer Bott, the then CEO of the Australia Council for the Arts, states in the forward of the “EDUCATION AND THE ARTS STRATEGY 2004 – 2007” that the said Council’s long term vision is to garner “an environment where the arts are an integral part of the lifelong learning of every Australian”.

[[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/2564/ed\\_arts\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/2564/ed_arts_strategy.pdf)]

This is a vision that is certainly flourishing in Taipei through the Cloud Gate Centers continuing growth and the establishment and running of the Artists’ Villages. My research through a Churchill Fellowship can feed directly now into the Australia Council for The Arts ongoing aims with policy makers and organizations, and I aim to develop partnerships with groups and people concerned with education and the arts, and facilitate and share (through both consultancy and resources) information on arts education, research and practice. There are several noted organizations heading research in the area of The Arts and education, culture and creativity such as State and Federal Arts and Funding bodies, Education Departments, UNESCO; Ausdance, The Australian Business Arts Foundation, and through NEAN member agencies (National Education and the Arts Network).

In the essay “The Bonsai and the Rainforest: Reflections on Culture and Cultural Policy in Singapore”, as part of the book “Ask Not”, Kwok Kian-Woon discusses the persistence of art, culture and artists in the following:

“(it is) because of qualities of fortitude, discipline, responsibility, integrity and commitment to creativity that they (artists) have survived over time, in spite of the lack of artistic freedom, space and opportunity (2004, p.17).” To continue the garden metaphor and to apply Kwok’s sentiments universally – imagine how creativity can thrive and blossom with some nurturing.

***“The seeds of today are the flowers of tomorrow”***

Anonymous

Dance Plan 2012 holds great promise, promoting that in a two year window there will be “Sustained investment in programs for career development, leadership and skills sharing” and that this will stimulate the much needed nurturing of creativity, cultural education and artistic creation within this country. Along with this said plan, I also believe that expansion of creativity and the development of new values will develop by looking at the infrastructure that is not yet available here in Australia.

[[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/35602/Dance\\_Plan\\_2012\\_.pdf](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/35602/Dance_Plan_2012_.pdf)]

**Recommendations for consideration of sustainable creativity and cultural education in Australia include the following:**

- ➡ Matched conditions and opportunities for proven Australian Independent Artists – so that touring, producing and marketing success is not dependent on being an established (annually funded) Dance or Performing Arts Company
- ➡ The Implementation of Creative opportunities and experience for all - founded at school (within the education system) and throughout life (free public performances)
- ➡ Increased visibility of our Artists – in the media, showing an appreciation for creativity and culture
- ➡ Increased access to resources – the supply of multi-studio space to research performing arts making and develop creative arts hubs/centres; subsidized hire for independent artists; time to develop and research ideas and evolve new form (intercultural and interarts practice)
- ➡ Opportunity for Artists Residencies and programmes – the founding of an Australian Artists' Village/s to attract and encourage world class practitioners to develop their work here and to promote exchange opportunities within Australia
- ➡ The serious consideration of a second company infrastructure – to operate from an already established Dance Company with a separate artistic director (such as Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, and, Cloud Gate 2 operates)

To nurture new values for the creative industries in Australia will pave the way for cultural and creative sustainability in the near future.

***“The future depends on what we do in the present.”***

Mahatma Gandhi

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