

I Don't Do it for the Money

By Wesley Enoch

Hello and Welcome. Thank you for coming today. My name is Wesley Enoch and my family come from Stradbroke Island or Minjeeriba just off the coast of Brisbane in Quandamooka country. I am a Noonuccal Nuugi from there but my family are more than just that. I have a great great grandfather called Fernando Gonzalas who was a filopino fisherman who was shipwrecked on the island and married in, family from Rotumah Island in the Sth Pacific who were escapees from the blackbirding trade in the far north of queensland who ran away to Stradbroke and married in to the family, I have different clans from the north in Karndju country near Cairns and the Irish English Scottish. On my mothers side of the family I have a great grandmother with Danish heritage, a great grandfather with Spanish heritage and the usual mix that has become synonymous with being Australian today. I am the sum of all my histories I stand here because of them.

I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this area the Gadigal and the Darug of the Eora nation and play witness to the wisdom of the elders past and present. As I look out and see the elders in this audience today I acknowledge your wisdom and contribution to this country you call home and it is only with this combined wisdom will we have a future.

Phillip Parsons was such an elder and his work alongside the indefatigable Katherine Brisbane and the teams of people at Currency Press over the years have helped us capture a history, record the present and project into the future. Thank you for this opportunity.

I am a great believer in knowing our history. Where we gather now, on this hill, you used to be able to see out to the water courses and across the plains. When Joseph Forveaux claimed this place he may not have seen the significance of being able to see long ways into the distance. He named it Surry Hills Farm as an acknowledgement of his history and what he saw here took him back to a past place, a place of his history. The Gadigal and the Darug would have used this place to see where water and food would be, they would have lit a campfire and watched the sun play on water and trees and observed the present..... but today I wish to use this vantage point to see into a future. I want to see the history, I want to sit around a campfire and see what is being played out now and I want to look over the landscape and make some predictions into a future that invites us to be part of it, either through accepting or changing it.

I can see a future where even more commercial elements drive our theatre making.

I can see a world where the investment from artists is increased and the payment for services by an employer is replaced with greater personal risk for those who undertake to make theatre.

I can see a world where careers are built not only by talent but through connections with audiences and mobile fan bases.

I can see a world where Independent theatre practices are the norm.

I can see a changing funding landscape where nothing is guaranteed, and I can see a greater role for audiences and donors in innovation and risk.

Today I want to light a few fires, be provocative and argue that we as artists are sometimes our own worst enemies and I want to demonstrate the power of the audience and the ability for us as artists to work against the sustainability of our own careers and endeavours.

I called this Lecture - I don't do it for the money – because it's a phrase I've heard many times. Though I've never heard a lawyer say it, I haven't heard a doctor say it, I haven't heard a plumber or carpenter or bus driver or bank teller or office worker or an insurance agent or an engineer....you get the picture. Where I've heard this phrase used most is from the mouths of nurses, teachers, social workers and artists. Always artists. In a form of vocational justification we as artists use this phrase – I don't do it for the money - to explain why we are not getting ahead in a career or our financial well being, we say this phrase as a way of asking for more time, we stretch out our hope on a torture rack and say the pain is worth it. I don't do it for

I Don't Do it for the Money

By Wesley Enoch

Philip Parsons Memorial Lecture

Presented at Belvoir on Sunday 8 December 2013

the money - acknowledges we believe there is a greater good being achieved through our work, a huge social project that requires our long term sacrifice or a need to build skills and exposure to one day hit the jackpot in a career gamble where the odds are never in our favour.

So...what I've done is taken my fee for this lecture and split it into 200 envelopes in cash.

1 to demonstrate that you never get paid that much for a gig like this

2 to make me earn it even more and replicate the experience of many artists who are living off door deals, back ends, long tails, points and percentages and

3 to put you in the driver's seat. If you think I don't deserve the fee then keep the envelope. If you think someone else deserves the money more then give them the envelope

It's a bit of a stunt but it's this idea of putting your money where your mouth is or in this case putting my livelihood in your hands.

Like most people I have a mortgage, I have family obligations, I have living expenses, and I have some long term goals I'd like to achieve before physical and mental exhaustion take over.

But somehow as artists we suppress these normal expectations of life to pursue our art. We feel that we are not as valuable in our society and accept that we should defer financial returns and receive the appreciation of a grateful nation in the form of gratuity. Tips and change.

Payment for work in the Independent Theatre scene is the equivalent of in theatre busking.

In fact artists make a better living street busking than having a career in Independent theatre. But that's ok because we don't do it for the money.

After 20 years of using the term Independent theatre I think it is time to consider what the long term learning's have been and the effect of this movement.

For those who read my Facebook posts you'd know I have been asking questions around Independent Theatre for a while. What is it independent of? What are the goals of this movement? How does it distinguish itself from community or amateur theatre? From fringe and student theatre? For the purposes of this talk I wish to define Independent theatre around aspiration for a sustainable career in the arts where you generate the bulk of your income.

It is overly simplistic but I've put artistic careers into two bundles sustainable and unsustainable. I found that the amateur and professional nomenclatures were weird given that artistic careers deal with the ad hoc nature of payment, the long term returns versus the short term, employment fluidity through times of freelance and fulltime etc etc. The simple question to ask is – is your artistic practice sustainable? I acknowledge that the answer may change during regular intervals in one's life but this is the question we must all ask.

For many artists we balance artistic work with other work teaching, office work, waiting tables, temping.....this is nothing new. To make our artistic life viable we find other work that sustains us. In the Australia Council paper called Artist Careers it states that just over 44,000 people call themselves professional artists which is a 40% increase from 20 years ago (the population comparison is 17 million in 1993 to 22million in 2013 roughly a 35% increase in population), the median wage for artists in Australia is around \$36K which is around \$7K less than the Australian average. About 45% of artist incomes come from creative work, 23% from arts related activities like teaching in your field and 32% from non arts employment. 1 in 50 artists have incomes over \$150K.

Independent theatre has a number of roles it can play. I break them down into four areas Experience, Exposure, Exploration and Economics. Experience - As a training ground Independent theatre can be where you test and explore your skill base, where you build working methods and relationships and put into practice things you have learnt in theory. This trial and error through practice allows peer to peer learning and is where I witness most Independent theatre occurring. This goes hand in hand with Exposure. Independent Theatre is a public audition process, building audience connections and reputation, showcasing

I Don't Do it for the Money

By Wesley Enoch

Philip Parsons Memorial Lecture

Presented at Belvoir on Sunday 8 December 2013

your talent so others can see and potentially offer you employment. Exploration is what used to be called fringe where research and development can occur especially around form. Here I see Independent meaning separation of traditions and pushing the boundaries setting out to learn something new about theatre and performance. Economics refers to a group of artists who set aside payment to build a show with the view of selling that show to broader audiences through festivals, touring bodies, other presenters etc. We've seen this in Brisbane with groups like Briefs, Polytoxic, Casus, Shake and Stir who build shows that can then have extended lives touring. One group has been touring through Europe for 8 months with a show they created as an independent theatre offering.

These 4 areas all have in common deferring financial rewards for future benefit and are not mutually exclusive.

Unfortunately the bulk of Independent theatre has little if any financial returns for those who are making it. I chatted with a group who are part of the LaBoite indie program about their recent experience. They had a sold out show and were likely to walk away with around \$1000 - \$1500 dollars each between 17 people after expenses and house costs. The average ticket price was approximately \$24 for a 3 week season, they held a Pozible campaign which raised about \$3000 and by my rough calculations the house took around \$12-15K or roughly 1/4 of the income. So the house makes a small amount if any after costs but gets to include the audience demographics in their figures, build standing in the community, gather ticket charges and associated incomes ie restaurant and bar sales, parking. The house gets a series of low risk soft benefits associated with this investment in the new.

We have seen a proliferation of these independent programs within funded companies MTC and their Neon Program, Malthouse and Helium, Griffin and Stablemates, LaBoite's LaBoite Indie program, in addition to venues and Arts Centres. (I should acknowledge that Belvoir has ended their B Sharp program in the downstairs and replaced it with professionally paid projects). These recent additions to the independent theatre scene have mostly occurred in the past 10 years and have joined the long term Independent theatre structures like laMama, Metro Arts, The Old Fitz/Tamarama Rock Surfers/Bondi Pav, the Blueroom and many more.

There are a plethora of models and deals on offer. These diverse offerings vary so greatly that it's best for each company to promote their own programs.

I need to say now that I am not against the idea of self funded risk or artist investment in work but I see a trend where publicly funded companies who are funded to produce and present professional theatre are increasing their programming through unpaid or partly paid labour.

There is no malice or intention to defraud artists, it has become about sharing the risk and the potential rewards.

I argue that when funded companies are curating a program of works, developing relationships with new audiences and promoting the fact they are engaged in high risk programs to secure philanthropic or corporate support then there is little to distinguish between what is paid and what is unpaid. Audiences must distinguish through the choice and layout of venue, maybe ticket pricing, and promotional material etc how what is being presented in Independent Programs differs from mainstage. We have seen funding bodies part fund or accept part payment models with different companies around the country like Red Stitch, Short and Sweet, Darlinghurst Theatre, Tamarama Rock Surfers etc. If we believe that funding is about supporting risk, innovation and development and not primarily about the status quo then I argue companies should put their money where their mouths are.

I think it is immoral for people on full time salaries in companies and venues with multi-million dollar turnovers to be asking artists to do work for free or less than the agreed award.

As artists we are our own worst enemies....we agree to these compromised conditions so we can get our work made. The competition is such that we are prepared to assume long term unsustainable practises to build and sometimes maintain our careers. Maybe the future is where artists must balance the work that sustains us financially with our artistic work? Maybe the future is a renegotiation of the award system and the growth of more commercial models? Either way this is a debate that must be had now. The MEAA have done little to address these structures and as a slight apology for my leftist position, we run the risk of these

changes becoming a rolling inarticulate hodge podge of what works and what doesn't with very little publicly stated ethical or philosophical underpinning.

These are not new ideas. They have been floating around for some time. I believe we are a tipping point and we should articulate and debate these issues before we accept the change. Sometimes people disempowered in these discussions and that any criticism could jeopardise future work opportunities.

I know the arguments that precipitate the growth of these programs— the availability of space, the better use of public resources, the need to curate for quality control, the demands on funding, these groups are better off aligning with an existing company...but all these arguments are the thin end of the wedge. I know at QTC we could exponentially increase our output and create a more diverse offering for a wider range of audiences if we didn't pay artists, or paid them less. Is this the future? I am being dramatic but the central arguments around the introduction of these programs are about increasing opportunities for artists while decreasing financial exposure to the host organisation. And artists agree to share the risk and in turn alleviate some of the hardship in creating a show

At QTC we have a policy of cash or credit points for any labour within the company. We make sure that minimum wage and equality awards are maintained for all our activities or if there are unpaid positions they are in association with accredited training institutions. The exception to this is a Youth Ensemble of 75 school aged young people who train with professional artists on a fee basis like a youth theatre. We also have a responsive Theatre Access program that facilitates the use of our resources for free by the artistic community for rehearsal or small scale showings which is underwritten by the infrequent commercial use of our venues. We do not allow unpaid performance work to occur.

AT QTC we think.....

If you are interested in the artists and their work then pay them for it.

If you want to grow a new audience then invest in it.

If you want to engage in unpaid labour then sacrifice from your own wages first.

Funded theatre companies are trying to entice the artists and audiences from Independent theatre and are challenging and changing the rules by which they do business. This is an interesting trend I think will continue but runs the risk of undermining sustainable careers in theatre in this country.

The line between independent theatre and so called professional theatre is being blurred.

There has been a continual blurring of the lines in the past 20 years between Fringe or Independent theatre, mainstage companies, arts centres and festivals. In 2013 these lines are less delineated and everyone is competing for someone else's audience. As competition for funding increases each group is looking outside it's traditional markets and roles in the ecology to develop a greater share of the audience.

As I see it the large Arts companies were established in response to a need to have control over our own theatrical offerings. To stem the tide of international control over our stages around 50 or so years ago. Once this was secure, roughly 40 or so years ago we then saw the rise of the Arts Centres as homes for these companies and audiences. Home companies argued for and got theatres and concert halls that reflected their needs. In tandem and in most cases after the Arts centres were built the international festivals became the fashion as ways of staying to touch with international trends, artistic movements and artists.

In 2013 this equilibrium is in flux, we see Arts centres creating programming that rivals home companies and festivals, home companies co-producing with international touring bodies and commercial presenters, festivals umbrella-ing work by local companies rather than investing in them and building them up. I am a fan of competition and don't believe that any group has ownership over any particular practice but I think the conditions that created these bodies has not changed significantly and it is beholden on these organisations to maintain their role in the ecology.

I don't see a lot of innovation driving the changes in these relationships, instead there is increased competition, suspicion and sometimes dysfunction. Some could argue that the winners are the audiences but I doubt we see a building audience cohort, often I believe we are seeing an envious eye who spies the

I Don't Do it for the Money

By Wesley Enoch

Philip Parsons Memorial Lecture

Presented at Belvoir on Sunday 8 December 2013

successes of others and then competes to undercut or commandeer established audiences in any given market. We can look at Perth and see some unusual relationships between home companies and venues which have the potential to become poisonous and destructive. The recent developments at the Arts Centre in Melbourne are interesting examples of mixed messaging and relationship ambiguity. This form of competition does little to build a sustainable artistic community.

There are examples of more harmonious relationships say between the Opera House and its home companies, though this has not always been the case, and the ever improving relationships in Brisbane between QPAC and the resident companies there. But the key is for each sector of the ecology to do what it does best and to see opportunities and fill that gap rather than see success in another patch and go about replicating it. The funded sphere is funded for a reason....fulfil the goals you were created to do and do it best.

In the future I think artists will create virtual companies of collaborators and will range over the ecology pitching ideas to festivals, arts centres, touring networks and producing companies to create their work. The funded infrastructure will respond in ways that reflect their role in the ecology. Artists will band together to treat the existing infrastructure as buckets of resources to dip into to make their work. This is already happening. The future maybe artists will look more like pirates?

Coming back to independent theatre, I believe after 20 years of Independent theatre I can see 20 clear lessons that all theatre companies should investigate for the future of our Industry.

1. Rehearse part time – create structures that allow artists to continue their teaching, temping and waiting jobs by negotiating rehearsal schedules rather than expecting a fulltime commitment from actors that usually means leaving their part-time jobs
2. Every ticket has a percentage set aside for the person who sold it – incentivise the people involved to sell tickets
3. Stop paying for advertising – be creative and create moments, publicity stunts and stories rather than paying big bucks for print and media advertising
4. Go digital – it's cheaper and more likely to hit your target markets
5. Let the market decide if you get paid or not – be box office sensitive, let the audience know what it costs and create value for the ticket
6. Focus on the performers – are sets and costumes the way forward, focus on the people
7. Go to where the audience gathers – stop thinking about gathering people to you and start being imaginative about where the audiences are
8. Mobilise your support networks – create personal followings and fan bases of friends and family
9. Create each show as a brand – create each show as a stand alone event that can argue for attention rather than need to have a huge mega brand that tries to entice audiences
10. Crowd funding as a norm – instead of subscription, use crowd funding to get initial capital, audience buy in and support, demonstrate community need before committing to a project
11. Work with people who are committed to the project – by not relying on guns for hire to build your show you can get more out of the working relationship
12. Cut the administration down to the barest minimum – allow administration to share the risk at the box office through door deals and contract labour rather than fulltime staff
13. Build an audience through person contact – get out of the ivory tower and meet the audience, Q&A sessions, conversations about the work,
14. Drink in the bar after every show – don't be namby pampy get amongst your audience as soon as possible and keep them drinking at the bar
15. Maximise opinions rather than valuing reviews – reviews are just one opinion build a culture of discussion where many opinions are possible and encouraged
16. Be inventive to maximise the dramatic effect – what are things that money can't buy you in the theatre, think about the effect of these when making a show
17. Create festivals and hubs – don't try to be a stand alone event, develop cross over audiences, build nights out not just nights in the theatre
18. Do deals...everywhere with everyone, never pay full price – act like you're poor because you are
19. Do not give away free tickets to anyone – never give it away, never ever....everything has a price, value what you do

I Don't Do it for the Money

By Wesley Enoch

Philip Parsons Memorial Lecture

Presented at Belvoir on Sunday 8 December 2013

20. Ticket sales are the only form of payment for those involved – pay people in tickets to sell, they make their money the more tickets they sell for the show

I think these practices will become the norm in the theatre industry of the future. This paints a picture where we further erode the award conditions and wages we have built up over the past 50 years in Australia. I think some of these practices will help grow a responsive and audience sensitive theatre but very few of them will build sustainable careers for artists.

In the future, career Sustainability will be led by artists who maintain strong connections with their audience. I believe the future looks more like the past, a past when artists had fan clubs and actively maintained relationships with their fan base through communications, public appearances and strong brand recognition. This fan base can then be seen as an asset by any potential presenters or producers. My recent career has been built on such moves. I can say that a contributing factor for me being here and delivering this lecture is because of my recent Facebook activity. After 18 months of being on Facebook I have accumulated just under 1600 friends and over 1000 followers (I don't friend anyone I haven't had a conversation with and so I encourage people to follow me instead). Though I have no evidence of the reach of my regular updates and provocations, I'm sure they have aided my personal brand and subsequently added to an increase in subscribers (QTC jumped by 1000 subscribers in my first year), the maintenance of our funding levels in the face of extreme state government cuts, and several work opportunities due to my increased exposure. Notably my regular gig on ABC 1's Sunday Arts Up Late Sunday nights at 10.30. This may be an overstatement of the power of Facebook and an underestimation of other factors - however - communication and information are the future and artists will have to build a following to survive. Companies have been doing this for decades but I think Individual artists must now consider these lessons. Look at the developments of online music and the rise of touring as a primary income source for recording artists. These are valuable lessons.

In the future I predict only marginal increases to government funding to support the Arts. For the past 10 years we have seen CPI adjusted grants to major companies but static or decreased support on average for the small to medium sector. Governments across the country have placed a premium on box office revenue and an increased emphasis on philanthropic and corporate support. In Queensland we have access to increased funding through a dollar for dollar scheme where the state government will match any philanthropic gift (up to a capped amount), the establishment and funding of Creative Partnerships (formally ABAF), the placement on Boards of donors and business people and the setting up of teams of workers in organisations to chase this support.

Give, Get or Get off has become a mantra amongst funding bodies when addressing the role of Boards of large Arts Companies. Funding networks have become just as important as the art. A contributing factor to being appointed to Boards or high positions in companies is your access to family connections and business networks. I'm thinking of the Malthouse and Michael Kantor, or before him the relationship between the Myer family and Playbox, Cate and Andrew at STC, Li Cunxin at the Queensland Ballet, Ros Horan and Griffin. This is no reflection on their artistic skills, nor am I saying they only got those jobs because of these connections but I can not imagine that this was not a consideration in their appointments. I believe my gift of the gab contributed to my appointment 3 years ago. I can see this being a pressure into the future. You only have to look at the amazing work of some of the American companies to see what this road may look like. This is not a reflection on the art being made but an unspoken truth that your ability to fund raise has become an implicit factor in becoming an Artistic Director in this country.

In a world where funding will get tighter and tighter I can see the need for public funding exit strategies for our major companies. In a world where organisations like STC and MTC are only funded about 8-10% of their annual turnover I can see pressure on them to become more like commercial producers of theatre in this country. In fact I think they are the commercial producers of straight theatre in Australia. This could be made into an argument for increased funding for these organisations but I suggest that would occur at the cost of greater diversity and breadth of theatre practitioners.

Cirque Du Soleil is a good example of how a funded organisation can transition into a commercial producer. 30 years ago the company was given a lump sum funding golden handshake and set about changing their model. Now they are worth half a billion dollars a year with shows touring all over the world whilst still being a proud Canadian company from Montreal.

I Don't Do it for the Money

By Wesley Enoch

Philip Parsons Memorial Lecture

Presented at Belvoir on Sunday 8 December 2013

Opera Australia, The Australian Ballet, the state theatre companies, regional Opera and Ballet companies and the orchestras should all be considering where they will be in 20 years, 50 years, 100 years. And is the funding that is currently awarded them guaranteed? How does growth of our Arts sector happen if there are no major increases to funding and a constant call by the larger organisations for increases. After 50 years of support should these bodies be building long term plans to exit the funding pool? Or at least calling up Jamie Packer more often.

I can foresee the establishment of an exit fund for large organisations to build commercial infrastructure, endowments and investments like term deposits, office and accommodation buildings, car parks, bars and restaurant spaces that can provide a revenue stream independent from government. Imagine the Queensland Theatre Company Toll road? Maybe not. The Australian ballet is a good example where this is working. In their Melbourne home they had the foresight to build a car park that brings them about 1 million dollars a year. Opera Australia has been engaging in a range of commercial and signature events, and the larger theatre companies have been balancing commercially viable programming with greater risk for decades. Golden handshakes and more commercial thinking need to become the norm in the next 20 years if the arts are going to grow and be able to provide space for art practices we haven't even imagined yet.

If the future requires artists to be investors in their own works, they are being asked to plough their own time, energy and resources for free to the development of Theatre in this country then it behoves the larger companies to maximise the returns for the artistic community and our audiences.

This may mean that some of our arts organisations can not survive....but maybe they shouldn't. If a cocktail of box office, donations, bequests, corporate sponsorship, commercialisation, merchandising can't support them then they really need to be doing more to reach many more people and demonstrating their value to the community.

I believe that public funding is strategic and not about supporting the status quo. Each part of the ecology must do what it can do best.

Artists face exit strategies all the time. For people in the theatre we face that dark moment when we can no longer sustain our careers and must transition out. For circus performers and dancers it may be because of physical aging. The average professional life for a dancer is 6 years. After decades of working and sacrifice we can often find ourselves unemployed, un-superannuated, and alone, with only a scrapbook of memories as an asset. Theatre training institutions graduated over 200 theatre practitioners this year. For many this training will become a foundation discipline that they will find application in a range of areas – teaching, public relations, sales, event management, law, workplace training etc etc.

We must start to challenge ourselves to question the sustainability of our careers and crash through our disappointment. We have to stop letting our hopes and dreams, our ambitions and goals becoming a cage that allows us to deceive ourselves and compromise our lives. When is the sacrifice too great? When is it time to transition? How do I support myself?

For many this is not a process of their own choosing. We must accept that we work in an area where there is a pyramid of opportunity and that attrition is hardwired in to ensure there are only a few at the top. Maybe we can balance our artistic work with more financially sustaining work and find an inner peace in that. Keep our artistic life alive through community and amateur theatre. But we must learn to live our lives.

There is an Indonesian saying – a good artist practises their craft, a great artist practises their craft and ploughs a field. I take this to mean tend your garden and you have more to offer through your art.

Thank you for your time and attention. Now over to you and your choice of what to do with the envelope.