

Pilot Evaluation of Sidney Myer Fund and Tim Fairfax Family Foundation Capacity Building Program

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1. Background

The Arts & Humanities Capacity Building Program seeks to strengthen and grow the independent arts and cultural sector in Australia by granting money to ensembles, collectives, groups and organisations that are *highly connected* within their sector and producing *excellent work*.

In response to

- feedback from artists collected by the Australia Council and Arts Victoria resisting the artform-based assessment of their work;
- an increased appetite in the sector for ‘capacity building’ support;
- the recurring challenge that small organisations and independent artists face attracting operational or core support;

the Committee has created a program that seeks to the grow the sector *and* the recipients’ capacity in a commensurate manner. The Committee’s program

- recognises that independent entities are already over-stretched and ‘matched’ programs create more challenges for them than they solve;
- genuinely seeks a new method or metric (beyond art form) for mapping and assessing applications from the sector;
- directs funding to those entities that other funding agencies have trouble reaching

As part of this program, Brisbane collective Prying Eye Productions received \$50,000 (over two years, 2016 - 2017) in a round co-funded by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and the Sidney Myer Fund.¹ Prying Eye Productions received no other on-going operational funding at this time.

2. Methodology

This program considers that to grow the sector *and* the funding recipient’s capacity requires the benefit of the funding be felt as broadly beyond the recipient – throughout the sector – as possible. To create a program which hopes to see the benefits of the funding move throughout the sector in such a manner requires a method to map an applicant’s position with the sector; its relationship with the other entities in the sector.

Once you’ve created a map such as this, or collected this kind of information, it is possible to see the kind of relationships that applicants have: their strength, their value, the number and their reciprocity.

Creating this kind of map is generally referred to as a network diagram.

¹ See Appendix 1 for a biography of Prying Eye Productions.

As part of the application process, applicants were asked to submit details about other artists, organisations, funders, presenters, etc they were working with. This information was then re-collected 18 months after the funding commenced.

This information was converted into numerical datasets using Microsoft Excel and then imported to a visualisation software program called Gephi.²

Each data set was parsed through the same visualisation algorithm in order to compare the three representations of the applicants' networks. The three graphs are included below:

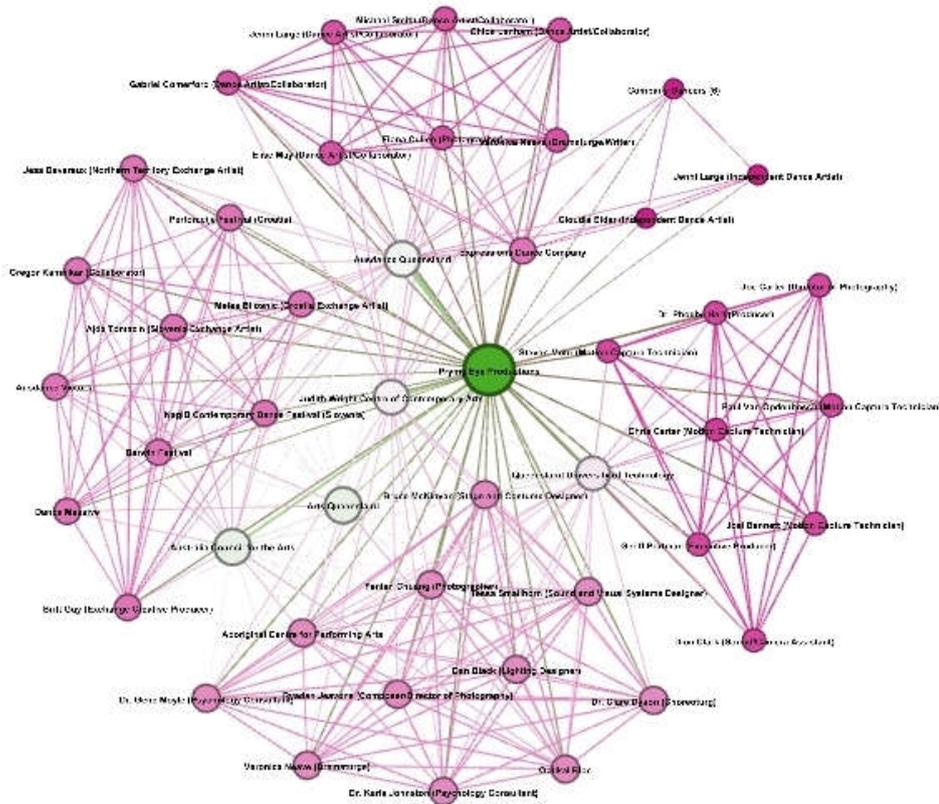


Figure 1: Prying Eye Productions Relationship Map 2015 (before SMF funding)

² See Appendix 2 for a more detailed description of the data collection and analysis method.

4.1 Resilience

What do we mean by *resilience*? There is a wide and growing body of research indicating the importance of resilience in creating and maintaining social, financial, economic, bodily and artistic health. For our purposes, we draw on Mark Robinson’s widely cited definition: “the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances.”³

In this program’s methodology, improving applicants’ resilience means strengthening its network – connecting it to more other agents in the sector – in order to help it overcome adverse shocks (to itself or the sector as a whole). The table below outlines the changes in the number of artists, presenters, funders, producers etc within Prying Eye Productions’ network and the number of relationships that exist between those agents.

	Before Funding	12 Months’ into Funding	24 Months into Funding
Agents in Network	46	93	157
Relationships in Network	316	2,757	1637

4.2 Influence

What do we mean by *influence*? For our purposes, influence is a qualitative measure of the types of agents and relationships that have been added to Prying Eye Production’s network. Influence measures the nature of the connections that the company is making – have they purchased social media followers or email addresses, or have they made relationships that appear to be bolstering their network? We measure the significance of other agents’ power within the network by the size and colour of their dot in the graphs above. The larger and lighter the dot, the more influential it is in the broader ecology. That is, the more dots, of more influence, it is connected to.

5. Conclusion

What this evaluation doesn’t capture is the detail and quality of the collective’s work over the past 24 months, but we never set out to evaluate the program in terms of the artistic output of the applicant. What we can point to is the increase in output by the company over the funded period (as is evidenced by the graph’s increasing complexity).⁴ The expert assessment panel provided commentary on the quality of program applicants so this metric has certainly been taken into account when awarding funds.

When looking at Prying Eye’s graphs above we can conclude that since receiving funding:

1. The collective is connected to more agents in the network – they have become more *resilient*.
2. The collective is better connected to more powerful agents in the broader network – they have become more *influential*.

³ See Mark Robinson, “Making Adaptive Resilience Real”, 2010 https://sca-net.org/downloads/50f2f82584e32-making_adaptive_resilience_real.pdf

⁴ See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaTQSaWlQwI&list=PL4AXtF88HbVfc7KYkK3iWjuF4i-787j_J for an example of the company’s work over this period and Appendix 3 for a list of activities/engagements undertaken post receipt of funding.

On the basis of this analysis we conclude that the program has met its objectives, and materially so.

6. Next Steps

Future programs or analysis, resources pending, might look to:

- a. understand the funding's impact on the network's
 - i. densities (relationship between *resilience* and *influence*),
 - ii. path-lengths (is frequency of collaboration important in this context?),
 - iii. modulatory (is it important to have lots of clustering of nodes in the network?),
and
 - iv. distribution (is a more evenly distributed workload more or less *resilient*?);
- b. understand the difference/correlation between artistic resilience and economic resilience and how resilience might affect productivity (is resilience an impactful input for any economic production function?).

Such analysis was outside of the scope of this project, but could form part of any future program.

Appendix 1: Prying Eye Productions - Zaimon and Lizzie Vilmanis

From the collective's website:

Lizzie and Zaimon, in partnership as creative directors of Prying Eye, shape a unique artistic voice utilising collaboration with other artists; developing new practices and evolving those that they acquired individually as celebrated performers and collaborators with acclaimed dance companies in Australia and the U.K.

For Prying Eye "their art is a collaboration with the world around them" - they assemble diverse and exciting voices, approaches, and experiences to shape work of physical, cognitive and emotional depth. Their process cultivates a fun, supportive environment which challenges and inspires risk taking; creating a shared vision built from multiple perspectives that none of the team could build on their own, also facilitating exhilarating originality of each new work. Balancing production elements is important to them so that each element contributes to making the whole work resonate, all in all, enhancing the impact of the live dance theatre experience. The strength of their practice was made evident through their spellbinding production, "White Porcelain Doll" (2014), their first independent full-length dance theatre work which was nominated for Outstanding Achievement in Independent Dance (Australian Dance Awards 2015) and still resonates with audiences today. "WOLF", their second work, recently premiered at Supercell: Festival of Contemporary Dance Brisbane, then toured to the Adelaide Fringe Festival, and was received to great critical acclaim.

Prying Eye's commissioned works include pieces for Expressions Dance Company (EDC), Brisbane Festival, Noosa Long Weekend Festival, Supercell: Festival of Contemporary Dance Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology, Create X, Cinedans (Amsterdam), Choreoscope (Spain), Adelaide College of the Arts, Sir Robert Helpmann Centenary Awards, Sybella Blencowe, Fresh Bred Ensemble, Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts, Royal Academy of Dancing, and Velvet Helmet.

Prying Eye's many collaborative projects have included working with Jazz improvisation trio, Feet Teeth (Resurfaced - Brisbane Festival), and electronic singer and song writer, Donna Hewitt (Lady Electronica). They have also just commenced their first international project with researcher of physical intelligence, the Slovenian Artist Gregor Kamnikar.

Lizzie and Zaimon are respected peers within their dance community; providing professional development and networking opportunities for independent artists through Prying Eye's "Play Date" program (supported by EDC) and through Brisbane Dance Artists Hub (which they founded in 2010).

Appendix 2: Data Collection and Analysis Method

When converting the information collected from applicants into numerical datasets, it is possible to create matrix datasets while the applicants' networks are relatively small. Once they exceed about 50 nodes, matrix datasets become difficult to manage with a standard office personal computer set up and it becomes necessary to create 'node' and 'edge' tables for uploading into Gephi.

Node tables contain three columns: ID, label and weight. ID is the numerical code, label is the actual name of the artist, company, etc and weight is a categorical ranking qualifying what 'type' of agent the dot is: presenter, creative collaborator, funder, etc.

Edge tables contain four columns: source, target, direction and weight. Each graph created in this analysis is undirected and all edges have equal weight for ease of analysis. The creation of these tables is the most time-consuming process of the analysis.

**Appendix 3: Schedule of Activities 2016 – 2017 (Post Receipt of Funding),
Prying Eye Productions**

Year	Month	Event/Activity/Production
2016	July	Vulcana Dance Partnering Workshop
	August	New Move Network Residency in Cairns - Creative Development for "Cells Behaving Badly"
		"Cells Behaving Badly" Masterclass
		Get A Move On Classes
	August/ September	Career Dance Slam and Community Bounce Tour
	September	Dance Workshop
	October	Filming and Feedback for Showing
		Consultation re: engaging producing services for Prying Eye
	December	Workshop
	October/ November/ December	Prying Eye Playdates
	July - December	Program Consultation
	Ongoing	Commenced engagement with Cluster Arts to help produce Prying Eye
Ongoing	Supercell: Festival of Contemporary Dance Brisbane	

2017	January/February	Creative Development - "The Inquisition of the Big Bad Wolf"
	February	Work-In-Development Showings of "The Inquisition of the Big Bad Wolf as part of Supercell Festival's INDEX program
	February	Creative Minds Workshop
		Repertoire Workshop
		Queensland Dance Forum
	March	Adelaide Fringe Festival 2017 research and professional development

		Dance Massive 2017 networking and professional development
March/April		Dance Lecturing
April		Creative Minds Workshop
		Dance Classes
		Performance of excerpt from "The Inquisition of the Big Bad Wolf"
		Acquisition of further partnership/sponsorship with Queensland Alliance for Mental Health
May		Creative Minds Workshop
		Strategy Meeting with Supercell Festival
May/June		Rehearsal Directing for Dancenorth
		Shockwave Youth Arts Festival
June/July/August		Rehearsal Directing for Expressions Dance Company
July/August		Community Bounce Tour
August		Lecture on independent dance
August/September		Rehearsal Directing for Expressions Dance Company. Dance classes for the company.
September		Workshop with Merrimac State High School
		National Dance Forum - professional development and networking
October		Australian Theatre Forum
		Choreography
		Filming of showing
November		Creation and delivery of packing crates for "White Porcelain Doll" set

		Creative Sector Workshop
		Australian Alliance for Wellness in Entertainment Workshop on Mental Health in the Performing Arts Industry
		Performance of excerpt from "The Inquisition of the Big Bad Wolf"
	April - September	National Dance Forum Advisory Panel
	July - September	Fundraising and Marketing Campaign for "The Inquisition of the Big Bad Wolf"
	October - November	Rehearsal Directing and teaching company classes
	January - December	Professional Development Consultation

Appendix Four: How to Create a Capacity Building Program for Arts Organisations and the Sector at Large

1. Determine eligibility criteria for your round, primarily:
 - a. artform eligibility (how widely across the sector are you attempting to effect change?), and
 - b. turnover ceiling of eligible organisations (to what degree can your funding have an impact on the organisations you are granting to? Noting that, the larger the organisational turnover, the larger your grants need to be to make a difference).
2. Create application form. Alongside contact details, mission statement and support material, collect material from applicants detailing with whom and which organisations they have worked with, the nature of that working relationship and the project/activity they worked on together. SMF used the table headers below to collect information from applicants.

Year	Month	Event/Activity/ Production	External Individuals Involved (not listed as Applicants on this form), and the Role they Played	External Organisations or Companies Involved
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3. Based on your eligibility criteria put together a panel of experts capable of speaking to the excellence or the applicants' work. While each panel member won't be familiar with every applicant, a representative and diverse spread of panellists will be able to use the information supplied in combination with their own experience to make assessments on the applicants.
4. Convene a selection meeting and discuss applications, support material and panellists' recommendations.
5. Put recommendations to authorising environment.
6. Communicate with successful and unsuccessful applicants.
7. Meet with successful applicants and attempt to understand key priorities, opportunities and impediments presently experienced. Record this information in the same table as described above.
8. Meet with successful applicants again in 12 months and hold the same conversation. Refer to previous conversation and reflect on how events have/have not worked out as anticipated 12 months earlier.
9. Meet with successful applicants again in 12 months and hold the same conversation. Refer to previous conversation and reflect on how events have/have not worked out as anticipated 12 months earlier.
10. Anecdotal evidence collected over the course of these three interviews should bear out the impact of the funding on the applicants' activities, growth in network and ability to overcome unanticipated events.
11. Subject to your available resources, use steps in Appendix 2 to create network diagrams and associated metrics if interested.