



Symposium on Current Audience Research Across the Artforms

14th March 2018
Deakin University

9:00am Registration, tea & coffee

9:30am Welcome, Katya Johanson, Deakin University and Ben Walmsley, University of Leeds

10:00am *The Participating Audience*, Lisa Walsh, Australia Council for the Arts

10:45am Morning tea

11:15am *Audiences or publics; value or benefit: digging in the data for new ways of understanding audiences*

Dr Tully Barnett, Flinders University and Dr Mark Taylor, University of Sheffield

11:30am *Imperatives in policy and planning for audience research: The White Box tool to support evidence-based, outcome-focussed work*

John Smithies, Cultural Development Network (CDN) and RMIT

11:45am Q&A

12:00pm *Exploring modern-day audience response to historical artworks through multi-pronged methods*

Dr Amanda Krause and Professor Jane Davidson, The University of Melbourne

12:15pm *How to Study the Spectator's Process of Value Creation? A Case Study of Contemporary Dance Spectators*

Saara Moisio, University of Helsinki

12:30pm Q&A

12:45pm *The Artists' Audience*, Ross Coulter

1:15pm Lunch



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2:00pm *The Particularly Implicated Spectator: Authenticity, Closeness and Distance*
Matthew Reason, York St John University

2:15pm *In the Eye of the Beholder: exploring the application of a “Neo-Institutional” approach to report the meaning and value generated by the State Library of South Australia*
Heather Robinson, Flinders University

2:30pm *The idea of audience: Conceptualizing Audience Engagement*
Simon Piening, Australian Stage Online

2:45pm Q&A

3:00pm *The Performing Audience: Capturing Relational Theatre Experience*
Dr Caroline Heim, Queensland University of Technology

3:45pm Afternoon tea

4:15pm *‘I don’t know why I cried, but I did’: Researching Affective Impact in Melbourne Theatre Company’s Education Programme*
Associate Professor Paul Rae and Abbie Trott, The University of Melbourne, Jeremy Rice, Melbourne Theatre Company

4:45pm Q&A

5:00pm Wrap up, Katya Johanson and Ben Walmsley

5:45pm Close & networking drinks



Abstracts

The Participating Audience

Lisa Walsh, Australia Council for the Arts

Every Australian should be able to experience the transformative power of the arts, no matter where they live, what language they speak, or how much they earn. The Australia Council for the Arts conducts a National Arts Participation Survey to track trends in arts engagement, and to provide insight into growth opportunities and barriers to access. This research is designed to broaden the conversation about the arts, and to inform policy, programs and investment in the arts and beyond. Lisa Walsh, the Council's Director of Research, will discuss trends in Australians' attitudes to the arts, and in our engagement as audiences and participants – including at festivals and online. Ms Walsh will outline how survey findings highlighted an opportunity to build audiences for First Nations arts, and the research program and sector capacity building that sprung from this. She will address the importance of audience research to arm the sector with information on participants, audiences and markets and to build the evidence base about the value of the arts to all Australians.

Lisa Walsh joined the Australia Council for the Arts in January 2016 as Director, Research and Knowledge Management. Prior to this Lisa was Head of Audience Research at the ABC for 13 years and was a member of the ABC's Senior Executive. Lisa has worked in market and social research for close to three decades. She holds a Masters in Applied Science (UTS), Graduate Diploma in Change Management (AGSM) and an Honours degree in Geography (Sydney University).



Audiences or publics; value or benefit: digging in the data for new ways of understanding audiences

Dr Tully Barnett, Flinders University and Dr Mark Taylor, University of Sheffield

Since 2013, Laboratory Adelaide has been implementing various versions of a willingness to pay, contingent value methodology survey instrument to access the views and valuing of user and non-user, local and non-local cultural publics in The Festival State (South Australia). The aim is to experiment with ways of talking about the value of arts and culture beyond ticket sales and attendance data. While no magic methodology exists to demonstrate to governments, funders, publics and other stakeholders the rationale for increased funding in arts and culture, we need interventions that recalibrate the notions of value and benefit to better serve arts and culture in the increasingly instrumental moment. This paper reports on the early stages of a collaboration between Laboratory Adelaide and Mark Taylor to delve beyond the traditional modes of representing contingent value methodology to see audiences and publics as co-constructors of value.

Dr Tully Barnett is a Lecturer in English in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University and Research Fellow with the ARC Linkage Project Laboratory Adelaide: The Value of Culture. Amongst other things, she publishes across cultural policy, digital humanities, and reading as a practice in and out of the tertiary classroom. She is the co- author, with Julian Meyrick, Robert Phiddian and Richard Maltby, of “Counting culture to death: an Australian perspective on culture counts and quality metrics” (2017). She serves on the boards of the Australasian Association of Digital Humanities and the Australasian Consortium of Humanities Research Centres.

Dr Mark Taylor is Q-Step Lecturer in Quantitative Methods (Sociology) at the Sheffield Methods Institute, University of Sheffield. His research interests are in the sociology of culture, in consumption, production, and education, and its relationship to inequality. He is currently working on AHRC-funded projects on social mobility into cultural and creative work, and on data, diversity, and inequality in the creative industries.

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***Imperatives in policy and planning for audience research:
The White Box tool to support evidence-based, outcome-
focussed work***

Dr. Kim Dunphy and John Smithies, Cultural Development Network
and RMIT University.

Current policy imperatives for governments and other arts funding agencies include the use of evidence to inform decision-making and a focus on outcomes in planning and service delivery. For the cultural sector, these requirements are particularly challenging, as outcomes of cultural activity, including performing arts, have traditionally been considered intangible and therefore immeasurable. Few schema or associated tools have been available for cultural agencies, including performing arts presenters, to utilise in planning and evaluating their work. Many tools that have been developed focus on measuring inputs (investment made), outputs (number of activities and participants) and quality measures (how the activity is rated or valued by audiences or others), rather than the fundamental question of outcomes (that is, what difference the arts experience makes to audiences).

The presentation introduces White Box, an online planning and recording tool developed for the cultural sector to catalyse use of evidence in planning and measure outcomes of cultural activities. Its potential to support cultural planners and programmers to (best) respond to community needs and increase chances of achieving desired outcomes is discussed. This includes a focus on the tool's usefulness to performing arts programmers through the consistent longitudinal data about audience outcomes it will eventually make available.

John Smithies has extensive experience working with and advising government in the management of cultural organisations and facilities. His current role is Executive Director of the Cultural Development Network (CDN), Melbourne, Australia, an independent organisation that supports local government in its role assisting local communities to make and express their own culture.

John's work with CDN has included the establishment of the National Local Government Cultural Forum as a partnership between the

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Federal Government, through the Australia Council for the Arts, and local government across Australia. A primary focus of the Cultural Forum is the development of an evidenced-based and outcomes-focused planning framework for local government and others in the arts sector, and a schema of measurable outcomes alongside an agreed set of inputs and outputs that are applicable across contexts and governments. The frameworks are currently being trialled in government, cultural organisations and major institutions across Australia and internationally, including 90 organisations funded through Creative Victoria's Organisations' Investment program. This work has led to the development of the White Box outcomes planning platform to be discussed in this presentation. John regularly delivers training programs on cultural planning and outcomes measurement of arts activities across Australia and internationally.

Exploring modern-day audience response to historical artworks through multi-pronged methods

Dr Amanda Krause and Professor Jane Davidson, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music + ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, The University of Melbourne.

Performance arts reflect and generate emotional experience; whether conveying emotion-rich descriptors that generate emotional expression, or eliciting emotional responses in performers or audience. Historical works, which form a significant part of arts repertoire, are contingent on historical conceptions of emotion, which underpin both their construction and reception at the time of production. Working in the ARC Centre for the History of Emotions, our research aims to consider what, if any, of these historical emotions are perceived and/or allied to the reception of historical works by modern audiences. Our investigations explore how audiences engage in historical productions ranging from an oratorio by Handel (e.g. a modern day staged production of Theodora) to a curated art gallery exhibition of a variety of artworks from the Early Modern period. We offer examples of the methods employed to access historically-understood emotion associated with the art works' creation and the modern audience experience. These methods include close reading of archival data, surveying modern audience's subjective emotional experiences through questionnaires, vox-pop interviews and real-time digital

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tracking. In this presentation, the resulting complex array of approaches that generate rich findings will be contextualized and discussed terms of challenges inherent to conducting audience research.

Dr Amanda E Krause is a Research Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions and Melbourne Conservatorium of music at The University of Melbourne. Her research interests concern the relationship between everyday arts engagement and well-being.

Professor Jane W Davidson is Professor of Creative and Performing Arts and Deputy Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions at The University of Melbourne. She has expertise in a wide range of music related research, including music facilitation, emotion and expression in performance, musical development, and music for health and well-being.

How to Study the Spectator's Process of Value Creation? A Case Study of Contemporary Dance Spectators

Saara Moio, University of Finland

How contemporary dance is valued by spectators and how to study this process? As a part of my on-going PhD research I have employed qualitative and creative methods for studying the meanings and values that spectators connect with contemporary dance. Applying the concept of co-creation of value and embodied understanding of experience and meaning-making I consider that for a spectator the process of value creation is about finding meaning and building a relationship to an art form. Meaning-making and value judgments are always part of this process, in which also emotions and feelings have a crucial role.

In the fall of 2015 I organized a case study with ten participants in connection with a performance in Zodiak Center for New Dance in Helsinki. With a combination of interviews and a creative workshop I have tried to go deeply into the meanings and values, which these spectators created in the process of watching and reflecting on the performance. Through presenting this case study, I discuss what kind of challenges I have faced with qualitative and creative research methods, and what these challenges imply for further research.

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Saara Moisio is a doctoral candidate of Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki. Besides the master's degree in theatre research, she has a bachelor's degree in business administration. The topic of her doctoral dissertation addresses the process of value creation in the audience experiences of contemporary dance performances, and how it can be studied qualitatively with creative methods. Before doctoral studies Moisio has worked in various organizations in the field of performing arts. Her work has included administration, marketing and communications. She has also published several reviews, interviews and articles about dance and dance research in the Finnish on-line dance journal Liikekieli.com. Currently, she is working full-time on her research.

The Artists' Audience

Ross Coulter

The "Audience" was a photographic project by Ross Coulter that took place in ninety-four gallery spaces in Melbourne between 2013 and 2016. Members of the local arts community were invited to attend a photo-shoot and were instructed to imagine viewing a performance art event. Drawing on the visual language of 1970s performance art documentation, the work constructs a selective photographic archive of an audience during that time. The series of 445 photographs was exhibited at the NGV in 2017. Ross will discuss the conceptual framework, participants' response and audience reception of the "Audience" project for the symposium.

Ross Coulter is a visual artist with a BFA (Hons) and MFA (Research) from the Victoria College of the Arts. He has exhibited widely in a variety of artist-run initiatives and public institutions both locally and internationally. Last year Ross's photographic series titled "Audience" was on display at the NGV as a part of the Festival of Photography. The recent focus of his work has been an exploration of photographic portraiture, performance, community participation and documentary photography. Ross has lectured in visual arts and photography for a several of years at different tertiary institutions including Monash University and Deakin University and has received numerous arts grants and awards.

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The Particularly Implicated Spectator: Authenticity, Closeness and Distance

Matthew Reason, York St John University (UK)

This paper examines two instances of particularly implicated spectatorship, where audiences watched performances that reflected back to them their own identity and lived experience. The examples occurred across two initially unrelated audience research projects, where spectators had a close connection to the content of the performance they were watching.

The first example occurred in 2015 when I interviewed both serving and veteran soldiers about their experience of Rosie Kay's contemporary dance performance *5 Soldiers* – presented in an active military barracks. The second involved focus groups with women prisoners after a performance in their prison of the Donmar Theatre's all-woman *The Tempest* – itself also relocated to a women's prison.

In each of these the audience experience consisting of watching a representation of their own experience – dancers pretending to be soldiers; actors pretending to be prisoners. Each entailed an experience of distance (their experience mediated through dance, or through Shakespearian language and narrative) but also of closeness and recognition. This paper brings the two examples together to explore questions relating to staging, attention to detail and authenticity. It proposes that the implicated spectator's experience of self-recognition entails experiences of both pleasure and trauma and produces a kind of self-reflective witnessing.

Matthew Reason is Professor of Theatre and Performance at York St John University (UK). His current research explores experiential and phenomenological responses to theatre and dance performance, including through qualitative and participatory audience. Publications include *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (Palgrave 2006), *The Young Audience: Exploring and Enhancing Children's Experiences of Theatre* (Trentham/IOE Press 2010), *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Contexts* (co-edited with Dee Reynolds, Intellect 2012), *Experiencing Liveness in Contemporary Performance* (co-edited with Anja Mølle Lindelof, Routledge 2016) and *Applied Practice: Evidence and Impact Across*

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Theatre, Music and Dance (co-edited with Nick Rowe, Bloomsbury 2017). For further information visit www.matthewreason.com

In the Eye of the Beholder: exploring the application of a “Neo-Institutional” approach to report the meaning and value generated by the State Library of South Australia

Heather Robinson, Laboratory Adelaide, Flinders University

The affordances of audience-based and stakeholder-driven qualitative approaches to developing clear understandings of the meaning and value generated by cultural institutions offer alternatives to the instrumentalist agenda of valuing arts and culture. Ben Walmsley has developed an approach to considering cultural value, proposing that measures of success for theatre companies be evaluated against the expectations and experiences of stakeholders (Whose value is it anyway? 2013). This inverts commercially driven quantitative methodologies to record and evaluate success. This paper will address issues highlighted in the cultural value literature (Holden 2006, Chiaravalotti & Piper 2011 Crossick & Kaszynska 2015,) to discuss emerging articulations of value from users of the State Library of South Australia, who share with theatre audiences a similar diversity and intangible intersubjective experience. This examination will consider if Walmsley’s Neo-institutional approach could be adapted to contextualise numbers-based regulatory requirements through narrative means to better reflect the value and meaning created by the library and its audiences.

Heather Robinson has extensive experience in the arts and cultural industry across Australia, specialising in cultural project management, strategic communications and developing communities of knowledge exchange. This paper is part of her PhD research exploring the meaning and value generated by the State Library of South Australia. Her doctorate is part of the Flinders University Laboratory Adelaide Project, exploring the non-pecuniary impacts of cultural institutions. Her early career in Melbourne began in heritage collections management and events with the National Trust of Australia (VIC), membership and events with the National Gallery Society of Victoria and later as Program Coordinator for the Australian Centre for Youth Literature at the State Library of Victoria. She lived and worked in WA and Los Angeles before returning to Australia in 2012. In 2013 she delivered

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the Adelaide Festival of Ideas (AFoI) as Associate Director. In 2015 she became a Board member of Adelaide Festival of Ideas Association Inc., and in 2016 was Executive Producer.

The Idea of Audience: Conceptualising Audience Engagement

Simon Piening, Australian Stage Online

The dominance of neoliberal ideology in cultural policy over the past thirty years has significantly impacted on the subsidised performing arts sector. Companies are increasingly expected to maximise revenue from the box office, resulting in less artistic risk-taking, less innovation, and fewer opportunities to diversify their audience. Consequently, the sector has invested heavily in improving management competencies, with responsibility for audience development inevitably falling to the marketing department. However, the way marketing personnel conceptualise the audience, and the kind of audience relationship they seek, may be quite different to the kind of audience relationship sought by the artists themselves. So whose idea of ‘the audience’ is driving audience development practices? What do arts workers understand by ‘audience engagement’? What sort of relationship do performing arts professionals want with their audience?

My study seeks to complement current audience research, which frequently focuses on the motivations and attitudes of audiences toward the arts, instead examining the attitudes of performing arts professionals toward the audience. Through in-depth interviews with professionals in the small to medium performing arts sector in Melbourne, this study seeks to better understand how performing arts professionals conceptualise their relationship with the audience, and the factors that influence their thinking.

Simon Piening is currently a PhD student at Victoria University examining the relationship between performing arts organisations and their audiences. He completed a BA in Performing Arts in 1991 and for many years worked as an actor and director in the small–medium performing arts sector in Melbourne. He completed post-graduate studies in Arts Management at the VCA/University of Melbourne, before working as an Assistant Manager at a suburban performing arts venue. In 2005 he founded Australian Stage Online, a niche online

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media outlet for the performing arts industry in Australia. He has a longstanding interest in the use of online technologies in the promotion of the performing arts and most recently completed a Master of Communication, with a minor thesis examining the use of social media by Australia's Major Performing Arts organisations. He has a particular interest in the early theatres of Melbourne and is incoming President for Theatre Heritage Australia, a not-for-profit organisation established in 1995 to foster greater knowledge and research into the history of Australian theatre.

The Performing Audience: Capturing relational theatre experience

Dr Caroline Heim, Queensland University of Technology

Previous attempts at describing the experience of the audience performer have been undertaken in terms of superimposing theories: Dolan's "utopian performatives", Rancière's spectator composed "poem" and Fischer-Lichte's "re-enchantment." Audience members, when interviewed, however, predominantly describe the phenomenon of their experience in visceral terms: the experience of theatre "makes you tingle," "gives you a rush" or "makes you spark."ⁱ We are finally valuing the "ordinary" audience member by asking them to describe, draw, compose or even perform their experience of a production. Audience studies often fail, however, to accurately contextualize the audience experience. The audience experience is relational. We are missing the point if we are not considering the theatrical encounter. In the theatre, Bourriaud's "rendez-vous" moments materialise not only in relation to the artwork but more so with the actors and characters during co-creation. It is a significant challenge for audience studies methodologies to consider the total theatrical experience and explore the relational, yet a highly rewarding step to take.

Capturing the relational can be undertaken by applying a cross-disciplinary methodology that combines, as a starting point: the phenomenology of audience experience, the phenomenology of actor's technique, and the psychology of relationships. I address the first component of this approach by discussing the significant role that audience performance has played in history: audience speak. Drawing from new research – case studies of productions and interviews with

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audience members and actors in New York, London, Paris, Stuttgart and Adelaide – I present the second and third components: actor speak and relationship speak. Twenty-first century audience researchers are uniquely positioned to explore multi-disciplinary methodologies to describe these relational experiences.

Dr Caroline Heim is a senior lecturer in theatre at Queensland University of Technology in Australia. She holds a PhD in Drama from The University of Queensland. Her research interests are in the area of audience reception and actor/audience relationships. Her first book *Audience as Performer: The Changing Role of Theatre Audiences in the Twenty-first Century* was published by Routledge in 2016. The research included interviews with over 100 audience members, 20 researcher-facilitated post show discussions and questionnaires all undertaken in mainstream theatrical capitals worldwide. She is currently interviewing actors and audience members for her new book which focuses on the phenomenology of the actor/audience conversations that create the “electric air” of live theatre to be published by Routledge next year. Her articles appear in *New Theatre Quarterly*; *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*; *Popular Entertainment Studies*; *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* and *Australasian Drama Studies*. Caroline was a theatre critic for *The Australian* in 2012-13. Before entering academia, Caroline worked as a professional actor on New York Stages winning a Drama League Award and receiving critical acclaim from *The New York Times*.

i Comments taken from audience members 2013/14.



'I don't know why I cried, but I did': Researching Affective Impact in Melbourne Theatre Company's Education Programme.

Associate Professor Paul Rae and Abbie Trott, The University of Melbourne, Jeremy Rice, Melbourne Theatre Company

On the face of it, 'affective impact' is a contradictory phrase. 'Affect' might be said to name all the qualitative, subjective, embodied, fleeting and downright unruly dimensions of audience experience that the 'impact agenda' would appear to disregard in favour of quantitative, explainable and actionable data. However, only the narrowest definitions of 'impact' could fail to register how deeply rooted in affective experience are those features of the theatrical event that are most transformative, intense, memorable or, conversely, boring or aggravating. It follows that a substantive understanding of 'impact' cannot be achieved without registering where and how 'affect' functions within the theatrical event. This is particularly important in the domain of theatre for young people, whose lives are equally characterized by the carefully prescribed criteria of academic success, and the emotionally challenging desire for self-discovery and self-definition.

In this two-part presentation, we explore some of the conceptual issues arising from both the contradictions and complementarities of 'affective impact', outline a methodology for researching it in practice, and explain preliminary findings from one such process. Our case study comprises three productions produced by the Melbourne Theatre Company for youth audiences: *I Call My Brothers* (2015) by Jonas Hassen Khemiri; *Melbourne Talam* (2017) by Rashma N. Kalsie; and *Hungry Ghosts* (2018) by Jean Tong. Having conducted a pilot research project with the first, and currently tracking the creative process of the third, our primary focus in this presentation will fall on rehearsal observation, performance analysis and audience research conducted on *Melbourne Talam*.

Jeremy Rice will introduce the Melbourne Theatre Company's Education programme, explaining its aims and objectives, describing its target audience, and providing details of its regional outreach. He will also explain the considerations underlying programming decisions, and how the initiative has changed over time.

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Abbie Trott will explain the research methodology, which involved conducting a drama workshop about being an audience member. The workshops were held several weeks after audience members had watched the performance, in order to explore what they were able to recollect, and how they had begun to make sense of the work in relation to the more general flow of their life experiences. In recognition of the multi-modal ways in which theatre experiences affect us, the workshop exercises comprised a range of practical and creative activities. Abbie will explain the activities and evaluate their significance for the research, as well as outlining how the activities were refined as the process went on.

Paul Rae will then expand the discussion to place audience responses to *Melbourne Talam* in the context of the larger timeframe of the creation and performance of the production. Drawing on rehearsal observation, production reports and interviews with the artists involved, Paul will consider how audience accounts of the show relate to the ways in which 'impact' was inscribed by the director and actors during the creative process and subsequent tour. He will focus in particular on where and how impact was anticipated and refined in the work by the artists involved, what the role of the audience was in crystallizing this in performance, and where artist and audience experiences of the work departed from each other most significantly.

Paul Rae is Associate Professor in Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of *Theatre & Human Rights*, and his monograph *Real Theatre: Essays in Experience*, will be published by Cambridge University Press later this year. Paul is also Senior Editor of *Theatre Research International*, and has published widely on contemporary theatre, and on the performance cultures of the Asia-Pacific region.

Jeremy Rice has over eleven years' experience as artistic director and executive officer of three key youth arts organisations: Barking Gecko Theatre Company (WA), Corrugated Iron Youth Arts (NT) and Shopfront Theatre for Young People (NSW). He completed a Master of Arts by Research at Edith Cowan University on the topic of Taboo Theatre for Teenagers. As a postgraduate student, he was a national finalist in the Three Minute Thesis competition and presented at the

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2011 NYU Symposium on Theatre for Young Audiences about his ongoing collaboration with Australian-Sudanese writer Afeif Ismail. Jeremy is currently Head of Education and Families at Melbourne Theatre Company.

Abbie Victoria Trott is an experienced stage and production manager working across community theatre, circus and multimedia performance, and a PhD candidate in Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is undertaking a longitudinal theatre reception study with young regional audiences to examine the impact of participatory media on their experience of contemporary theatre. Abbie completed her MPhil in Theatre Studies at the University of Queensland in 2016, where she researched co-presence in multimedia performance.
