

# Video Transcript

## Part 1 (6:49)

**Opening Title: Major Production Fund Pitch Panel  
Feedback & Discussion  
20 November 2008**

### **WHAT ARE THE KEY AREAS YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN A MAJOR PROJECT?**

Speaker 1: Robyn Archer, Performer, Writer, Artistic Director (**RA**)

Speaker 2: Kristy Edmunds, Artistic Director, Melbourne International Arts Festival (**KE**)

Speaker 3: Fergus Linehan, Festival Director & Chief Executive, Sydney Festival (**FL**)

Speaker 4: Lissa Twomey, Artistic Director, New Zealand International Arts Festival (**LT**)

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#### **START OF RECORDING**

**RA:** It's really hard to say exactly what you're looking for before you see it and tastes change all the time and I'm afraid the bear truth is that every festival you apply to, every time you are trying to create a major production, there are tastes involved and some people like this kind of thing and some people like that. I suppose all you can say is that you are looking for a level of skill that is good in whatever form it is and if it's not good, you're putting that in a context that comments on the striving for excellence. I certainly think that you are looking for a passion that excites you incredibly. I mean in the end, that's the main thing but you can get very tiny projects that are comply passionate but that might be somebody's definition of a major production.

It might be a very small thing but so passionately felt and so intensely communicated that it becomes a big experience and therefore, it becomes a major production. I mean, there have been one person shows that create incredible effects. So I suppose in the end, what we're looking for in a major production is something that's authentic. Something that's not borrowed. Something that's not particularly clichéd unless you are making fun of the cliché and contextualizing that

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in a particularly brilliant way. Then a level of skill because in the end, you can say “I like this” and “I don’t like this”, that’s kind of neither here nor there but you can, in some ways, weigh what’s been done up against other people who have been in similar areas. You can, to some extent, say whether a singer is singing well or not. Whether a violinist is playing well or not or if they’re deliberately not playing or singing well, it’s for a very passionate reason. So you can never be quite clean cut about these things. I know that’s a difficult answer for anybody, but level of skill. A great idea is always a good start. I mean, not necessarily even a new idea, but an idea that challenges, that shocks is something that we look for and then executed brilliantly in whatever form it takes.

**KE:** You know, what Rowen was saying — it’s sort of like that thing of often when you have a great idea, you are passionate about it. It’s going to translate to us. It’s going to translate to us in one way or another. What we do with that is entirely a separate set of conundrums, as you articulated. To me, it’s that difference between the artist who is in pursuing their idea and they’re pursuance of communication for resourcing of their idea. There is a roadmap and if you think that you have to fit your idea into that particular set of levels and layers and that’s all you do, I’m never going to find your idea. I’m going to find that you filled out a form really well.

So to me, it’s about that sense of knowing somehow, how to jump off of that page or off of that DVD or off of that thing and get to this other thing which is the compass. How is your compass aligned for the maturing of your idea and the vision and that sort of thing? Do you have a compass or is your compass spinning because you’re just trying to get the Guernsey? I look for those sign posts that say “This person actually – there is the idea. There is the commitment to it. There is the passion for it. There is the ability to talk about why this idea, why now? Or, “When am I ever going to get this ...”. Something that is absolutely not addressing just the criteria, or just the way of audiences or just the way of gallery spaces, or just the way of screened culture but “really the way of that aesthetic vision must live in this world and here is how I am going to try and get you to feel it in the way I feel it”. Because even if you can’t get the resourcing in that moment, or you can’t get the gig necessarily in that moment, you leave with the person or you leave with the people a desire in us to advocate it beyond that circumstances but broadly out into other colleagues and other people who are not at the table. If we have enough that

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comes from them, then we will know how to start passionately knitting together what we think is going on. But if we can't activate because they've just kept everything nicely on the map, the opportunity is gone.

**FL:** Particularly in relation to this fund where, I think people exist within, you know, everyone exists within their own kind of cultural ecosystem and hopefully with something like this, it has that kind of slight shift for people because what this is encouraging is for them to just step outside of that and people get very bogged down because there are so many hoops we've all got to jump through to get our work done. There is the possibility of just dreaming and that if there is sort of that idea which has just been sitting, brewing away at the back of your mind but just the usual structure is be it funding or venues or whatever else, only allow you to do something else, then it's the possibility of actually looking to broaden your horizons. That might not be scaled, that might be just something that needs a little bit more development time. It could be a whole range of things and the whole issue of scale is not just 20 people on stage. It can be just as much about practice that requires more resourcing in all sorts of areas. At its best, that's what you really hope for is that what you'll end up is a whole series of projects which kind of run along side and compliment what's going on around Western Australia but at the same time, kind of create a few kind of shifts and thinking and just encourage people to think outside of the way they will usually kind of present their work over the course of the year.

**LT:** It'd be easier if we had a formula to say "This is what we're looking for". I would encourage artists to look beyond the criteria that's on the page because that's just a set of guidelines.

In terms of work, it comes down to what Robyn, Kristy and Fergus said, it's the idea. That's the germ. That's the kernel. What really excites me is when I come across an artist with a real passion for an idea that I think "Well, if they're not going to get the money for it, they're going to go and slit their wrists because it's that important to them". But having said that, it must have the ability to engage with audiences and work beyond that. There are certain practical things that we're all aware of. At the end of the day, we have to be able to produce this work. Those elements shouldn't get in the way of the artists wanting to realise that idea.

**END OF RECORDING**

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