
Video Transcript

Part 4 (9:14)

For a project at concept stage, to what extent do the logistics need to be confirmed?

Speaker 1: Robyn Archer (**RA**)

Speaker 2: Kristy Edmunds (**KE**)

Speaker 3: Robyn Archer (**RA**)

Speaker 4: Kristy Edmunds (**KE**)

Speaker 5: Robyn Archer (**RA**)

Speaker 6: Lissa Twomey (**LT**)

Speaker 7: Fergus Linehan (**FL**)

Speaker 8: Robyn Archer (**RA**)

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RA: This first thing to say this is two stage anyway which is very sensible, so the application comes in and then there is a small amount of money to be able to see a pitch and I think it's within the panel's discretion also to be able to say, "Okay, that was really good, but we still need to have another look at another stage and that quite often happens, with major productions is that you have real faith in it and it is tracking well, but even when it's tracking well, you still want to see one more stage before you totally commit to it, especially if it's large amounts of money. So I think it's not necessary to have everything in place, I think intention is probably a good idea about, if I haven't exactly pinned down the kind of person that I want, these are the kinds of people that I'm thinking about and you would then give the seed money I suppose to say when you come back there's other things we want to see. I think there's stepped processes are quite an acceptable way of doing things these days. In fact most presenters want to see a number of stages before they'll invest heavily. So I don't think it all has to be pinned down by any means. The reason for naming certain collaborators is to get everyone excited. It's about saying, "I've got these

people on my team and they're really going to do it." And that's for an artist with a big track record or one with none at all. If somebody that we've never heard has suddenly brought in a designer or a composer, you start thinking, "Hmm that person must have something as well as clearly a good idea. So there are a number of ways in which you could inspire confidence I think when people are looking at a project. And just the exciting combination of people is one of the reasons sometimes why you want to give a project the go ahead because you really believe that that collaboration is going to create something very exciting.

KE: I'd say, in terms there's the creative team and that kind of concept stage of collaborators and it's true, everyone's demonstrating, they're taking a leap of faith and they're on board. But I also think that it's worthwhile for a concept stage project, whether it's an exhibition or an object or a performance, or you know because we're working across a lot of form and genre here. But what I would say is knowing the kind of organisation, or the kind of artistic director or the kind of curator that you are going to need to collaborate with as opposed to following that kind of desire trap which is, "If I can get this made, I'm sure it will go to the Barbican." You have to know why the Barbican is who you're aiming at or you would have to know why Melbourne Festival or ten days on the island or why Cultural Centre in Alice Springs, and you actually need to know where and why you want the life of your work to go within these other presentational modes which doesn't mean you have to always have a commitment of a curator, it depends on how far along you are, but if you don't have a sense of why you want your work seen in these contexts, then desire is all we have to rely on and the amount of times we have, it's like, "Well if I can just get it done I'm sure it will be at the Pompadou. It's not going to happen so if it is going to the Pompadou, well get that in your application but if it's that you feel like there's something that you know about that organisation or that festival, that resonates with the calibre of the work that you're generating, I think it signifies something that matters.

RA: I also think that you would be surprised how much conversation goes on in the festival team or the presenting team about which venue and what context to present a work in. I think most people would sometimes see, most directors will sometimes see a work that might not be complete or finally honed but they still will think the germ of the idea is fantastic and therefore, "I'd like to present it but I'll give it this

context, I won't put it on the main stage, I'll put it somewhere else or I'll call it a work in progress" or a work that seems modest can suddenly have the full spotlight on it because you think a large house and a big audience will work for it but I think most festival directors I've come across are very careful about the way they contextualise the work in their program so in a sense, even if it's good if you know the festival and you know the audience, but I think you can also be sure that your work will be taken up in quite unexpected ways sometimes with some really productive output by the presenter saying, "I've got a way that we could do this, you could maybe shift it a little bit this way or that, I'd like to put it in that venue, could you compromise in that sense?" A lot of things turn out differently...

KE: When it's turning right at that page as a concept. Do you know what I mean? We'll have less ability to collaborate creatively. But that to me that artist or that producer knowing who, it becomes sort of important.

RA: Yeah, just to say I'm going to travel the world with the show is – I mean okay, dream on...

LT: I think it's what we're looking at are projects and a fairly big investment, I won't put a dollar on it but none of us want to see an artist just looking to present a project in their own hometown without some idea of how they might take it somewhere else or a return on that investment to put it very crudely in financial terms. But one season isn't enough I think that's the start of the process, that's the start of the journey. So I think in developing work in their own mind is to look further afield as to where it might go, who it might suit, who the potential collaborators might be, whether they're on board at the initial stage as a financial partner or whether it's a commitment to look at the project and take it beyond after it's been produced, but we're interested in hearing about those connections that the artist or the company think they'd have nationally and internationally.

FL: It's interesting to note that like really major artists, household names in terms of the international festival circuit, but they and their management spend so much time, just constantly engaging with their partners around the world and you know their partners around the world do not always come through on them. Do you know what I mean? I think some people think if you're a major international director or choreographer you just say you want to do it and it happens. It really doesn't, that

investment in time and effort and the sort of companies I think who have really managed to successfully understand what that touring circuit is all about, spend a huge amount of time in advance, going and meeting and talking and talking and for the most part people will meet you or they will talk to you and that makes all the difference in the world because it's also understanding the context. It isn't just some sort of competition. In a lot of cases presenters are looking for a very specific piece of work that will work within say a community or a venue or something else and it's only by that constant travelling and in general the companies are going to be successful at it when they were little baby companies they just got on planes and they just spent their time going around. I think if you don't make that personal commitment yourself, it's hard to see how you're going to be able to follow through because as well as that by the time you are really going to present major work you'll be so busy you probably won't have the time then. So I think it's building up that network over a long period of time is really, really important.

RA: I think it's also really exciting when you get a proposal that says, I've made connections with Finland, South America, and sometimes they can be quite small institutes or unexpected little companies or some strange thing especially if you've never heard of it. That network of partnerships and you're saying, "We're making this work together because it really fits all of us" is as exciting as the idea itself the idea that you've developed some networks and you can see where the work, or so everybody has been saying, where the work is developed, it's not just an ambition to be in Avignon or Edinburgh or New York or the Barbican. There are actually very specific and deep felt reasons and I think that goes to the thing that we've discussed a lot during this panel and it's about the level of passion and understanding you have about your own work. It's not simply a superficial opportunism if you like but there are big amounts of money to be had, "I'm going to invent a big project so I can get lots of money", so you know from time to time all artists have that feeling, I've just got to get the money together and do a big project. But in fact I think we're scrutinising our projects to the extent that that kind of filigree of connection springs out the deep understanding of what your project is about and why you want to do it and for whom you're doing it. And I think that's greatly appreciated I think that is evidence of major thinking, thinking on a major scale not on a mean and superficial scale.

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