Redefining Places for Art

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Abstract

Observing an apparent shift in the relationship between place and performance in creative work and audience behavior, Redefining Places for Art explored whether, how, why, and to what extent artists, administrators and audiences consider places as an essential aspect of the twenty-first century performance experience. The research examined six clusters of arts organizations in Queensland (Australia), from larger 'flagship companies' to small regional arts initiatives. Extensive interviews with key artistic decision-makers, focus groups with audience members, and a study of statistical data confirmed that no matter what their experience with performance, Queensland audiences are highly discerning about place. Important insights uncovered through this research include an increasing desire among audiences to curate their own experiences, artists and administrators seek to negotiate place alongside production values and flexibility, and the realization that arts policies and funding may not yet fully reflect the current dynamic relationship between place and performance.

Keywords: *Performance, Place, Access, Engagement, Facilities, Technology*

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Introduction

Recent years have seen the performing arts experience an apparent shift in the relationship between performance and place in creative work and in audience behavior. While some established venues and companies have been lamenting a lack of audience engagement with the performing arts, a vibrant alternative circuit of performance spaces seems to have emerged, attracting audiences to performance in settings which are more flexible, and often less formal. In Queensland, this is evidenced by the rise in number of and attendance at outdoor festivals, the refurbishment of industrial spaces to accommodate performances of various kinds, increased staging of location-based performances, and, as is the case elsewhere, the rise of online participation in (and consumption of) the performing arts. Often, these trends do not only constitute a physical shift, but also one of approach, allowing audiences to play a more active role in curating their individual experience of the performing arts.

One of the particular challenges for cultural activity in Queensland is the sheer size and dispersed nature of the population: Queensland is one of the few states in Australia where more of the population live outside the capital city (Brisbane) than in it. Although it might seem reasonable that performance should be shared equitably across the state, the reality is quite different. There are a few regional hubs which to differing extents, act as mini-centres of cultural activity, their local governments investing in performance spaces and communities supporting the development of small-to-medium companies. Yet despite these regional hubs, Brisbane has the largest number and greatest diversity of performance venues. This is the cause of some sensitivity: regional Queensland does not automatically see the State capital as having sole right to cultural infrastructure and activity.

Statistics reinforce the notion that cultural tastes are changing. In Queensland, for example, visitor numbers for alternative spaces show convincing growth over the past decade, while the more conventional venues report stable numbers or even a decline when measured against a substantial population growth in the State. Traditional or so-called elite art forms are struggling to retain audiences as they compete with musicals, digital and online cultural products and performances, the popularity of festivals, and community-based events. Increasingly, a sense of localized identity and a sense of place and belonging are found at the core of cultural activity which more and more frequently takes place outside sanctioned arts and cultural centres, in alternative kinds of venues. Such trends pose challenges for governments as they commit to cultural development, diversity and engagement, on which *Redefining Places for Art* sheds some light.

Queensland government strategies recognise that there is a blurring of boundaries within the arts sector: between commercial and not-for-profit activities, established cultural infrastructure and independent artists and organizations, audiences and artists. "This view of the sector as a complex and interdependent 'ecosystem' is forging new thinking, new practices and new business models" (Arts Queensland 2009, 12). A key government strategy is the development of new kinds of spaces and places for performance, by increasing 'access to traditional and non-

traditional public spaces and facilities' (17), integrating 'arts and cultural spaces into non-traditional environments' (19), creating facilities, venues, spaces precincts and festivals that are accessible, flexible, sustainable, affordable, digitally compatible, integrated into local cultural planning, and catalysts for urban and regional renewal (19). In short, "Demand driven investment in cultural infrastructure – built and digital – will ensure the state's creative spaces remain accessible, functional and lively places for artists and communities." (19)

The organizations to which this strategy applies include those in this study: the major performing arts organizations (Opera Queensland, Queensland Ballet, Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Queensland Theatre Company); small-to-medium (s2m) performing arts organisations; community festivals such as the Brisbane Festival, Queensland Music Festival, Laura Aboriginal Dance and Cultural Festival and the Dreaming; venues such as the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) and the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts; Indigenous cultural training, performance and events; and youth arts. These policies have caused a proliferation of cultural activity across artforms and across the state – all vying for a share of increasingly sparse funding as well as competing with new artforms such as festivals, community cultural events and experimental and emerging activities.

Such trends are not confined to Queensland but reflect changes in cultural policy, arts funding and the cultural spectrum internationally. Culture has become central to the political agenda, increasingly centred on cultural identity, building a sense of community, cultural difference, and cultural activities which develop and reflect a sense of place. In short, there has been a cultural shift away from traditional and elite arts towards culture that can be consumed and appreciated by everyday communities as part of community life and collective pride. This has challenged nineteenth century models of culture and mechanisms of arts funding and support away from central direct government largesse and the building and maintenance of iconic cultural edifices (opera houses, cultural centres, and so on) towards the diversification of sources of support and supplementation by commercial activities and value adding. There has been a concerted effort to supplement or replace government sources of funding with sponsorship and partnership arrangements as well as engaging in commercial activities (such as merchandising) and enlisting the incorporation of volunteers, community groups and 'ambassadors'. After a generation or two of neglect, the importance of cultural education in schools and engagement with youth in cultural production has also been prioritized.

Thus has emerged a tapestry of predominantly mainstream art forms which play with the relationship between place and performance to create a new artistic experience or the engage audience -existing or new- in ways that enhances their experience, often with a greater sense of agency on the part of the otherwise passive spectator. The underlying thought is that this development is potentially of great importance in ensuring and sustaining a vibrant performing arts scene in Australia, and perhaps should drive policy and funding in decades to come.

For this project, the Queensland performing arts sector was divided into seven main clusters, each with specific characteristics: major urban and regional arts venues; flagship companies; major festivals; small-to-medium Brisbane-based organizations; s2m regional organizations; community-focused festivals; and emerging, experimental and online events. The research comprised six key elements across these clusters: a literature review of the most important sources discussing performance and place; an in-depth case study of one organization representative of each cluster; extensive interviews with creators and producers; a careful analysis of policy documents and reports; a statistical analysis of relevant audience data; and a series of focus group discussions with audience members.

This study delivered seven in-depth case studies on the practice of and drivers for negotiating the relationship between performance and place; a framework connecting quantitative data to a matrix of choices and influences, including perceptions of accessibility, the balance between heritage and innovation, and considerations of 'selling' quality versus public appeal; and a user-friendly template to replicate this research for other places and disciplines. It provides policy makers, funding bodies and arts organizations with practical tools to address drivers for change in the way the arts are experienced in contemporary Queensland, and delivers a model for mapping similar phenomena elsewhere. This paper offers a summary of the more significant findings.

Place and Performance
On the surface, the relationship between place and performance may seem to be driven primarily by physical structures, but at a deeper level it is shaped by ideas. Considerable attention is always devoted to creating the best possible setting for the performing arts, and performance spaces not only shape the terms of production, they have also the potential to influence reception, and consequently the likelihood of success for a performance. Put succinctly, "The role of art is to transform spaces in places, the public into people." (Miles and Adams 1989, 4)

In order to be meaningful, a place must develop a relationship with people. The actual place in which performance occurs may bring with it various levels of meaning. Indeed, place is "a space to which meaning has been ascribed" (Carter et al. 1993, xii). Theorists endorse the concept of place as more than merely physical or geographical. Each place represents a tapestry woven from those historical and social elements (communities) which have shaped it over time. Spaces become places "as they become 'time-thickened'" (Crang 1998, 102), and specific places might have "different meanings for different individuals or groups" (Clark 1998, 112). This study confirmed that the bond between place and community is constantly evolving in response to the imagination of those who influence or impact upon each such relationship.

Whilst true for all artforms, this is particularly so for the performing arts, which build their work around (and in) places, some very specific. Among the performing arts the places that have traditionally cultivated artistic prestige have been located in cultural icons like concert halls, opera houses, and theatres, most of them

built on the nineteenth-century European model. At great expense, and despite the fact that many of them struggle financially, we continue to build such edifices, and subsidise their operations. "Because a prime characteristic of a flagship cultural project is its iconic quality, the buildings are typically designed to be big and flashy. However, large-scale facilities require a major annual investment toward building and maintenance and operations, which can deflect funding away from programming, education and outreach" (Grodach 2008, 510).

This predilection for iconic places for performance is relatively recent in history. Private houses and royal courts originally were the places for performance, the latter "largely to the benefit of the well-heeled" (Evans 2001, 19). Over time, the parallel emergence of theatres for the upper classes alongside the pleasure gardens, fairs, music halls and cinemas which were "open to all who cared to pay the entrance money" (59) led to a "social and spatial divide" (Evans 2001, 59). To varying degrees, this divide - including barriers experienced among popular forms of performance - persists today, with studies confirming that attempts by venues to increase demand from non-users of elite arts facilities have largely been unsuccessful, the barriers to participation remaining "deep-seated" (117).

Attraction and Access

It is therefore not surprising that access emerged as a key issue in this study. The term applies equally to barriers brought about by social mindsets as it does to the ability of audience members to become aware of a venue, locate it, and pay for a ticket. This study found that specific performance etiquette may be responsible for alienating audiences. Concert halls carry expectations of behavior, both social and musical, which may isolate those unfamiliar with one or the other. For example, the ritual of the solo piano performance isolates the soloist from the audience, exaggerating the status of the performer. This isolation is a social one, eliminating the need for interaction with the audience, and further exacerbating the gap between performer and audience (Kingsbury 1988, 125). Less formal performances spaces have the capacity to reduce, if not eliminate this gap. Whilst the proscenium performance space remains the most likely 'new' facility to be built, the range of available places for performance has expanded to include the renovated and rejuvenated, coupled with an increase in foyer events which may transform audience expectations of elitist facilities.

Smaller and flexible spaces may be more accessible to a wider audience because they do not necessarily carry the same expectations. This study found artistic organizations choosing to engage with a broader community; and communities responding with increased interest in diverse places for experiencing the performing arts. Clearly, the dynamic between a performance and its audience shifts in different contexts, and deserves specific consideration. There are implications in this for education on a number of levels: inferences that the classroom might be the first point of access for widening audiences; suggestions for professional education which is more open to flexible engagement with audiences; and potentials for educating audiences of different ages.

Access may be restrained by inhibitions about venues which with audiences are not familiar. Physical issues like location and effectiveness of public transport, car parking and ease of access (steps, lifts) may influence audience motivation, but equally so audience incentive may be affected by a sense of belonging to or isolation from a building, or location. Indigenous people are less likely to be found in iconic places. This research uncovered one young Indigenous woman from suburban Brisbane who expressed delight and pride when taken to experience Indigenous dancers performing in the otherwise-imposing Queensland Performing Arts Centre. For her, the connection to place emanated from the performers, with whom she shared familiar culture.

Most venues in Queensland are single-purpose arts facilities (for example, a theatre), and multi-discipline arts and cultural centres (such as those single venues with varying spaces). Since 2008, Arts Queensland has also been exploring the potential of arts hubs such as those found in Canada and the USA, and not unlike the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts which serves as an arts and cultural incubator in Brisbane. Acknowledging the benefit of such models, the Arts Queensland research (2008) concedes the need for effective resourcing of such facilities, meaning the research has yet to yield tangible outcomes. Even so, within the remaining diversity of venues across Queensland, there exists a hierarchy of models defined by expectations, funding, and governance.

Where there is an emphasis on flexibility and accessibility, the iconic place may not be the answer, either for the audience or for the creators of performance. Prestige does not necessarily insure venues against the impact of any cultural change which affects the performances associated with them. This study confirms that s2m organizations need more affordable and flexible spaces in order to meet audience expectations of affordable and accessible programming. This is an argument which may also be applied to larger flagship companies. With few places capable of meeting production requirements for large performances, Queensland is restricted to limited seasons of visiting productions. For every visiting production that QPAC accepts, there are fewer weeks available to the local companies which rely on QPAC spaces to present their own work.

Whilst places for performance might be mapped on a continuum from static to flexible, this study found gaps in what is available along that continuum in Queensland. With an obvious predilection for outdoor performances, the notion of permanent (or even mobile) infrastructure which would reduce the cost of setting up the physical necessities for some artforms (for example, power, sound, lighting, performer facilities) in both popular (and, if mobile, remote) settings would seem to have some potency. Somewhere in the middle of the continuum of need lies the creative hub, with a view to supporting performance needs for a variety of purposes.

It is not only the number and type of places available for performance, but the frameworks under which they operate which impacts on their capacity to meet the needs of performance organizations. The range of governance models across

Queensland extends from private ownership and management through to public spaces managed by government officers (and offices). This study has found some models to be more responsive to creative and audience needs than others. The crucial differences relate to management's capacity to appreciate (if not actively engage in) discussion about creative issues; and their freedom to invite, and respond to artistic and community needs.

Edifice and Engagement

Within this complexity, it is inevitable that issues of place and community will exist, and within that context, 'community' may not necessarily imply a homogenous self-contained group (Carter et al. 2002, 2). Lyndon Terracini (2007) acknowledges this complexity by insisting on the necessity of finding out "what makes [people] tick" because "it is our responsibility to create work which resonates immediately with the ordinary citizen" (21). Terracini likens the relationship between art and the ordinary citizen to "what Aboriginal Australians have always done, told stories about their country, their people, and their everyday activities, which are then passed on by the 'story keepers' of their place" (21). Through his work as a festival director in metropolitan and regional Queensland, Terracini successfully exploited the notion that every place has not only its own history but also its stories of place: its own culture. In so doing, he brought about a significant attitudinal change to local culture, particularly in some regional centres. By consulting with the local people, and designing his artistic product on local stories, Terracini has raised the level of awareness of local culture in many regional and metropolitan centres of Queensland, allowing change -sometimes enduring change- to develop.

Thus, a significant shift in cultural policy has occurred as traditional class divisions that positioned art as the privilege of the elite have been challenged by a focus on cultural democracy – with its mantras of access and equity, audience development and community enrichment. The framework of contemporary Queensland cultural policy and the performing arts reflects this increasing importance of concepts of community, identity and place. Given relevant opportunity, cultural activity may reveal previously concealed local and regional resources, and the collective belonging where community is involved in performance generates energy which is rarely related to the price of a ticket.

In this study, artists and audiences alike acknowledge that performance has the potential to transform a place, and to give meaning to it which might be either positive or negative. However, simply being in a place is not enough: performance does not automatically realise any potential a particular place might offer. The study uncovered ephemeral moments: cockatoos rising off the lake as a performance began at Karnak Playhouse, and kangaroos bounding through the dawn as the Queensland Music Festival commenced at Winton in 2007. In these examples, what the place provides adds magic in a way that cannot be planned. But this study also found that there is more to the transformation than fortuitous moments of enchantment: place transforms art when real connections are made between art and place, between the performance and audience in that place. Such was the case when the creation of a musical fence in regional Winton transformed

the attitudes of hardened locals (Terracini 2007, 8), and when bobcats from a mining company danced in Mt Isa, building town ownership of this extraordinary art, and demanding its return for a subsequent festival (Lancaster et al 2010, 81). This example from Lyndon Terracini's Queensland Music Festival in 2001 demonstrates that embedding a performance in the local interests, in the local culture, having it emerge from local stories, linking it to local people has a more transformative effect on place, on the art, and on the community. In Mt Isa, the whole town was the performance stage. Involved with its planning and production, local people found it difficult to escape the inevitability of and anticipation about the performance which took shape before their eyes, in their midst, and in their minds during months of preparation. Bobcats Dancing therefore had an enduring effect, engaging 18,000 people. Whilst this research has confirmed such transformations are possible, it has also noted that they are not essential for performance to satisfy an audience.

Virtual Places

Of increasing significance is the impact of less-easily defined places for performance, such as those found among online and social networks, some of which never meet physically. Technology has transformed the notion of place, having "its most profound effect when it alters the ways in which people come together and communicate" (Smith and Kollock 1999, 4). Interactive performance online has been a possibility ever since 1997 when William Duckworth made the first interactive work Cathedral available online with virtual instruments. Although not all online performance is interactive, it does nonetheless attract an audience roughly of the same size as 'traditional culture vultures' in the United Kingdom (Arts audiences... 2008, 35). According to this study undertaken for the Arts Council of England, Bedroom DJs do not attend arts events, but do engage online in a range of creative activities which includes playing a musical instrument, and dancing (35). Their place of engagement is most often cyberspace. If they do engage physically, they are more likely to respond to events which are 'creative', 'entertainment', or 'social' (35).

The internet brings a new space into play, and internet users "are in the process of constructing a very different 'audience', with different practices, expectations, materials, tools and technologies" (Banks 2002, 189). Not only does online performance use a new space, it creates a new relationship between audience and artists, promoters and producers. By way of example, in August 2007, the South Bank Parklands in Brisbane became a theatre in the round for a high-tech opera, iOrpheus, conceived and written by composer William Duckworth and media artist Nora Farrell. The notion of place was woven into this event on a number of levels: the high-tech contemporary performance founded on a work emerging from Greek mythology and formalized centuries before, placed itself in an enduring virtual space, across history; the World Wide Web provided a place for creative sound activity, engaging hundreds of people from the online world; participants in cyberspace using laptops, iPods and mobile phones combined to create more performance spaces, some fixed and others moving around, creating ribbons of sound. More tangible were the soloists, ensembles and dancers across five sites in

the Parklands which were the physical stages for performers and park visitors on that balmy Friday afternoon, as dusk was settling over the Brisbane River.

Developments in technology challenge and inspire performance. This study confirms that just as audiences are excited by special effects generated by new media, so are artists inspired by them. The challenge for companies, if not financial, is almost always logistical. There are as many times when the organization wants what the venue can't provide as there are times that the venue has the capacity to do much more than the company requires or understands. In this study it was not unusual to have organizations proudly claim to be using new media, when the reality is that they use projection and lighting effects. The art itself occurs without technology, but is enhanced by it.

Performance and Place-Making

Whether the performance takes place online or onstage, there is a three-part relationship between the creator (whether composer, choreographer, playwright, designer or director), the performer(s) and the audience. it is the performers who make the work exist "because without them the music would remain nothing more than the black marks on the score, the choreography a set of instructions without movement and the script a collection of unspoken sentences (Graham 2005, 149). From this perspective, the performance itself happens in an extra place - the soundscape, or the headspace in which the performers imagine and realize the work, and audiences receive it. That place where the performance exists is shaped also by the level of receptivity among the audience - their readiness to receive the performance. A variety of situational factors might shape audience readiness, including "the temperature in the theater, the comfort of the seating and the lighting in the hall. ...[even] the composition and character of the audience itself (e.g. experience level, cultural alignment with the artist)" (Brown and Novak 2009, 44). Research into the stimuli affecting audience decision-making describes captivation, anticipation, intellectual stimulation, spiritual value, aesthetic growth, social bonding, and emotional resonance as components in the amalgam which affects audience response to performance. Their findings suggest that "Impact is simply too unpredictable, and too much depends on the performance itself. Even when audiences have moderate to high levels of readiness, they may report low levels of impact" (Brown and Novak, 78). Given that readiness to receive might be affected by factors beyond even the performer's control, the combined result of all these influences might affect the place in which the performance exists each time it occurs. This may explain "why the same program in two different locations generates different levels of Captivation" (Brown and Novak, 44).

Some situational factors which influence audience readiness relate specifically to place, for example, those related to physical comfort in the venue. It is not surprising then that Brown and Novak suggest that programming unfamiliar performance work might best be done in venues which are more likely to meet these physical needs, those which are familiar, comfortable, maybe even local, are known factors which might become "pathways into the art forms" for new audiences (55). By selecting a venue which meets audience expectations of access and

physical comfort, performance companies may be part-way towards achieving audience receptiveness. That less tangible 'readiness' which comes from audience experience, both personal and corporate, is more likely to be achieved by drawing the audience into the experience, developing anticipation through interaction before and after the performance (78). Further, social bonding - which might occur with other audience members, and also with performers - plays an influential role on readiness to receive a performance (59). The complex dynamics of audience readiness can be equally relevant to virtual audiences, influenced by such elements as personal subjectivity, passion, motivation, and enjoyment.

Each performance place has its own issues of access and relevance to the community it serves. External factors, such as the design of concert halls, have exhibited aspects of human relationships by exuding images of wealth, power and exclusion of the 'outside' world, communicating clear class divisions between the audience and performer (Small 1998, 25-27). Yet, placing a performance in a non-traditional space may "break down conventional barriers and create new relationships, not only between actors and audience, but within audiences themselves as they arrive together for a new experience in a new space" (Rider 2009, 4). Whilst creating art in a new space may be challenging, the performance "becomes then what it should always be – a celebration of our shared humanity, feeding the spirit as well as the intellect and emotions, something that perhaps we need now more than ever" (4).

Redefining Places for Art offers undeniable evidence that it is possible to set the scene for a favorable audience experience. Audience members articulated expectations relative to the place in which performance is set. To the participants in this study, iconic venues like QPAC suggest status and -for some- set the scene for a special night out. The same is obvious for regional participants who view their local proscenium stage as a place which implies quality, in both the performances presented there and in the service available. This research found that quality of service and facilities available at any place for performance are to a large degree filters through which the audience experiences the performance. Poor parking or a long queue at the bar has the potential to set the scene for, and color the response to, what might happen in the performance space. Expectations accompany the audience into the space. Whether about the artform or any etiquette related to it, whether aligned with confidence or insecurity, contentment or discomfort, how an audience member feels during the performance may affect not only their engagement with that performance, but also their likeliness to respond favorably to another of the same kind. There is the suggestion that, whilst some participants welcome their expectations of dressing up and making a special effort for a performance perceived to be associated with status or just a good night out, there are those isolated by negative perceptions of what an event might entail. Equally this research found that the notion of art for art's sake is not widely preserved. Rather, there is an acceptance among many participants that performing arts events offer connections that extend beyond the expected.

Among the participants in this study was an obvious desire to experience the unexpected, and a positive response to dramatic effect which had been specifically manipulated by the producers. This study uncovered clear attempts by performance companies to use place as a vehicle for bringing the audience into the action. For example, there was a positive response to Opera Queensland's choice of the Conservatorium Theatre in Brisbane for a more confronting effect through perceived proximity to the action in *Fidelio*, such as would not have been the experience in QPAC's Lyric Theatre. Likewise, audiences in regional Cairns appreciated the dramatic effect of *The Kirsk* presented in the Centre of Contemporary Art instead of the larger Cairns Civic Centre, just as the Toowoomba audience did for the same work set in a small performance space in the small town of Oakey rather than the large space at the Empire Theatre in Toowoomba itself. For the participants in this study, being in the frame of the action is something they welcome when it enhances their experience of the performance. Their comments suggest that there are times when the comfort of the seating is less significant in the face of dramatic effect.

Extending the performance through complementary experiences is something that helps to create an imprint on one's life experience. This research confirms that audiences align the element of socializing with attendance at performing arts events. They want to create a shared memory of the performance through socializing before and after the performance. Having foyer facilities that encourage socializing, eating, drinking and meeting friends, is valued by audiences. If there is an emergent trend, it is in the hunger for events which allow a relaxed form of engagement, maybe even with a drink in hand. All focus groups reported that socializing was an expectation of their attendance at events, suggesting that by developing an emotional connection to the experience, socializing will likely enhance the sense of connection to place.

Some artforms continue to opt for the traditional spaces because for them the space is a medium capable of being transformed as required. Dance, for example, has specific needs, not the least of which is the capacity for the audience to see the dancers from head to toe. In a traditional venue, the parameters are met, and the stage can be converted as required using sets and lighting designs, based on the known specifications available in that venue. To move outside the known space, a dance company confronts a list of questions which are not relevant in a traditional venue – how to meet safety issues, whether full movement is possible, how to transport the audience into the story of the dance without the magic brought about by sets and lighting. For an orchestra, it may be as simple as knowing how many instrumentalists (and instruments) will fit on the stage and what access there may be for setting them up. Very often, companies have to trade off the benefits and certainties of performing in the comfort zone of the known space against performing in new spaces that create more disruption than can be accommodated.

Whereas the traditional orchestra is bound by the space in which it plays: affected by the acoustic, compromised by the size of the stage, and driven by the audience

capacity, one of Queensland's s2m companies, Deep Blue, has developed a form of performance based on flexibility: the shape of the space may change, the acoustic is managed using technology, the performers may interact with the audience. Deep Blue is not confined by place at all, and is even developing the option of remote rehearsals via video-links in order to improve access to the orchestra for performers living in centres to which the orchestra tours. In conceiving this non-reliance and totally abstract approach to place, Deep Blue underlines the contemporary irrelevance of the traditional concert hall.

In all of these themes is an underlying premise that soft infrastructure is more significant than hard — that the constellation of elements which relate to how the audience approaches, receives and responds to a performance is not only influenced by the infrastructure, the place of performance, but in turn has a significant impact upon the performance.

Performance and Place-Making

Many of the practices and views encountered by Redefining Places for Art point towards an important change of approach in, or at least awareness of, the very nature of experiencing live performance. There seems to be a decisive shift from the idea of art for art's sake to art for the sake of the experience, which can incorporate a wide range of possibilities. Audiences are carefully choosing where they go and how they want to engage with the performance. By their very nature, festivals invite visitors to curate their own experience: sit down, move about, listen from a distance, or participate directly. Many place-specific works engage the community, giving it a voice or active role in the experience. Online formats go even further, allowing surfers to decide on factors like time, length, content, and level of engagement with the performance.

Among the examples encountered in this study there is clear evidence that performances have the potential to be catalysts for change. This is particularly so for festivals that offer the unexpected, and create wider access than most main stage performances are able to achieve. The Queensland Music Festival in particular has shown over a number of years that performance which engages an audience by building a relationship with the place or culture in which the people exist has an enduring impact on them. Festivals have the capacity to demonstrate the extent of what is possible. By creating an event in an unexpected setting, or creating a setting for a performance event, a festival can open the imagination for further development of that site.

In the face of such transformation, companies may need to reorganize themselves, especially in relation to the way in which they conceive performance place.

Conclusion

Place-making occurs everywhere: from the bouquet of flowers on the stage at a piano recital to clearing the underbrush for an outback dance performance to logging on to an online poetry reading. Place-making can be conventional or innovative, physical or constructed. In all cases, it is a significant force in drawing

audiences and shaping their experience. What Redefining Places for Art has found is not so much a radical shift from conventional to alternative places and spaces, but rather a seeking for a new balance between the various formats of presenting performances available at the beginning of the 21st century, from the grand theatres inherited from Europe to highly individual virtual spaces.

The project found abundant evidence of new and imaginative use of place across new and older performance traditions. This is evident from the activities of dedicated explorers of new spaces (including festivals which position new work or re-contextualize existing performance formats) to the activities of more conventional venues which organise activities 'out of the box.'

New places have the potential to connect to new audiences, but it would be a mistake to reduce this to marketing of 'broadening participation.' In fact, smaller audiences may buy in to a particularly adventurous product, but have a high-quality experience. This relates to the key concept underlying this project: a sense of the audience not primarily as consumer, but as an active participant in the experience, to the point of acting as a co-creator or curator.

The breadth of exploration of place in the performing arts seems to depend very strongly on the space inside the mind of an individual creator, curator or administrator. Not recognizing limits there seems to make the impossible possible, although all ideas are subsequently moderated by constraints in the physical, funding and organizational realm. A key finding of this research is that while the 'three As' (artists, audiences and administrators) seem to naturally gravitate to a balance between conventional and non-conventional spaces, policy and funding structures are less than conducive to nurturing sustainability through diversity.

Other findings are sobering: that many artists who create imaginative, site-specific performances do so out of necessity rather than conviction, and wish for a 'home' space; that realizing performances in non-conventional spaces is often very costly and plagued by regulations, laws and liabilities; that Indigenous concepts of connectedness between performance and place play a limited role in shaping this relationship in mainstream Australian performing arts; that new places may only be exciting for a limited duration - once the novelty wears off, they risk being seen as staid; and that it is easy to underestimate the relationship between the comfort of performing arts audiences and their level of engagement with performance experiences.

Realities and perceptions of access seem to play a key role in choosing meaningful places for performance. While parking, weather protection and the availability of food and toilets (as two ends of the same domain) are of obvious importance, insights and preconceptions ("this opera first night is a setting in which I belong/will feel very uncomfortable") may be as decisive. Both audiences and administrators emphasise the importance of an open, friendly, and accessible atmosphere, conducive to place-making. There is no convincing case for ticket prices to be consid-

ered as a key driver for choosing location: audiences will pay what they think the experience is worth.

Related to this, manners and levels of engagement and a sense of intimacy with experience are important. This partially depends on the positioning of the spectator-participant vis-à-vis the creator-star. This engagement also raises questions on the continuum from education to community to professionals. Many initiatives that deal creatively with place involve collaborations across a divide that has perhaps become too strong with far-going professionalization in the performing arts. This in turn is linked to commercial opportunities to connect with communities, the education and tertiary sector; and the rise of the amateur, not in the sense of 'not-good-enough-to-be-professional' but in its original meaning of 'lover-of-the-art.' Finally, there is the role of online experiences, which in themselves — in spite of their potential — do not yet play a very strong role beyond audiences consuming mediated digital performance, although they are increasingly integrated with performance and will no doubt be more so and more imaginatively so in the future as creative links are forged.

Flexibilities in approach are closely related to management styles and models of governance. There is a distinct sense that a number of the larger organizations examined in this study are caught in the tension between creative desire and the need to survive. If not dealt with carefully, this tension only increases over time, as the discrepancy grows between the creative spirit of the time and the format the organization is trapped in. This is not anybody's fault, but a potentially tragic unintended outcome of wanting to create some stability in the arts sector.

Across the state of Queensland — or anywhere beyond — there is no fixed formula for the exact nature of and proportion between conventional and non-conventional places for art. However, given the various findings of this study, it stands to reason that a healthy diversity of fixed and flexible practices will represent an ecosystem most likely to lead to a vibrant, diverse and sustainable performance practice.

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