

NSW Responses

This is How We Do It, Theatre Network Australia’s report on the working trends and conditions for independent artists and creatives in the performing arts, analyses results from an online survey conducted in July and August 2020.

The survey received valid responses from 284 independent artists and creatives from across Australia. To acknowledge the ongoing unpaid work that is *inherent* in being an independent artist, the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic which has been devastating for the arts sector, and the resulting increase in data collection, TNA offered a \$50 payment and a free three-month membership for the time taken to complete the survey.

This Is How We Do It: Working Trends of Independent Artists and Creatives asked questions about working habits, conditions, personal financial management, and individually established ‘working rates’. It is the second survey with this focus undertaken by Theatre Network Australia and therefore provides some comparison from the 2018 survey of the same name. Because of COVID, additional questions were asked about the impact of COVID.

These responses below are filtered to only those who ticked the state NSW as their base. There were 48 of these, which is around 17% of the total responses. Part 1 is about the respondents – stage of career, demographics, working trends prior to COVID-19, Part 2 is the impact of COVID-19 on their practice, how they are coping, and comments in their own words.

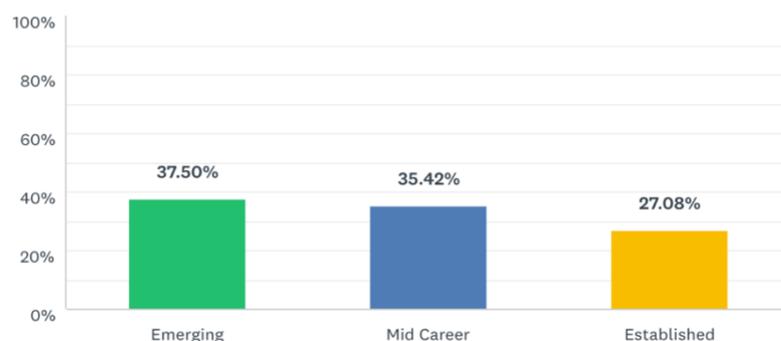
Part 1 Who we Are

WHERE ARE YOU BASED?

	Urban	Regional	Total
Respondents	75%	25%	100%

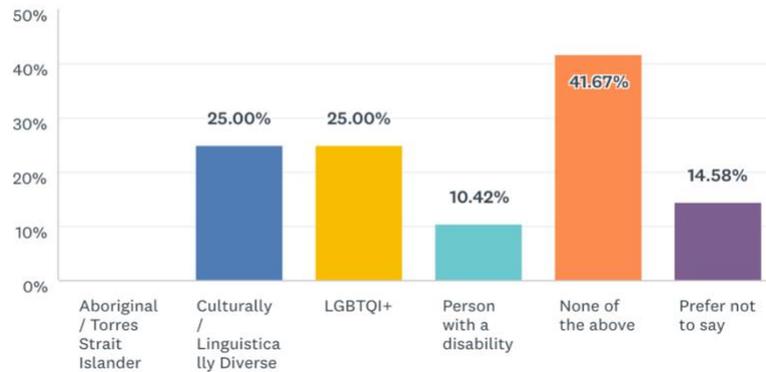
STAGE OF CAREER

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



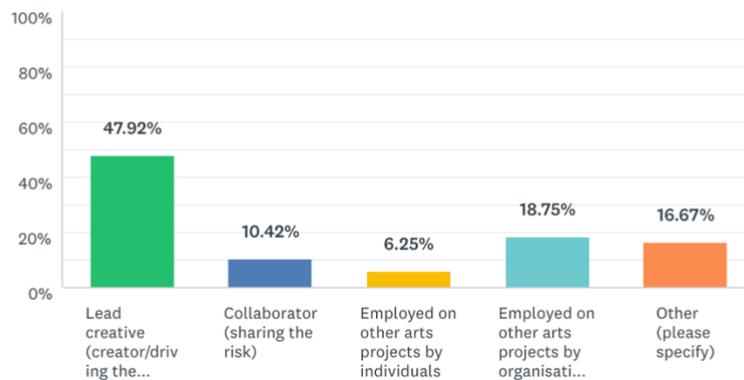
IDENTITY

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



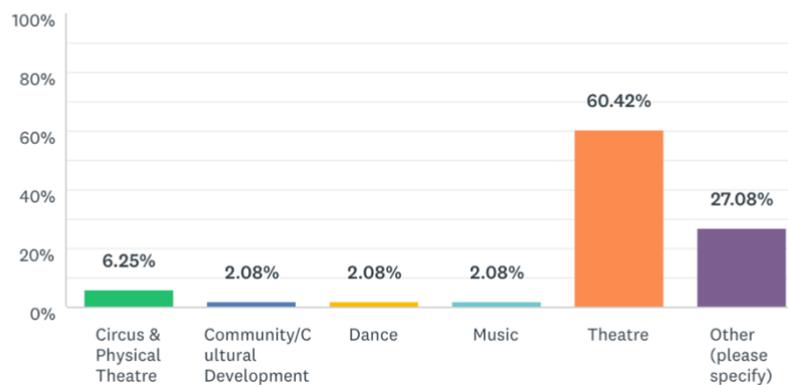
Please respond to the following in relation to 2019, before the impact of COVID-19 on your practice. In your practice are you primarily a:

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



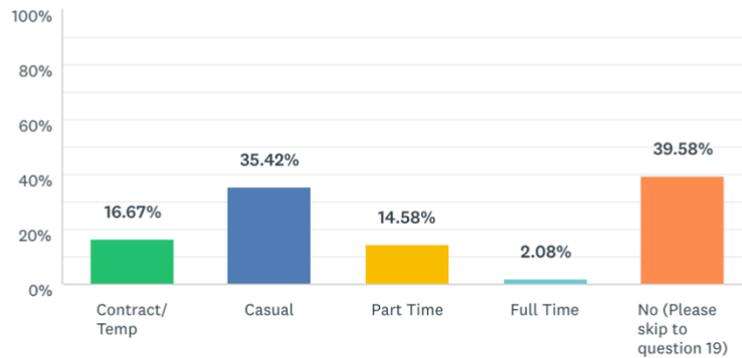
ARTFORM FOCUS

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



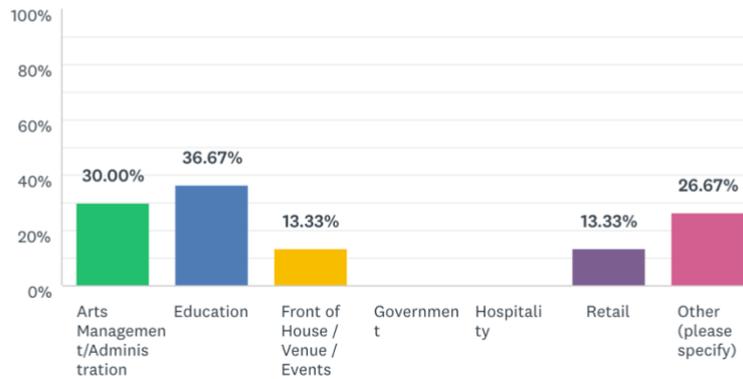
Are you employed outside of your independent creative practice? (Tick all that apply)

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



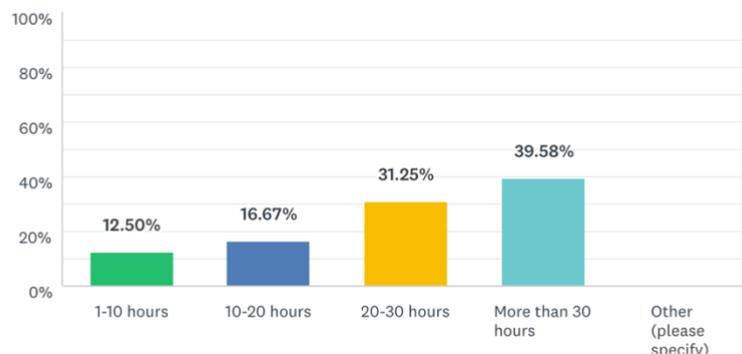
If so, in which field do you work? (Tick all that apply)

Answered: 30 Skipped: 18



On average, how many hours per week do you usually work on your creative practice? (Include making art, emails, grant writing, producing, marketing, meetings, etc.)

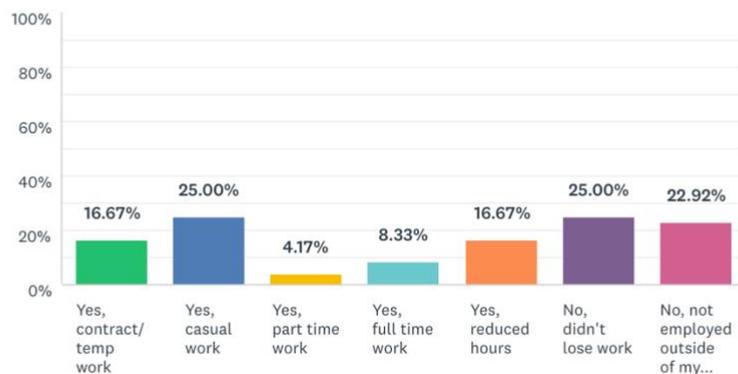
Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



Part 2. Impact of COVID-19

Did you lose employment, outside of your creative practise, due to COVID-19?
(Select all that apply)

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



How many creative projects/gigs did you have planned for 2020, before the impact of COVID-19?

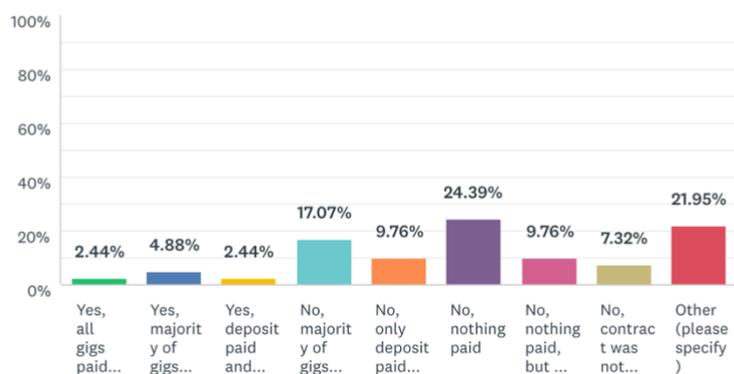
Projects planned: 8 on average

How many projects have proceeded, or will proceed in 2020, even if in a different form?

Projects going ahead: 2.5 on average.

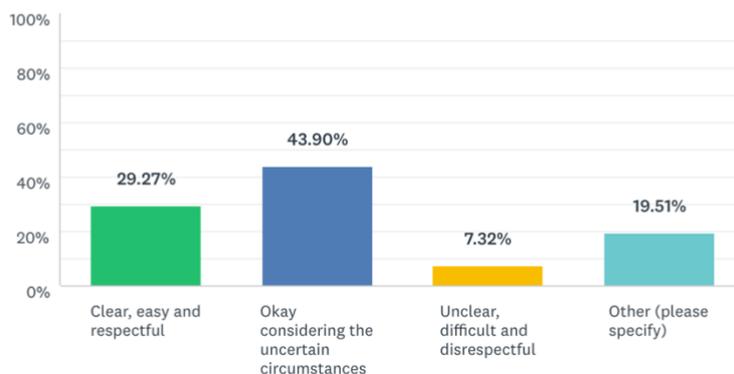
If any of your creative work was cancelled due to COVID-19, was your contract/s paid out in full?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 7



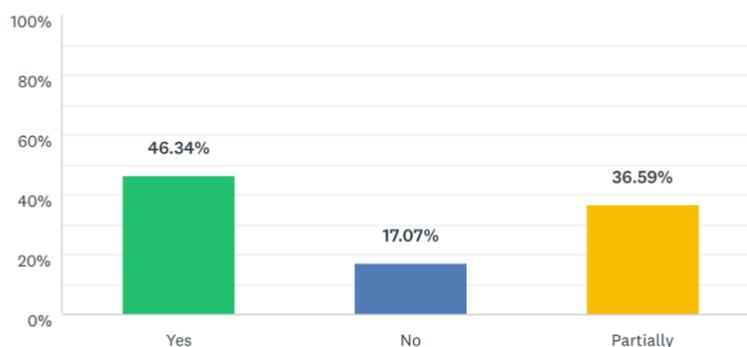
Considering COVID-19, how was your experience re-negotiating with presenters, producers, artists, venues or festivals around who got paid for what, dates, fees etc?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 7



Were you satisfied with the outcome?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 7

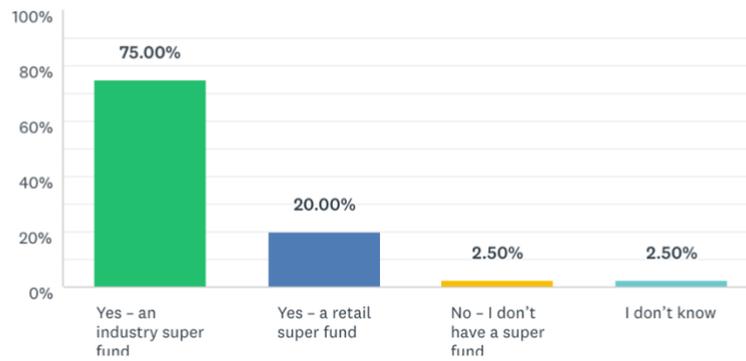


Did you apply for crisis/survival payments due to COVID?

	Applied	Successful
Australia Council	11	5
Myer Foundation	6	4
TNA Crisis Cash	4	4
City of Sydney	4	1
Create NSW	2	1
Other	3	2
TOTAL (out of 48 responses)	30	17

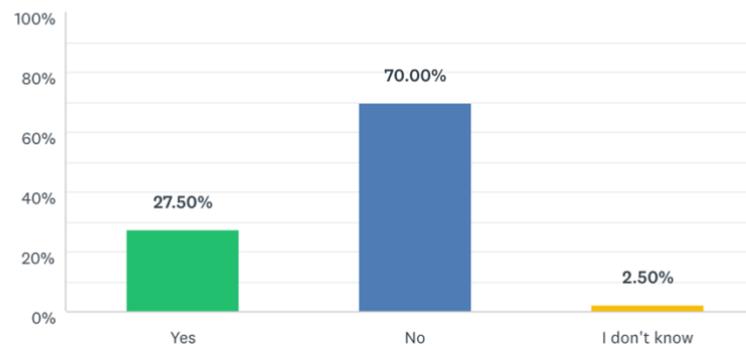
Do you have a superannuation fund?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



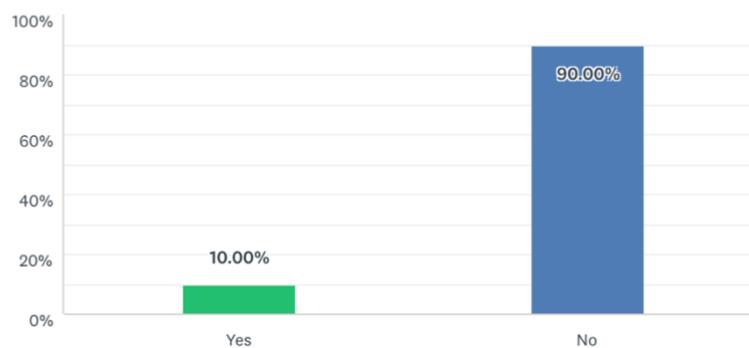
Do you make personal contributions to your own superannuation?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



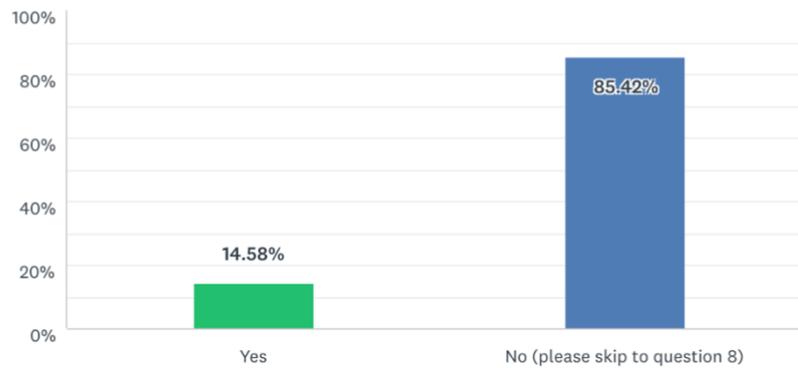
Did you access your superannuation due to COVID-19?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



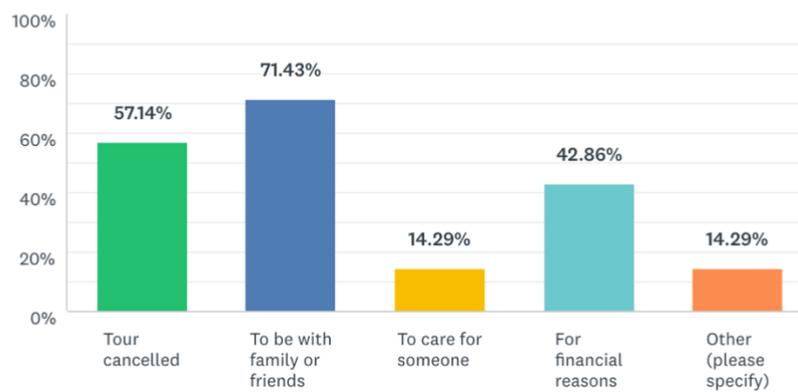
Did you relocate due to COVID-19

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



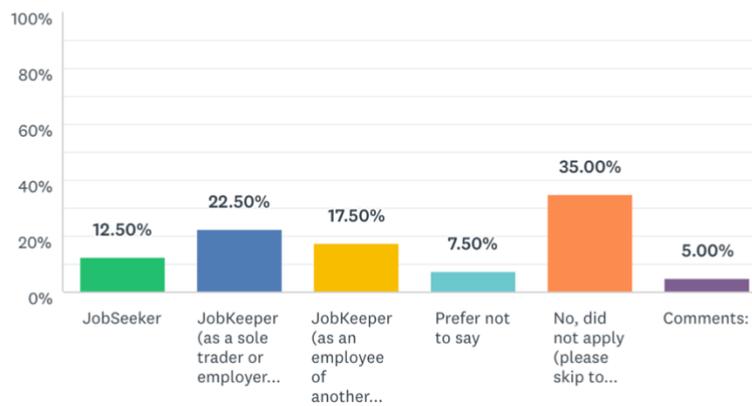
Why did you relocate? (Tick all that apply)

Answered: 7 Skipped: 41



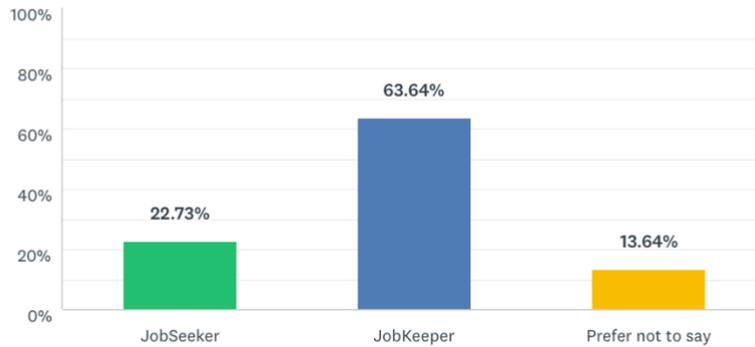
Did you apply for:

Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



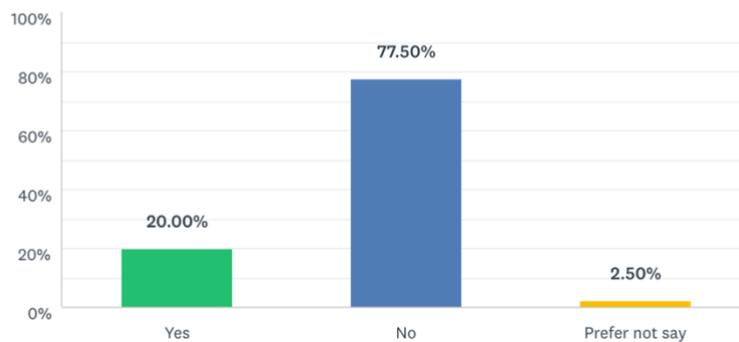
Did you receive:

Answered: 22 Skipped: 26



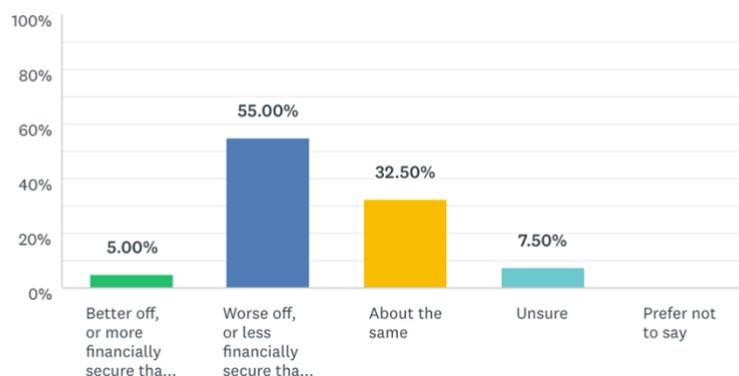
Have you accessed any mental health services due to the impact of COVID-19?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



What is your current financial position considering the impact of COVID-19?

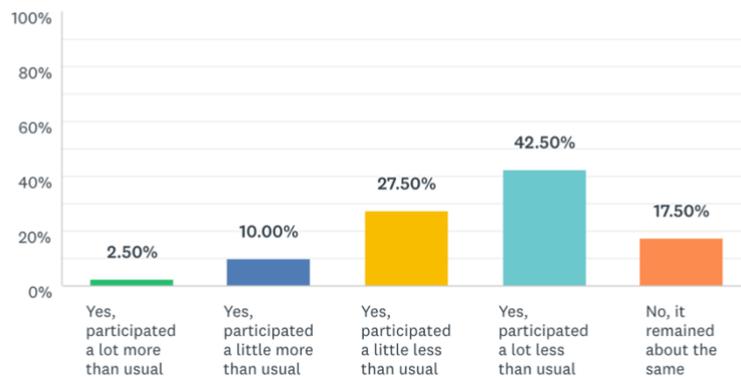
Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



55% of NSW respondents are financially worse off now, due to the impacts of COVID-19, compared to 49% of Victorian respondents and 50% of the overall respondents.

Putting your creative practice and projects aside, did your participation in the arts community change due to COVID-19?

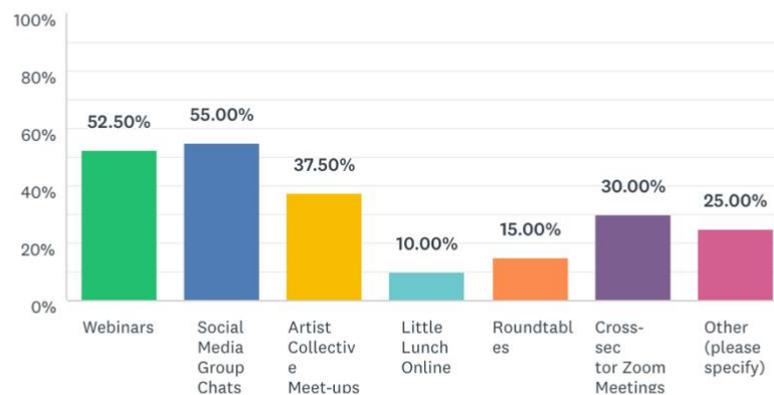
Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



Only 12.5% of NSW respondents participated in the arts community more in the arts community, compared to 22% of the overall respondents. 87.5% of NSW independents participated less or the same, compared to 78% of the overall.

What did you participate in?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 8



Did COVID-19 have an impact on your creative practice? Briefly explain in your own words.

Some Positive Outcomes

2 different shows which were being performed overseas have been postponed; moved 1 project online, made some valuable overseas connections unexpectedly by online practices

I planned to produce a theatre show later this year, which was post-poned. I've had a lot more time to write. With all productions put on hold during quarantine, there were very few/no auditions earlier in the year and then a whole bunch selftape auditions when restrictions started to ease.

Yes. I went from leaving the house at 7am and coming back at 11pm nearly 7 days a week working multiple creative projects to cold turkey at home. It took me a while to adjust, but what it has done has allowed me to take a step back, reassess my priorities and focus myself more. Now my creative

practice has me looking after me more. I have been fortunate to gain a few opportunities out of covid, mostly writing (understandable), and now I am rested, and no longer overworked.

Generally neutral outcomes

Had to stop devising a theatre show and turn it into a webseries instead. Missed out on performing live all together so far.

it gave me more time to write and then the wave of people who needed response increased

It had both a positive and negative impact. It did give me more time to work on my creative practice specifically writing my own work but negatively affected my mental health

Yes - it came to a grinding halt- however companies that I create for found ways to adapt with my input.

yes, I am shifting to Visual Arts and integrating Online Performance modes, including video broadcasting, criticism, and investigating public art and installations, as opposed to 'traditional' theatre based performance

yes, I tried to learn different skills

no - I did not have a theatre production scheduled this year. it affected some of my screenwriting gigs

Yes- cancelled a re-mount of a major work. Gained work for a development. Possibility of a tour of a different work.

I have semi-retired (luckily) so there has been no noticeable impact on my already reduced business activity.

Generally detrimental outcomes

All domestic & international tours postponed or cancelled.

COVID-19 caused to cancellation of multiple paid gigs - interstate residency, international residency, interstate tour, intrastate workshops and tour and therefore a full year's worth of income. Isolation also meant no access to studio.

A big part of my creative practice is doing live performances and testing material on stage. Covid made this no longer possible.

Delimited opportunities to make and present work, now and into the future.

Extensively. I lost two shows set to debut as well as other freelance work due to a lacklustre economy.

Hugely. The play I was rehearsing was canceled and I lost all my teaching work at 5 different institutions

I lost 3 gigs, including an 8-month tour. Lost around \$35,000.

I sheltered and had no public outcome from March 2020- now (July)

I was meant to complete my PhD in visual arts in May, but that was postponed to September and all the live work I had scheduled for the second half of 2020 has been postponed. (3 projects)

It has prevented me from continuing play readings and focus groups.

It's hard to assess the full effect it will have (ie. shifting priorities for work) but the base effect has been a pausing and delaying of staging and the discussions around staging by a year - two years.

Major impact on my practice. There are not many gig opportunities at all at the moment due to Covid-19. I lost all my work and classes. I had to teach on Zoom just to pay the rent it was very difficult
Unable to continue face to face rehearsals. Performance or residency opportunities postponed.
Without 2 festivals to deliver, a cancelled solo show, myriad projects halted And working from home it is fair to say that 2020 has been a write off professionally and very tough creatively.
Yes - cancelled events I was commissioned to do. Remaining uncertainty about what I can stage due to venue closures
Yes - it's hard to do lighting design for shows when few projects are using a traditional theatre space
Yes - my practice is primarily international. I lost all of that - and the Australian premieres, & developments moved to 2021. Essentially I lost all my income for 2020.
Yes - we have a show programmed at [removed] that was forced to close on the same night as our final preview. I was also meant to direct [removed] for [removed], which was cancelled a few months later. We hope that both of these shows will go up in 2021 instead.
Yes and I received no support. Many opportunities that were not confirmed however were likely to happen (callbacks, final stages of auditions, meetings for potential projects) were canned. Although I didn't have a contract as such a lot of very close to being signed jobs were cancelled. I also didn't get to go to the world congress in Japan LAME!
Yes I was no longer able to support myself financially. I also have had to put a hold on projects and I haven't picked them back up yet and finding it hard to do so.
Yes it canceled some practice time and not being sure if it's gonna be in the festival or no because of COVID-19
Yes, cancelled gigs.
Yes, I had a show which was about 3 weeks out from being performed that I was performing in, wrote and produced. Not being able to be in the same room as other creatives to bounce ideas off has definitely impacted my creative process coming out of it.
Yes, I had planned to take a year off from my management and administrative work to write a book and a film, and to really attempt to establish myself as an artist rather than a producer. I had been saving and making massive lifestyle changes to facilitate this to begin in July (now), but it became clear in March that it couldn't happen.
Yes, I lost 8 months of touring full-time work as well as the ability to work independently on my own projects/creative developments due to gathering restrictions. My core practice involved working physically and devising new works with creatives and communities.
Yes, it devastated it- was meant to be earning and making in NYC right now,. Loss of opportunity and income at all levels Increased isolation Increased digital barriers Need to re-map business plan and set new goals Increased systemic barriers due to arts industry not being capable to address accessibility in crisis- ripple effect
Yes, somewhat, I had planned on working to get a script put on but unfortunately with the theatres closes I couldn't do this
YES! I lost projects - most have been re-scheduled to 2021-2022
Yes. Apart from a season of a show being cancelled and poetry readings and events connected to my book launch cancelled, the closure of state libraries affected my ability to research new projects. Likewise not being able to travel interstate or overseas for research and related purposes.

Yes. I had a projection gig deferred. I was unable to take up two exhibitions in Victoria. And unable to travel to Shanghai for a residency. And I have spent more time trying to find funding and opportunities because I have no income currently.

Yes. I took a temp contract for a full time job in the end of 2019 working in festival programming that was supposed to end in mid-2020. I had freelance creative work lined up after the end of this contract, but that was cancelled and now my contract has been extended until Dec 2020.

Yes. I was meant to be on tour with a company that performs in schools across Australia from May - November.

Yes. I was planning on wrapping a TV show in the US which has been postponed, a theatre show closed down early and a majority of projects planned for mid to late 2020 have dissolved. I have been fortunate in that my company has been able to take advantage of the pandemic, forming partnerships and starting initiatives to assist the industry as it rebuilds.

Yes. It cancelled jobs already lined up for 2020, cancelled a show that was on the verge of Opening Night, and reduced the opportunities available for engaging in professional creating practice. However, I've tried to use some of the time to regain or build on relevant skills, like movement skills, writing, accents, and screen acting, through the kindness and time of friends, teachers, and the internet.

YES. Programs cancelled and postponed (?) to 2021. Mental/emotional health dragged out report/acquittal writing, grant writing and blocked creative writing. Zoom meetings/communications difficult with a hearing impairment. Different team members have different needs, especially with home-schooling. Unpredictable periods of people's need for isolation/Covid-testing, etc. Lockdown also leads to communication issues and difficulties in future planning and decision making.

Yes. Two of my regular gigs were cancelled or put on hold

OTHER COMMENTS

I think that the organisations that I work with really tried their best to look after the welfare of me as the artist - I also understand the funding bodies AusCo May have found it hard to spread their funds

I write poetry and prose as well as for theatre and performance. Because of the Covid restrictions on live theatre and the cascading cancellations, I've moved my focus to writing more poetry and prose because they are artforms less impacted by Covid.

I, along with many others, find it appalling that performing artists have been so specifically excluded from almost all federal government financial rescue packages, including the much vaunted \$250m injection into the arts

Thank for keeping tabs on this

Thank you for support!

Thank you for taking the time to ask us these questions. I look forward to your findings.

Thank you! \$50 goes a fair way and thank you for caring about us artists!

Thanks for all of your great work! I hope all is going well for you guys in this tough time :)

Thanks for asking the questions and for all the advocacy work you do.

Questions 26-29 are not accessible in that they don't allow for discussion of disability systemic injustice, what I am valued at vs what I receive - it's unclear how to approach it.