

Theatre Network Victoria Annual Report 2009–2010



Theatre Network Victoria

Theatre Network Victoria advocates for the professional theatre industry. We focus on strengthening the independent and small to medium sectors, and increasing connection between all parts of the industry.

Theatre Network Victoria began as an initiative, developed by the sector itself and funded by Arts Victoria through its Sector Development Partnerships program. TNV operated as a project from May 2009 to December 2010. For the calendar year 2011, TNV received Annual Operations funding from Arts Victoria and two project grants from the Australia Council for the Arts, and it incorporated as an Association in March 2011.

This Report covers the period May 2009 to December 2010.

Victorian Theatre Meeting, MTC Lawler Studio, September 2010.



Photos both pages: Gavin D Andrew

Chair's message



When Theatre Network Victoria was first imagined by a group of Artistic Directors and General Managers sitting around a big table with a bottle of wine in late 2008, I don't think any of us foresaw the extraordinary impact the

Network would make in such a short period of time. 2010 sees the end of the initial 18-month pilot project and it is due to the extraordinary skill of its Director, Nicole Beyer, that the industry has embraced TNV as such an integral – and ongoing – part of our industry. 2011 sees the organisation grow up, as we begin to lead major initiatives across the state and the country with the vital support of our sector. Thank you. I also want to thank the wonderful, hardworking committee of management – past and present – for its ongoing commitment to the big picture, the staff at Arts Victoria and Lyn Wallis and the Theatre Board at the Australia Council for their continued belief in TNV's vision. Particular thanks are also due to the incredible Fiona Maxwell, whose great vision guided TNV's early steps as our inaugural Chair and, of course, to TNV's real brains as well as our legs on the ground, Nicole Beyer. Imagine, at this moment, a big round of applause, some whoops and cheers and – just maybe – a standing ovation. I'd give them one, anyway.

– Simon Abrahams

Director's message



What a joy it has been to work on this project and to see it blossom into a fully fledged, if still very young, organisation. The generosity of all of our partner organisations has been key to our success – the project's resources were limited, so we relied on lots of goodwill, existing contacts, in-kind support, plus a lot of trust that we would do what we promised! In particular I would like to thank Chamber Made Opera for hosting the office and providing lots of moral and financial support, and Arena Theatre Company for auspicing the project. Big thanks also to all of the founding member organisations, and the wonderful current committee (listed on page 8), in particular the two Chairs Fiona Maxwell (until June 2010) and Simon Abrahams (from July 2010). Both Fiona and Simon have put in many hundreds of hours to drive the committee's vision for an ongoing Theatre Network.

– Nicole Beyer

How TNV was born

Sector Development Partnerships – Arts Victoria

Arts Victoria's Sector Development Partnerships program assisted arts industry service organisations or other organisations playing a representative role for a particular arts sector to develop a project. The aims of the project were to: increase understanding and appreciation of the arts within the wider community; Build capacity within the arts sector through skills development; Support the development of collaborative working relationships between artists and arts organisations within a sector and partnerships beyond it; and expand opportunities for all Victorians to participate in arts and cultural activities across the state.

The proposal

A consortium of Victorian performing arts organisations created a proposal to "develop a Theatre Network to undertake research, deliver professional development and develop the sector broadly to build capacity and sustainability".

Fiona Maxwell, TNV's founding Chair.
Photo: Brad Spolding.



The consortium members were:

- * Arena Theatre Company
- * Back to Back Theatre
- * Chamber Made Opera
- * Melbourne Workers Theatre
- * Next Wave Festival
- * Platform Youth Theatre
- * Polyglot Theatre
- * Snuff Puppets
- * St Martins Youth Arts.

The project received funding and a manager was appointed in May 2009.

The project has been very successful - the sector has been galvanised, and TNV has been funded by Arts Victoria's Annual Operations for 2011.

Goals for 2009–2010

1. To support, increase the profile of, and contribute to a strong, engaged Victorian theatre sector.
2. To provide an influential, respected, political voice for the sector.
3. To gain and share evidence and understanding of sector issues nation wide.
4. To connect people to services and training programs which are focused on sector development, professional development and theatre art-form development.
5. To capably manage TNV as a discrete project while investigating and planning for a clear and ongoing future.

Achievements

Theatre Network Victoria is filling a gap in service provision for the theatre sector in Victoria. The sector is hungry for a service organisation to represent them, unify them and support them to increase their profile, and become more sustainable and more engaged. In addition to the companies and individual practitioners that need a service organisation – other service organisations, peak bodies and government agencies have taken advantage of having TNV in existence.

Delegates at the TNV Victorian Theatre Meeting, September 2010. Photo: Gavin D Andrew.



Highlights of the project included:

- 2010 Victorian Theatre Meeting and report;
- a submission on behalf of the theatre sector to the National Cultural Policy consultation;
- 2009 Small to Medium Remuneration Survey;
- 20 E-News editions sent to over 500 subscribers;
- a series of three workshops for independent producers in partnership with VAPAC;
- a scoping project for the Australia Council towards the Australian Theatre Forum 2011: convening a steering committee, recruiting a Curator, and sourcing funds;
- a comprehensive website including a library of relevant resources;
- a theatre-sector workshop at APAM 2010;
- ArtsCareer theatre partnership – the new professional development hub for artists and educators to access up-to-date career development information from around Australia, headed by the National Association for the Visual Arts.
- a joint campaign with Vic ArtsPeak and AIC(V) towards the state election promoting the value of the small to medium arts sector;
- assistance and support provided to dozens of individuals and organisations.

“Independent theatre companies are really growing and doing exciting work, but they are vulnerable. They give a layer of richness to theatre generally, but it is not secure and not sustainable.”

– Nicole Beyer, Melbourne Times 2/6/2010

The Victorian Theatre Meeting

The Victorian Theatre Meeting, held at MTC in September 2010, was the first time that the Victorian theatre sector had convened for a formal meeting in over 10 years - it was a dynamic, exciting and generous afternoon of ideas sharing and dreaming. It resulted in a comprehensive report, including 20 'Issue Pitches' written by selected delegates, which will feed into TNV's ongoing work, as well as exist a resource for the wider sector.

Highlights of the meeting

"In an ideal environment, the theatre sector in Melbourne would be a complete ecology in which artists are well supported across their career with clear pathways for development." Pippa Bainbridge

"In many small companies the focus should be on creating an environment for reckless artistic exploration!" Tom Gutteridge

"The Malthouse's photovoltaic solar panels has a digital interface screening a new morning raga from a composer in Mumbai... What could the arts sector contribution be to that vision?" Angharad Wynne-Jones

"[Writers] now understand implicitly that despite what they have written, they must be 'open' and indeed 'eager' to change their work to suit the predilections of the company who are developing it." Aidan Fennessy

"Scenius describes a creativity not driven by lauded individuals, but rather by an entire community. It's a shared genius." Emily Sexton, with reference to Brian Eno

"A strong CALD policy is more than showing that you've got a couple of brown-skinned cleaners and a Vietnamese accountant looking over the books." Polash Larsen

"Often artists are bogged down in the logistics of funding applications, producing commissions, working other jobs and more, that the essential element to 'just be, dream and create without self judgment' is not there." Jodee Mundy

"In the past five years, Victorian-based women directors have had as much opportunity to increase their perceived 'merit' (which dictates their appointment suitability) as women seeking leadership roles in the AFL, Armed Forces and Catholic Church." Lucy Freeman

"Theatres of clarity, argument and risk...might involve further disassembling theatre, thereby fostering new relationships. To return to the spectator means to make work that is something between (to quote Kerkhoven) 'looking at something and walking into something'." Peter Ekersall

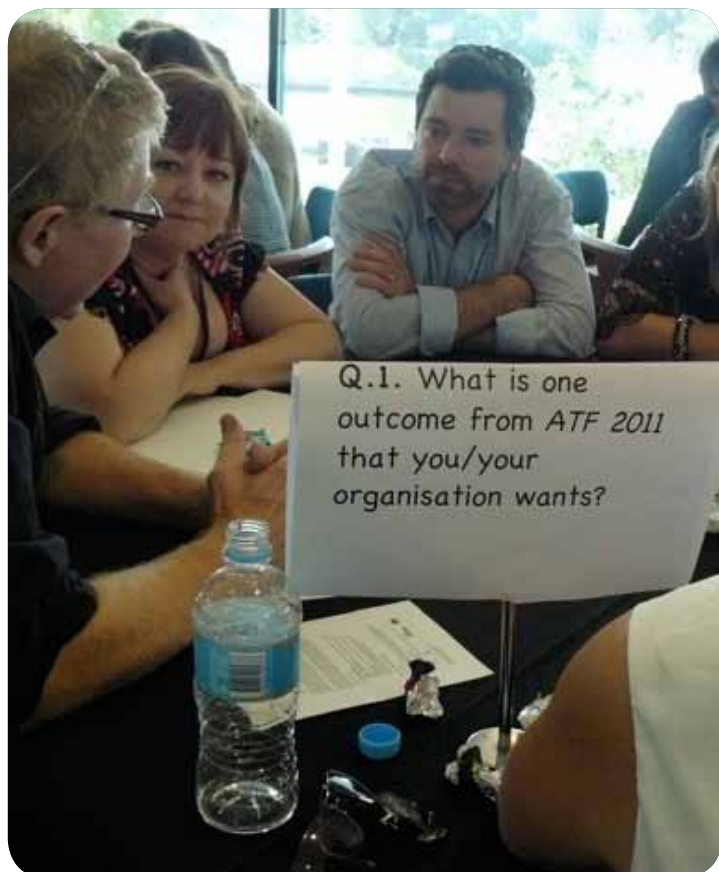
"We must commit as an industry to empowering Indigenous communities to control our stories within the theatre context." John Harvey

The future: state-based organisation, national network

As well as continuing as an ongoing, state-based organisation, TNV has initiated a project to establish a separate Australian Theatre Network. This was one of the original aims - to support discussions around a national peak body - but it has happened earlier than expected because of the sector need and the support by the Australia Council. The project will support other states to establish networks and help them connect to each other, with the goal of establishing an ongoing network. This is a key way for the Victorian theatre sector to remain strong - by linking with and supporting other state networking activity and developing a unified voice and presence across the country.

“The organic, grassroots nature of the TNV project – being founded by the sector itself – has been instrumental in TNV’s success. We have had the freedom to respond quickly and nimbly to opportunities arising, and this has meant we have been able to fill gaps that have existed for years.”

– Nicole Beyer, Director



APAM Meeting, 2010. Photo: Brad Spolding.

Staff, Committee, Statistics

2009-2010 Staff

Director: Nicole Beyer
Volunteer Research Assistant: Nyunkia Tauss
Casuals/Consultants: Brad Spolding, Ariane Ramsay, Fiona Maxwell.

2009-2010 Committee

Fiona Maxwell, Chair (until June 2010)
Simon Abrahams (Chair from July 2010)
Görkem Acaroğlu (from August 2010)
Sarah Austin
Maude Davey (until July 2010)
Rose Godde
John Harvey (from August 2010)
Erin Milne, Treasurer
Jaclyn Booton (Acting Treasurer from June 2009)
Alice Nash, Deputy Chair
Emily Sexton (from August 2010)
Brad Spolding (until August 2010)
Ann Tonks (from August 2010)
Geoffrey Williams (until April 2010)

The Stats

4 workshops - 3 Victorian workshops, 1 National workshop
1 State Meeting
Two formal publications:
• TNV Victorian Theatre Meeting Report 2010
• TNV 2009 Small-to-Medium Remuneration Benchmarking Report
A new website www.tnv.net.au
20 e-news editions – to over 500 subscribers
Over 400 volunteer hours.
All this with:
• a Staff of 0.6EFT, and
• an income of \$99,669

Rob Brookman, Sydney Theatre Company, Lyn Wallis, Australia Council, Angharad Wynne-Jones, Tipping Point Australia and Alice Nash, Back To Back Theatre, speaking at the TNV Theatre Forum workshop at APAM 2010.
Photo: Brad Spolding.



Acknowledgements

TNV has established ongoing working relationships with the following organisations:

All nine founding companies: Arena Theatre Company, Back To Back Theatre, Chamber Made Opera, Platform Youth Theatre, Next Wave, Polyglot Theatre, St Martins Youth Arts, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Snuff Puppets; plus new Committee members - Melbourne Theatre Company and Ilbijerri Theatre.

In addition TNV worked with the following Victorian organisations:

Arts Victoria,
Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres,
Regional Arts Victoria,
Arts Industry Council (Vic),
The new Vic Arts Peak,
The Dog Theatre,
Auspicious Arts Incubator,
Malthouse Theatre,
Melbourne Writers Theatre,
The Victorian AD/GM Network.

TNV also worked with the following interstate and national organisations:

Australia Council for the Arts,
Australian Performing Arts Centres Association,
Australian Women Directors Association,
National Association for the Visual Arts (and other national peaks),
Australian Circus and Physical Theatre Assoc.,
Australian Major Performing Arts Group,
Young People and the Arts Australia,
Live Performance Australia,
Brisbane Powerhouse,
Brisbane Festival,
Arts Queensland,
Brisbane City Council,
Metro Arts,
Australian Theatre Forum Steering Committee,
Theatre Council of Tasmania.

Thank you:

Thanks to everyone involved in the Victorian AD/GM network; Fiona Maxwell, Paul Gurney and team at Next Wave, Alice Nash and team at Back to Back; Simon Abrahams and all at Polyglot; Görkem Acaroğlu; Sarah Austin; Maude Davey; Rose Godde; John Harvey; Erin Milne, Jaclyn Booton, Chris Kohn and team at Arena Theatre Company; Emily Sexton; Brad Spolding; Ann Tonks and all at Melbourne Theatre Company; Geoffrey Williams, David Young and team at Chamber Made Opera; Nyunkia Taus; Ariane Ramsay; Linda Sproul; Jacqueline Grenfell; Virginia at Inventive Labs; Julia at Web Prophets; Erin Voth; Jim Stenson at the Meat Market; Jenny Ryssenbeek at VAPAC; Brianna and team at NAVA; the team at APAM; Rick Heath at APACA; Sue Donnelly at AMPAG; Lyn Wallis and team at the Australia Council; Melissa Kramer, Alice Park, David Everist, Andy Miller, Rohini Sharma, Greg Andrews and colleagues at Arts Victoria; Rob Brookman at STC; the Australian Theatre Forum Curators Angharad Wynne-Jones (2009) and Fiona Winning (2011) and the 2011 Steering Committee: Nicole Beyer, Lenine Bourke, Candy Bowers, Liz Burcham, Kristy Edmunds, Wesley Enoch, Fiona Maxwell, Chris Mead, Rose Myers, Alicia Talbot.

Special Thanks to Arts Victoria

The Sector Development program was crucial to the establishment of Theatre Network Victoria. The small to medium sector will never be financially secure enough to support a non-funded service organisation. Attempts in the past have fallen through because of the lack of a paid staff member. The funding from Arts Victoria in 2011 leverages the same amount of funding from the Australia Council, so TNV has been able to appoint another part-time staff member and become an ongoing organisation. This is truly a significant outcome for the Victorian performing arts sector.

**ARTS
VICTORIA**



Australian Government



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The logo for Theatre Network Victoria is presented on a white, tilted rectangular background. The text "theatre network victoria" is written in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with "theatre" on the top line, "network" on the middle line, and "victoria" on the bottom line.

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