

Producing Live Performance/Theatre in Wales.

A Proposal

The Background

One of the areas I keep returning to is the idea of a Producers Collective or Hub and/or a support services team for small to medium project funded companies.

We have many large cultural organisational structures in Wales and many small artist led and project funded companies like Omidaze, Flying Diplodocus, Dirty Protest, Wales Mercury Theatre, Lucid, OtherMother, Motherlode, Light, Emberton and Ladd, Mary Bijou and Kitch 'n' Sync to name just a few, all producing small-medium scale work with an ever diminishing pot of resources. There is, I think, a missing layer.

As a small artist-led organisation to become a registered charity, a portfolio organisation, or even a limited company is to spend time and energy on tasks and activity which takes them away from their artistic visions, aims and objectives and creates more structures which have more core costs attached. Basically more money being spent on the admin and less on the art.

Wales as a small devolved nation does not need to support more organisational structures and building based companies. It does not have the capacity to support more core services.

Also without being a registered charity all of these small producing companies are denied access to funds from Trusts and Foundations. Hence many large Trusts and Foundations are articulating a shortage of interesting applications from Wales to support new and ground-breaking work.

There are many individuals it would seem working very hard doing the same tasks in isolation. There would seem to be much duplication and inefficient use of time, energy and resources. The main two barriers to making their work, which artists identify over and over again, are time and money.

These are my proposals:

Proposal One

ARTS CORE

Arts Core would be a NPO support services team company which serves the performing & producing arts sector initially in the Cardiff and the South Wales area to test pilot it with the aim of then rolling out in different Welsh regions.

The Company would be a not for profit registered charity and consist of the following full and part-time staff:

Producer CEO

Finance

Administrator

Marketing (including Press/Distribution and audience engagement)

Fundraiser

Tour planner /Programmer

IT (Web/Digital Media)

The company would offer a range of Arts Admin packages with a preferential rate given to individual artists and small producing companies operating on a project funding basis with a higher rates given to medium – large organisations who may wish to ‘buy-in’ services on a project basis. This sliding scale of rates would be fixed and industry approved and project and time-limited.

I predict that the demand for this service would grow quite rapidly and additional staff can be recruited to meet that demand.

The company would be a one-stop shop for pay rates and maintain an approved list of providers for such things as Arts Access, translation, rehearsal/practice room hire, equipment hire and so forth.

Predicted Outcomes

- Greater equality and fair rates of pay.
- A more joined up offer and conversation
- Huge money savings due to shared resources
- Increased venue and tour collaboration and networking
- Cleverer programming
- Increased audience engagement
- Greater artistic output of higher quality
- Increased sustainability
- Opportunity for greater time spent at looking beyond ACW for funding
- Would allow many emerging artistic leaders to develop at a greater rate and lift their eyes above the horizon

Proposal Two

ARTS CORE & PRODUCING HUB

This proposal takes the core services model and layers in Producers in to the Arts Admin packages with a minimum of three Producers being on the payroll.

Additional Predicted Outcomes:

- Increase in quantity & quality of produced work reaching audiences both in Wales and beyond
- Raised profile for Wales and Wales based creatives
- Increased movement & flow within the sectors ecology

Proposal Three

ASSOCIATE ARTIST MODEL

Formalise and incentivise Associate Artist status within RPO organisations.

Clarify the distinction between Supported and Associate Artist status.

Therefore a small company like Flying Diplodocus can apply for funding from Trusts and Foundations under the auspices of No Fit State. This would be mutually beneficial since it could allow both the NPO organisations and individual artists and small companies to unlock and access new funding and increase existing funding streams to support the NPO's ongoing main artistic programming and vision as well as contributing to NPO core costs, part-fund a one-off project led by the associate and fund a Producer to work with the Associate(s). The Producer would dedicate the equivalent of xxxx number of days to each associate and xxxxx days a week to the NPO. This would be flexible and project dependent and could operate on a time-banking system.

Predicted outcomes:

- Greater philanthropic funding streams being leveraged by Welsh and Wales based producing companies
- Career pathways and career development improved and made more transparent
- A new level of 'gatekeepers' introduced
- Mentoring opportunities

Benefits to NPO

- Funding to contribute to core costs and cover part-time Producer role to support Artistic Director and planning and delivery of main artistic programme.
- Increased ability to attract on-going large scale funding from Trusts and Foundations - Unlocking New Funding – particularly core costs, additional space requirements and future capital build projects
- Associates to contribute to community work and artist development programmes.
- Ability to access contributions from and collaborations with Associate Artists on bespoke projects.
- Widens NPO's pool of collaborators, performers, directors, choreographers, producers, partners & venues therefore builds workforce and freelance capacity
- Formalises structure for associates, supported artists, trainees and apprenticeships.
- Associate Artists will contribute to structured development and CPD for trainees and to the identification and nurture of a new generation of Emerging Artists from these trainees, apprentices and their wider networks
- Research & Development potential of concepts and ideas for large-scale pieces.
- Ability to commission Associate Artist to develop, produce or curate work specifically for the NPO thereby simultaneously supporting the development of their creative practice
- Talent development / Creating Pathways
- Succession Planning
- Diversity of Access – e.g LGBT and disability focussed work and audiences
- Formalises key strategic aims and objectives
- Associate Artist will be advocates for the NPO in Wales, the UK and Internationally and help raise their profile and status.
- Potential and option to brand associates creative vision and projects as in association with NPO if suitable and produce work in association with Associate Artists and their companies

- Associates to collaborate with NPO in breaking down barriers to access and develop audiences and visitors of the future
- Associate Artist will provide objective and challenging creative partners for NPO

Benefits to Associate Artist

- A sense of belonging as an artist and a sense of 'home'
- Assigned part-time producer for fixed period
- Raised profile for all stages of their practice, research, development and production
- Space – both physical and creative
- Validation & status within the industry
- Practical resources
- A support network
- Be supported in fundraising, producing and creative endeavours
- Have access to producing, admin, marketing & press support/resources
- Ability to unlock funding from Trusts & Foundations only available to organisations with charitable status
- Planning time and resources to create long term development plan and future sustainability
- NPO as host company for secured time period providing a fora for Continuing Professional Development
- Increased industry networks and contacts through association

Yvonne Murphy November 2015