



**Australian Major Performing Arts Group**

submission to

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Country Strategies: Japan, China, Indonesia, India and South Korea

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TO:

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## **AMPAG**

The Australian Major Performing Arts Group, or AMPAG, is the umbrella group for Australia's major performing arts companies who inspire millions through theatre, circus, contemporary dance, classical ballet, classical music, opera, musicals and comedy. (See list of AMPAG members at Appendix 1.)

The companies, all of which are not-for-profits, are designated major because of their prominence and significance. This is demonstrated by their presenting work of high artistic quality and their contribution to a vibrant and sustainable cultural sector, including building the sector's economic and artistic potential through collaborations. These companies also have a responsibility to extend access and provide a leadership role in the development of audiences.

### **Asian engagement—overview**

On behalf of AMPAG I wish to express our appreciation to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for inviting input towards the formation of individual engagement strategies for Australia's priority countries in Asia: China, Indonesia, South Korea, India and Japan.

### **Cultural diplomacy and the Australia brand**

One of the many benefits for the Australian government in supporting engagements, including tours by our major performing arts organisations to Asia, is cultural diplomacy—or 'soft' diplomacy, as it has been dubbed.

This cultural exchange typically takes place in fields such as art, sport, literature, music, theatre and science. It builds respect between cultures, based on a heightened understanding of a nation's values, and a reduced susceptibility to stereotypes. With improved knowledge comes easier interaction and more willing cooperation, the ultimate benefits of which can be to promote national interests, build relationships, improve socio-cultural understanding or promote trade and foreign investments.

The vibrancy, professionalism and innovation displayed by Australia's major performing arts organisations have done much to enhance Australia's reputation in international markets and have paved the way for our cultural diplomacy.

AMPAG's response to the Asian White paper paid particular attention to the paper's aim to identify:

... opportunities for a significant deepening of our engagement with Asia across the board, including in the economy, science and technology collaboration, clean energy, education, business-to-business and people-to-people links and culture;

AMPAG believes this deepening of cultural engagement should be multi-purposed:

1. to strengthen the markets and options for individual companies
2. to develop partnerships in Asia—ones that are reciprocal so that we are not only presenting Australian culture, but learning and enriching our own work through the cultural observations and artistic connections made during such visits. The export of Australian production and technical skills, and its expertise in arts administration, would also be a key factor in building relationships. We would also seek out cultural cross-fertilisation, drawing on the cultural difference and expertise of other nations
3. to promote Australia as a sophisticated, creative and innovative nation
4. to develop the capabilities of the Australian cultural workforce, so that they understand the complexities of the different Asian markets
5. to develop educational ties—Australia is forging a great path in the introduction of the National Arts Curriculum. Within that we should integrate Asian arts practice—and use this as a springboard into Asia.

To achieve these purposes DFAT's role in developing a more strategic long-term plan for our cultural engagement in Asia is critical. Piggybacking on companies already independently touring, to build diplomatic and business events, is an opportunity that can be productively leveraged, but it should not replace a more considered strategic approach.

Other government agencies (particularly the Australia Council and Austrade) have a critical role in developing the capacity of performing arts companies' to tour internationally. But their different objectives could be better achieved through greater coordination across agencies and the sector, to increase knowledge sharing and maximise the leveraging of scarce resources.

AMPAG also believes it is important that the government's priorities in Asia are supported by the allocation of adequate resources for the performing arts to enable cultural diplomacy to take a stronger and more effective role in advancing our cultural, social, diplomatic and economic interests in the region. Our performing arts companies are very efficient and carry little or no excess capacity. International cultural activities take time, resources and occupy the focus of senior management. However, as the company builds local industry knowledge over time, the draw on resources diminishes. A long-term strategy with adequate support attached to it builds underlying capacity to support sustained international engagement. Performing arts companies then have the potential to maintain networks and relationships that can be later leveraged with greater ease.

## Types of engagement

### Offshore

The major performing arts companies are involved in a diverse range of international activities and collaborations including touring performances to foreign countries. This often involves facilitating diplomatic opportunities around performances as well as social opportunities to nurture inter-country people-to-people and business relationships. The tours also include media coverage, interviews, speaking engagements and workshops or masterclasses for local artists and/or education institutions. These artistic, cultural and social experiences promote the image and understanding of Australia and its people as well as enrich our people-to-people links and our own artists' work. They provide opportunities for collaboration and strengthening of our voice in the crowded global cultural environment.

Some performing arts organisations are forging their own path in Asia, and have been doing so for many years. For example, the development of the Sydney Symphony brand in China is a major strategic priority for the company over the next five years. This will build on the orchestra's international profile that it has worked very hard to develop. And of course, its success in doing so promotes Brand Australia.

The Sydney Dance Company has recently signed Singapore Airlines as its major sponsor, which it expects to stimulate a strong relationship with the country, and re-ignite SDC tours to Singapore. Similarly, Sydney Festival has signed China Southern Air as a sponsor. This can be seen as an indication of how some Asian countries now view Australia, as partners in invigorating mutually beneficial markets.

Opera Australia Handa Opera in partnership with Virgin Atlantic , Destination NSW and Hong Kong shopping mall, Elements, launched a consumer promotional campaign in Hong Kong to profile the 2012 Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour event and successfully targeted high value VIP Hong Kong travellers to Sydney.

Circus Oz has had a long involvement with Asia, including ambassadorial activities such as a performance at the launch of the Australia–Korea Year of Friendship in Seoul in 2011. However previous plans to tour South Korea were decimated with a change in government. Circus Oz recognises the need and has a desire to engage in the region but the best way to do this is still unanswered.

Appendix 2 outlines a selection of AMPAG member companies' recent activities in Asia and current areas of interest.

Other companies simply do not have the financial resources or manpower to progress their Asian activities and so outcomes for them will be much slower. This means great expertise, remarkable talent and outstanding creativity are confined to the domestic or established foreign market instead of contributing to the development of Australia's reputation in the targeted Asian countries.

## Onshore

Australian major performing arts companies also regularly contract artists from overseas to work with them here in Australia. It may be in the form of a virtuoso singer or cellist, an artistic director or a chief conductor. These appointments infuse our own artistic practice with new ideas, cultural nuance and technical adeptness that can inspire artists and audiences. The Australian Ballet currently has 15 dancers from overseas including six from Asian countries.

These personal international connections can also provide pathways for nurturing other company interactions—for instance, the Sydney Symphony's Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, world-renowned Vladimir Ashkenazy, has been instrumental in developing the SSO's Chinese–Australian collaboration.

## Education and exchange

The Australia Council also facilitates artist training through bursaries, international secondments and overseas scholarships as well as providing support for hosting talented individuals from overseas to work within the companies here in Australia.

Paul Dyer AO, one of Australia's leading specialists in period performance styles and founder and artistic director of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, completed postgraduate studies in his early career in solo performance with Bob van Asperen at the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague. He performed with many major European orchestras and undertook ensemble direction and orchestral studies with Sigiswald Kuijken and Frans Brüggen. Early intense international engagement significantly contributed to establishing international recognition of his talent and deepened Paul's links to the international 'fraternity'. These relationships have continued to evolve and include Paul's 1998 debut in Tokyo with countertenor Derek Lee Ragin, leading an ensemble of Brandenburg soloists.

Pathways for international exchange are generally more accessible in other Western nations—rather than in the focus countries of Asia.

Our companies have had a long tradition of fertile exchange with companies in Europe, the US, etc. Opera Australia recently produced *A Masked Ball* as a co-production with Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, la Monnaie in Brussels and Norway's National Opera & Ballet and has slated further collaborations next season and beyond. Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia's state opera companies are collaborating with Cape Town Opera and New Zealand Opera on a new production of *Otello* premiering in Queensland later this year.

Dance, like music, may be better positioned to traverse the language barriers that can exist for Australian companies seeking to engage Asian audiences and artists. International collaboration is more problematic for theatre but not insurmountable. It may be the simple addition of subtitles or surtitles. Or the cross-pollination of expression and ideas may occur in more complex ways—Malthouse, for example, is

exploring ways to connect stories in collaboration with a Chinese theatre company. The initiative involves a Chinese director working with Australian performers using a Chinese play translated into English—and the Chinese performers working with an Australia director to create a performance of their Australian production translated into Mandarin. This may lead to new connections, new traditions, new ways to traverse the notional barrier of language and experience.

### **Priorities, prioritise, follow up**

While many of our major companies have visited individual cities within Asia and several are developing focused strategies for particular regions, others are more tentative. Overall our relationships with the Asian arts sector and arts audience are relatively new.

AMPAG members recognise the benefit of focusing on a particular area or company in Asia as their start point, (rather than a scatter-gun approach) with collaboration growing over time. Financial support to enable exploratory visits and individual return visits as needed, as well as ways to fund visits by the company once an opportunity has emerged, is vital.

Consistent connection over time can build mutual trust, and nurture opportunities for closer more nuanced collaboration. Development of DFAT strategies that can support the Majors target long-term engagement in Asia will result in better, deeper, more sustained connections. It will also help to create Australian sector expertise and knowledge of Asia to the benefit of the broader performing arts sector.

Of course long-term engagement is not entered into at the cost of one-off tours. Such tours have an important role. They too can raise the country's profile and provide opportunities to build other networking and branding activity around an Australian event. However, they tend to be resource-heavy providing little in the way of longer term links or opportunities for the performing company.

Attached is a snapshot of recent major performing arts companies' engagement in Asia (see Appendix 2).

### **Leveraging opportunities and mitigating costs**

#### **Cultural missions**

Several performing arts companies have expressed a desire to develop ties with Asia but have not explored where or how this might be achieved. AMPAG recommends DFAT develop a number of targeted cultural equivalents to trade missions that are both fact finding and relationship building opportunities, with government and cultural personnel pursuing shared goals. These would be followed by return visits by a sub-group of delegates or individual participants—and assistance in hosting reciprocal visits for key Asian representatives or artists coming to Australia within a certain period of time e.g. 18 months–3 years from the first outward bound mission.

This will enable cultural exploration to continue in new and varied ways, supporting the development of strong inter-country conversations that also enrich the Australian companies' artistic vision.

### Cost considerations and finance

Although there are barriers to developing our connections in Asia they are not insurmountable. However, they do require perseverance. A major barrier for major performing arts organisations touring to Asian centres is cost.

Performing arts companies' inclination to tour or collaborate with foreign countries and foreign artists is primarily driven by cultural and artistic motives ahead of economic returns. Working overseas is expensive and high risk—touring to Asia is usually only possible if financial support is found to offset the company's additional associated costs such as freight, flights, accommodation. (This is similar to regional touring in Australia.) Companies must also engage a knowledgeable and reliable local agent and/or facilitator to manage the risks of entering a new market. International touring and collaboration is often supported by additional subsidy, philanthropy and sponsorship.

It should also be recognised that Australian government financial support for developing cultural and diplomatic relations has been inadequate, compared to other Western and key Asian countries (see AMPAG article at Appendix 3).

Supplementary forms of modest financial assistance do exist from areas such as the Australia Council for the Arts, corporate sponsorship or the federal government's Australia International Cultural Council (AICC).

However, the AICC's funds are small—the highest grant is \$40,000, which would cover only a fraction of the cost of touring a production of scale, whether theatrical, operatic or orchestral, to any destination in the world. Clearly this is an inadequate response to encouraging a flourishing cultural trade between Australia and our key Asian markets.

Musica Viva is regularly funded, running its tours as part of DFAT's Fine Music Touring Program. But it does this on a shoestring—in 2011 Musica Viva's \$100 000 from DFAT resulted in six Australian groups touring to 10 countries, presenting 28 concerts and 18 workshops. The multiplier benefit that the nation derives from such a small investment is immense.

We are aware companies can also apply for some country-specific funding through DFAT's various foundations and councils to promote relationships with Asian countries, including China, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and India. However, the grants are generally less than those funded by the AICC. Also, according to some companies, the processes for decision-making are impenetrable.

These funds can support smaller targeted activities, which are valuable—but, without a strategy that includes our nation's leading performing art companies, or performances of art form excellence and of scale, they run the risk of being isolated and inadequate. AMPAG is not critical of these funds and recognises they have supported good work—such as the Sydney Symphony's outreach program in Seoul, funded by the Australia Korea Foundation in honour of the 50th Anniversary of Australia–Korea diplomatic relations. But AMPAG believes such funds are at best supplementary and should be complementing financial support for larger scales of engagement. This may be via philanthropy, stimulated by matched government funding, sponsorship or creating another tier of DFAT support.

Festivals are emerging as key venues for international creative expression and collaboration. However, Australian companies have had difficulty accepting such invitations that often have relatively short lead times, because there is no one empowered within DAFT with both knowledge and resources who can provide quick response support. This can transform an opportunity into a negative cultural impression by suggesting Australia lacks conviction or capacity—an image that flies in the face of Australia's desire to build its reputation and presence in these markets.

### Other barriers

**Problem 1:** Lack of developed relationships with the major venues in Asian cities and a lack of knowledge of their particular interests, physical specifications and ways of working.

**Solution:** Develop a facilitated strategy to enable performing arts organisations to more easily engage with venues.

**Problem 2:** Lack of overview of the region to avoid tour clashes.

**Solution:** Develop a coordinated touring program that doesn't clash with other groups and organisations. Also develop a regional overview including a communication strategy that outlines other international cultural activities in the area as well mapping the local performance calendar and programming patterns.

**Problem 3:** Access to the right agents in Asia to facilitate touring. Some Australian companies set off on major Asian tours and, because of the lack of knowledge and strategic facilitation at the destination, perform in second rank or unsuitable venues.

**Solution:** Create a series of cultural missions to develop first-hand knowledge and allow for locating and vetting of potential agents and facilitators.

**Problem 4:** Different languages—which is why dance and music often do better in Asian countries than theatre.

**Solutions:** Provide financial support for cultural collaborations that explore use of dual languages or exchange of language and story (e.g. Malthouse—but not limited to any specific approach).  
Identify arts-based bilingual people who can provide translation support.

**Problem 5:** Australia as a nation continues to lack Asian cultural literacy. Australian performing arts companies need to develop expertise to understand the cultural, economic, social and technical parameters of working in Asia.

**Solutions:** Build local connections with target country groups living in Australia. Invite guest speakers from creative industries in target countries to visit and host forums, smaller dinners etc.  
Investment is needed in internships, mentorships, scholarships, research delegations and exchanges so that the Australian performing arts workforce, especially the next generation, is ready for a sophisticated touring program in Asia. In Mainland China, for example, there is a great hunger for master-classes and high level performance training. Touring Australian companies have the opportunity to extend their reach while touring through partnerships with tertiary performing arts academies.

### What work should be toured/what collaboration supported?

To further cultural collaboration and integration in a way that will build an increasingly sophisticated understanding of Australia in Asian countries, it is essential that the strategies consider the quality of the work showcased and ensure we are featuring some of our finest work, including works of scale.

### Work smarter—stakeholder forums

There may be a role for DFAT and the Australia Council to share insights and feedback on strategic and cultural priorities, program ideas and opportunities in Asia to better leverage activities and investment without homogenising international engagement. The screen sector, coordinated by the Office for the Arts with representatives from DFAT, Austrade and the industry, has had an industry consultative group for many years. It meets twice a year to discuss international sector engagement and development. While the make-up of an arts-based consultative network may be a little different—and a forum such as this does not negate other Australian Council-supported individual company or artists' engagement in Asia—it is an opportunity to consider priorities and opportunities holistically.

### Develop embassy knowledge, capacity and insight

Australian embassies struggle to develop/promote/engage cultural product. Our cultural showcases are underfunded relative to other countries. There is hunger in the arts sector to take our work to the world but there is little financial support.

Australia is the 13th<sup>1</sup> biggest economy in the world but we're being outgunned by smaller economies such as the Netherlands<sup>2</sup>, which allocates an average of 5 per cent of its annual budget to National Cultural Funds.

Many embassies are keen to use our major performing arts companies for their soft diplomacy activities, but can do little more than direct the company where to apply for funding to undergo the tour, host a cocktail party once the company has reached its destination, and fix any logistical problems that might arise.

While our embassies might be underfunded to properly support Australian cultural products, they sometimes also suffer from a substantial lack of interest. For example, one of Australia's smaller symphony orchestras has attempted to encourage DFAT to use its extensive set of CDs of Australian music as a resource in its embassies—in the library, to play at functions, to give to local artists, educational institutions etc.—but for whatever reason, their attempts have been to no avail.

In AMPAG's preliminary discussions with DFAT during 2012 there was agreement on the merits of including, as a standard part of diplomatic staff training, a briefing session about Australian performing arts and culture. However, the opportunity did not materialise. This sort of briefing would be developed with the intention of deepening embassy staff knowledge and access to the nations' cultural sector as well as briefing staff on opportunities for synergies within their region. It could include embassy staff attending an Australian major performing arts company's performance while back in Australia. We also encourage all diplomatic posts to stock a well-equipped library or access to sound and video files of Australian recordings of classic and contemporary music/dance/opera/theatre for use at functions or for sharing as gifts when the opportunities allow.

### Developing strategies for targeted Asian countries

The Major performing arts companies want to grow their own footprint in Asia for cultural and artistic returns that will also reflect positively on Brand Australia.

While not all DFAT's target Asian countries are noted as priorities for individual major performing arts companies—and other Asian countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan and Thailand have had some shared cultural activity with the majors—many of our companies have the flexibility to align future activities with DFAT priorities because they are still in the early stages of considering how and where their Asian activities focus should rest.

Appendix 2 lists some the member's recent activities in Asia that, to varying degrees, advance several different types of inter-country engagement—cultural, diplomatic and economic. We believe these activities could be enhanced through better resourcing, closer ongoing communication and improved coordination between AMPAG, individual major performing arts companies and DFAT representatives in

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.economywatch.com/world\\_economy/australia/?page=full](http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/australia/?page=full)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/files/134/en/Financing\\_the\\_Arts\\_and\\_Culture\\_in\\_the\\_EU.pdf](http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/files/134/en/Financing_the_Arts_and_Culture_in_the_EU.pdf)

Australia—initially by identifying key ‘go-to’ people in Australian embassies in DFAT’s Asian focus countries.

**For further information**

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## APPENDIX 1

### List of AMPAG member companies and their location

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra	South Australia
Australian Brandenburg Orchestra	New South Wales
Australian Chamber Orchestra	New South Wales
Bangarra Dance Theatre	New South Wales
Bell Shakespeare	New South Wales
Belvoir	New South Wales
Black Swan State Theatre Company	Western Australia
Circus Oz	Victoria
Malthouse Theatre	Victoria
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra	Victoria
Melbourne Theatre Company	Victoria
Musica Viva Australia	New South Wales
Opera Australia	New South Wales
Opera Queensland	Queensland
Orchestra Victoria	Victoria
Queensland Ballet	Queensland
Queensland Symphony Orchestra	Queensland
Queensland Theatre Company	Queensland
State Opera South Australia	South Australia
State Theatre Company of South Australia	South Australia
Sydney Dance Company	New South Wales
Sydney Symphony	New South Wales
Sydney Theatre Company	New South Wales
The Australian Ballet	Victoria
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra	Tasmania
Western Australian Ballet	Western Australia
West Australian Opera	Western Australia
West Australian Symphony Orchestra	Western Australia

## APPENDIX 2

### MAJOR PERFORMING ARTS COMPANIES IN ASIA



#### BANGARRA

Bangarra tours internationally for 2–5 weeks each year, shifting focus from North America and Europe to countries in Asia and South America.

Bangarra's international tour plans are often made possible through Australia's diplomatic relations.

As Australia's leading Indigenous performing arts organisation, Bangarra is often invited to be a cultural ambassador of Australia to showcase the world's oldest living culture and to showcase Australia's creativity and diversity.

- In 2013 Bangarra performed in Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi), in partnership with DFAT and the Australian International Cultural Council, to celebrate 40 years of bilateral relations between Australia and Vietnam.
- In 2012 Bangarra performed in Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar), at the invitation of the Mongolian Arts Council, and supported by Rio Tinto.
- In 2010 Bangarra performed in China (Beijing), as part of the 'Year of Australian Culture in China' launch at the National Museum of China.
- In 2005 Bangarra performed in Japan (Aichi Prefecture), representing Australia at the Aichi Expo.

While representing Australia overseas, Bangarra always conducts dance and cultural workshops for the host nation. Most recently in Vietnam Bangarra conducted workshops for several community organisations, including Hanoi Youth Theatre, Ho Chi Minh Dance School and the Vietnamese charity 'Know one, Teach one', a vocational training organisation for street and disadvantaged youth in Vietnam. En route back to Australia, Bangarra also hosted dance and cultural workshops in Thailand (Bangkok) supported by the Australian Embassy.

#### **PREVIOUS TOURS to DFAT Priority countries include:**

Japan: 2005, 1995, 1990

China: 2010, (Beijing, China at the National Museum) 2002, 1992

Indonesia: 1996, 1991

India: 1996

South Korea: 1998

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia at the Opera Theatre: 2012

#### **Purpose**

Cultural exchange

#### **Outcomes**

Cultural exchange and Australian diplomacy.

Engagement: Invited and publicly ticketed events, all performances sold out in each location.

Huge local media coverage and significant Australian mainstream media attention.

High profile media coverage and government recognition; development benefit for company's artists.

### **Feedback**

China was straightforward because it was a few dancers in an Australian embassy-driven program.

Mongolia was challenging as it was organised by the Arts Council of Mongolia (a non-profit organisation) in a developing country with little prior experience of touring companies.

### **Funding**

China: DFAT; Mongolia: funds via Arts Council of Mongolia provided by Rio Tinto.

### **Requirements to continue international touring**

Properly staffed administration to free up CEO to develop partnerships in Asia.

### **Sustainability**

Get the staff support to enable CEO to focus on this area and keep doing what the company does well which is international touring.

### **Planning**

Bangarra plans 12 to 24 months out so needs long lead times.

### **Company outlook and needs**

Bangarra is keen to further engage with Asia in particular China, Korea and Indonesia.

There are no limitations on what is possible, beyond establishing the necessary partnerships required to collaborate and fund international touring activity.

At present, Bangarra does not have a representative agent in (or an ongoing dialogue with) Japan, China, Indonesia, India or South Korea. It would be interested in further discussing any opportunity in these countries.

## **BELVOIR/SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY**

### **PREVIOUS POSSIBLE TOUR**

Invitation from the Ibsen Festival in Delhi to open the festival with *The Wild Duck* in December 2012. The invitation arrived in July/August, following trip to India in June by STC and Belvoir, funded by DFAT, to investigate possibilities of artist exchange.

### **Funding**

Short by \$50,000—it fell outside the funding rounds of the AICC. A further plea to the department was unsuccessful.

## **Planning**

Timeframe was very tight—but identified the difficulty for Australia in applying quick response funds. Therefore, the funds spent in laying the groundwork through the earlier trip to India were wasted.

## **Outcomes**

Cultural diplomacy/cultural exchange.

## **MALTHOUSE**

Malthouse is developing a co-production/cultural exchange exercise with the National Theatre of China in Beijing—it has not previously done this kind of work in Asia.

It's a three-year exercise:

Year 1: Australian director to direct an Australian play in Mandarin in Beijing April 2013.

Year 2: Chinese director to direct in English in Melbourne at The Malthouse in July 2014.

Year 3: TBC co-production that is performed in both Melbourne and Beijing.

## **Outcomes**

Malthouse expects to develop new works, explore international co-production, expand its Melbourne audience (especially its CALD audience), and tour resulting productions.

## **Funding**

Chinese government support going to the Chinese producing company for the Australian-directed show in Beijing. Philanthropic donations for the Chinese-directed production in Melbourne. TBC re co-production in year 3.

## **Building sustainability**

Encouragement of foreign companies working in Australia to provide pathways into their home markets—for example, Chinese SOEs sponsoring Australian companies to present work in China.

## **Countries of interest**

China, Singapore, Korea.

## **Planning**

Opportunities like this arise rarely—need long-term planning.

## **MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

### **FUTURE PLANS**

Possibly to China, Singapore, Hong Kong and India.

### **Purpose**

Trade mission, cultural exchange, touring.

### **Expected outcomes**

International profile and engaging corporate partners.

**KPIs**

Increased profile, engagement with corporate partner, artistic standard, engagement with local audience and community, engagement with current MSO subscribers.

**Funding**

Combination of private, corporate and government support.

**More information required**

India

**Capacity**

Will need to reduce concerts in 'commercial' season which will have an impact on revenue.

**Sustainability**

Through corporate partnerships, cultural/education exchanges and local engagement.

**MUSICA VIVA**

Musica Viva operates DFAT's Fine Music Touring program in Asia and has done for decades.

**PREVIOUS TOURS**

In the past four years Musica Viva has been to India, China, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Brunei, Nepal, South Korea, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Thailand.

**Purpose of trip**

Cultural exchange—all tours undertaken as part of DFAT's Fine Music Touring Program, which is a cultural diplomacy program. The aim of the program is to convey positive messages about Australia's contemporary arts, cultural diversity and sophistication through the presentation of high quality Australian music in Asia.

**Outcomes**

The trips are planned in partnership with local Australian embassies and high commissions, which in turn work with local venues, festivals or other presenters. In general the Australian musicians are very well received by audiences and there are mostly good levels of press coverage.

Many trips involve collaboration between the visiting musicians and a local musician or ensemble. The limited budget restricts the amount of time the musicians can spend together in advance preparing the work, so usually these collaborations are on a more limited scale—perhaps one or two pieces within a concert. This is an area that could be developed further with more resources. There is certainly interest in this type of collaboration by the visiting artists, the local presenter and/or diplomatic post.

**Funding**

Musica Viva manages the Fine Music Touring Program for DFAT. The annual funding covers administration and enables Musica Viva to pay the touring costs and sometimes artists' fees for about four to six Asian tours per year. The company believes it could send many more artists than it does.

**Ongoing contact**

With the high number of countries serviced by the program (all of South East Asia, India and China) and the low level of resourcing (about one day per week by one staff member) means it is difficult to build and nurture direct relationships with local presenters and festivals.

The contact is mostly with the diplomatic posts but we believe more could be leveraged if the resources were in place. An increase in resources would be needed to build direct relationships with local presenters and/or to pay local producers to maximize performing opportunities by booking concerts with high profile, local venues (which diplomatic posts don't have relationships or expertise in dealing with).

### **FUTURE TOURS**

In 2012–13 Musica Viva had anticipated touring to India, China, Philippines and Vietnam. However, in the light of the uncertainty of DFAT funding, Musica Viva is now adjusting its touring program.

### **Expected outcomes**

Musica Viva sees these tours as great opportunities to provide Australia's best musicians with international performing opportunities and to enable international communities to experience Australian music.

These performances also provide the springboard for many other relationships and conversations, bringing together potential international partners in trade, investment, and development. Importantly, efforts are made in each region to extend the performances with workshops in schools and with local musicians, giving Australian missions direct links into their communities.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability relies on the continuation of the DFAT program. Very few Asian presenters have the capacity to pay both the artists fees and expenses. Musica Viva is now reassessing its international touring and will have to drastically cut tours to Asia should DFAT support be curtailed.

### **Planning**

The program is split between taking advantage of existing local opportunities, such as festivals, and initiating tour ideas based on artists or their programs.

## **QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY**

### **PREVIOUS TOURS**

QTC hasn't visited any Asian countries in the last four years. The company did however coordinate the Australian delegation to the Festival of the Pacific Arts (FOPA) which was held in Honiara in 2012.

### **Purpose of FOPA**

Cultural exchange and regional development.

### **Outcomes**

Value of trip: Australian Indigenous arts was exposed to all Australia's Pacific neighbours. It assisted in cultural diplomacy for the region.

### **Funding**

QTC tendered for the contract from the Australia Council—therefore, federal government funding.

### **Ongoing contact**

Some

**Funding**

Administrative funds. Any tours will depend on touring fees and funding.

**Capacity**

QTC may need a touring coordinator.

**Company interest**

The company is developing a relationship with South Korea and in particular a partnership with the Daejeon Performing Arts Centre. The company aims to have established an Asian touring circuit in five years.

In the shorter term the company is entering into technical secondments.

There may be ways in which theatre companies such as QTC could engage in other areas of exchange such as education, given the volume of quality educational arts activities QTC and other major performing arts companies create. However, there needs to be well resourced preliminary work done to identify where synergies exist given Australia's education system and the educational material being developed and if there are clear synergies or opportunities to adapt to particular target markets in Asia.

**Company needs or barriers**

More information required on the touring circuit in Singapore, India, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia.

While QTC is current developing its Asian strategy, it is doing it alone, without additional or focused resources which create difficulties and slows the process down.

There is a strong interest in some Asian performing arts centres for more 'artistic' (that is, less mainstream) theatrical works. The difficulty is understanding what the venues want and getting them to see the work when it's on in Australia.

**Barriers to proceed**

Time and money.

**STATE THEATRE COMPANY SA**

Building on a successful tour in 2009 to Korea, STCSA is planning to tour by 2015, and then every second year.

**PREVIOUS TOUR**

Korea in 2009 at the Daegu Opera House (capacity 1500), for the Daegu International Musicals Festival.

**Outcomes**

Fantastic exposure and learning experience for all concerned—cast, creative, writer, company, Adelaide-based co-production company Asia Theatricals.

**Response**

There's a very strong audience for musical theatre, but the audience had never previously experienced an original Australian work. Very popular—high capacity attendances.

A lot of media interest and production received four nominations for festival awards.

### **Funding**

Korean Festival paid most of costs; Arts SA contributed \$14,000—limited opportunities because invitation was received very close to tour dates.

### **FUTURE TOURS**

STCSA is planning to tour by 2015, and then every second year.

### **Future funding**

The company expects to be able to manage a biennial tour within existing resources, with some external representation and funding/sponsorship for actual tour costs. It has a strong connection with Asia Theatricals, the promoter/producer based in Adelaide.

### **Sustainability**

In Korea the best opportunity is musical theatre rather than drama, but in Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan, festivals present some opportunities.

### **Planning**

Requires long-range strategy, building of connections, creation of the right productions, persuasion to get presenters to see proposed productions.

## **SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY**

### **PREVIOUS TOUR**

Shanghai, China for the World Expo\*  
South Korean Arts Market PAMS in 2012

### **Funding**

Sydney Dance Company has had DFAT funding to perform in Shanghai and Bangkok—but these have been one-off trips and have not developed into a touring pathway.

### **Outcomes**

\* Technically and organisationally difficult. Audience responses were 'OK but we were part of a large mixed "showcase" program'.

### **More information required**

Actively pursuing a Chinese agent.  
Korea, Taiwan, China

### **Aim**

To build Asian touring into our regular touring schedule.

### **Sustainability**

Grow contacts and find appropriate agents.

### **Planning**

At least 12–18 months in advance.

## **SYDNEY SYMPHONY**

Intending to build a presence in Southern China, particularly Guangdong province, the sister state of NSW and Guangzhou, the sister city of Sydney. In July 2012 the SSO signed an MOU with the Xinghai Conservatory in Guangzhou to commence a pilot residency and cultural exchange program. The signing was witnessed by the Premier of NSW and Governor of

Guangdong Province. There is an increasing role for the SSO in creating a point of coalescence for Australian interests.

### **Strategies**

1. Building a truly mutual exchange program with Xinghai Conservatory (2012) and Guangzhou Opera House (2013 +), leveraging intellectual capital and expertise.
2. Engagement with governments and leveraging SSO activity through joint activity, including digital and social media.
3. Engagement with the business sector through best-practice corporate partnerships.
4. Partnership with the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney for sector development through young artist exchanges and promoting post-graduate studies (services trade), ensuring the vibrancy of the orchestral music ecosystem in Australia and with our partners in China.
5. Sector development through the engagement of Australian composers and joint commissioning activities to bridge artistic and cultural divides.
6. Monitor developments and market opportunities in Indonesia.

### **PREVIOUS TOURS**

- 2009 China
- 2011 Japan and Korea
- 2012 China (October)

The orchestra is intending to have a presence in China every year from now on, both touring and other activities, as well as being regular visitors to Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

### **Funding**

Corporate sponsorship, with some EMGD funds.

No funds from either NSW Government or Federal Government for touring.

### **Building sustainability**

Working with post is very useful—but potential not yet fully explored. Tourism development angle (e.g. see how Austria leverages the Vienna Philharmonic) has been unsuccessful for the orchestra so far.

### **Outcomes**

The concert in Beijing 2012 was used by the Ambassador as the official recognition of the 40th Anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Australia. There were several senior ministerial guests of the Ambassador—but no attendance from Canberra.

## **SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY**

### **PREVIOUS TOURS**

- 2010 Shanghai, China—Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre and the Shanghai Theatre Academy
- 2012 Mumbai, Bangalore and New Delhi—various venues and meetings with several companies and presenters

## **CHINA 2010**

### **Purpose**

Resident Director Stefo Nantsou undertook a research trip into Chinese Theatre and Culture in 2010.

### **Outcomes—lessons learnt**

Drivers behind programming in China appeared at the time (2010) to be mainly economic rather than artistic.

Stefo Nantsou found the trip really inspiring on an artistic level and found the energy and enthusiasm of artists inspiring. He met with many alternative young theatre groups who were challenging the mainstream trends in programming. However, he felt that the artistic content was directed mainly towards the mainstream, with little experimental work. The production values and execution of the productions was very high.

### **Funding**

Australia Council

## **INDIA 2012**

### **Purpose**

Invited by DFAT for a scoping mission, both to feedback on existing and potential opportunities for Australian theatre productions to go to India, as well as to meet with theatre companies and playwrights to scope out opportunities for cultural exchange.

### **Outcomes**

Valuable experience to meet potential new playwrights and to get a realistic insight into the difficulties into touring in the Indian region.

The Indian market is still somewhat under developed both in terms of technical facilities and financial sustainability.

### **Funding**

DFAT

### **Ongoing contact**

Current active Asian contacts in China, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and India.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

Discussions underway.

### **Purpose of future activities**

Entry into the Asian market for revenue and cultural exchange purposes.

### **KPIs**

Profitability, strong critical response and demonstrated audience demand.

### **Funding**

Presenter fees topped up with corporate and philanthropic support.

### **Capacity**

Touring productions to Asia would be at the cost of touring to other countries due to the staffing and capacity limitations of the company.

## **Sustainability**

Potential to develop venue and festival presenter relationship as well as development of co-productions that will make ongoing touring sustainable.

## **Planning**

Opportunities arise constantly from various countries that the company is unable to respond to, due to existing commitments in the domestic market and capacity and resource issues. The company tends to prioritise markets for strategic purposes including potential revenue, impact on STC brand in domestic market, and export and showcase opportunities for Australian actors and creatives.

## **THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET**

The Australian Ballet has been touring regularly to Asia since 1968. Between tours, exchanges, collaborations of various kinds, the company has maintained ongoing contact and engagement with the region. Tours to China, Japan and other parts of Asia have occurred in 1993, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2007 and 2010. The Ballet rents its productions to companies in Asia and has had a number of artist exchanges.

## **TOURS TO ASIA IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS**

Tokyo & Nagoya Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, Aichi Performing Arts Centre

## **Outcomes**

International validation of The Australian Ballet's world class quality, showing unique Australian works overseas, provide rewarding and developmental artistic experiences to artists and other cultural workers—it's a retention strategy for Australian cultural workers to stay in Australia. The Ballet's presenter has a long history of successful arts presentation.

## **Media interest**

Pre-tour media undertaken with two artists travelling to Tokyo.

## **Observations about the trip**

Confirmed incredible diligence and efficiency of our hosts in Japan.

## **Funding**

Presenter fees and donations

## **Ongoing contact**

The Australian Ballet has rented productions to the ballet company associated with the presenting organisation. Two dancers from the same company will perform at the Ballet's international gala Oct. 31 to Nov 3.

## **FUTURE TOURS**

Future tours are likely.

## **OTHER CONTACT**

The Australian ambassador in Vietnam facilitated the Australian Ballet working with the Vietnamese national ballet. Renowned Australian Ballet dancer Colin Peasley recently completed (May 2013) preparing dancers from the Viet Nam National Opera and Ballet for a *Graduation Ball* performance.

### **Touring overseas—an impossible dream?**

Australian audiences have become very used to our major performing arts companies receiving rave reviews overseas. That international response has become part of our national creative identity, affirming we can cut it on the world's mainstages—whether orchestral, dance, opera, circus or theatre.

But international touring is not easy for performing arts companies, especially in the current economic circumstances when overseas currencies and economic conditions are struggling or weak, and the value of the Australian dollar is high.

Regardless of the state of national or global economics, major performing arts companies are expected to tour as part of their brief to engage with audiences around the country. Some of the larger companies are expected to tour internationally, as a condition of their funding agreements. This highlights their importance to the nation in 'soft diplomacy'. *Creative Australia*, the country's recently released national cultural policy, emphasises the importance of our engagement overseas, especially in Asia—and a major vehicle for such engagement is often one of the MPA companies.

The National Touring Framework (April 2012)<sup>3</sup> stated:

... some Australian companies may find overseas interest slowing due to falling demand in international markets, or because overseas buyers are subject to funding and revenue cuts. Similarly, the high dollar is making Australian products less competitive in global markets, exacerbating the loss of international demand due to economic recession and public sector contraction.

And the companies themselves have the evidence. Recently the Sydney Symphony had to abandon its planned European tour after it became clear that the levels of fees that could be achieved in the current economic environment were inadequate.

As reported in *The Australian* (3 April 2013), 'large-scale overseas tours—the 100-strong SSO tour was to cost \$500,000 in flights and freight alone—rely on venue fees to offset costs. The orchestra's 2010 tour of Japan and South Korea was "cost-neutral" in that venue fees covered touring costs'.

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<sup>3</sup> – Prepared by Rick Heath and Harley Stumm for the Australia Council for the Arts

According to the Sydney Symphony's Managing Director, Rory Jeffes, 'As planning progressed, it became clear that the logistical and financial hurdles to be overcome were insurmountable in the current economic climate and it would not be in the best interests of any of the parties concerned to proceed with the tour.'

Circus Oz has toured to all over the world, most recently and most frequently to the US and Europe. As in other industries, the strong Australian dollar has made it difficult to negotiate the performance fees required to take the show on international tours. This has meant that the company has had to make an increased investment in international touring to maintain a presence. Despite that, Circus Oz believes it's of critical importance that it continues international touring—building its profile and making sure its uniquely Australian identity is showcased to an international audience. It also allows the company to maintain already established relationships and to keep Australian cultural achievements in international sightlines.

For trade and international relations, cultural ties are an enduring and effective way to build networks in both the public and private sectors. International touring reinforces Australia's standing as a stable, sophisticated and creative nation with a diverse culture. It also promotes more positive images of our multicultural community, improves market access for Australian cultural exports and promotes Australian tourism and education. Yet opportunities are lost because of a lack of a cohesive cross-portfolio government vision for international touring programs.

Minimal funding is tagged for overseas touring. In fact, the Australia Council has approximately \$8 million for international touring which is expected to support touring needs and aspirations across all art forms as well as help support our country's efforts to develop our cultural image within countries of high diplomatic and economic importance.

Scant funds from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are available. Generally, the cultural diplomacy branch funds are woefully inadequate compared to other developed nations. The Australia International Cultural Council (a quango of DFAT) provided \$470 000 last year (eroded from \$500 000 in 2010) to support international touring with an upper limit of \$40 000 for a grant. Clearly this is insufficient to tour anything but the smallest touring parties. Musica Viva is regularly funded, running its tours as part of DFAT's Fine Music Touring Program. But it does this on a shoestring—in 2011 Musica Viva's \$100 000 from DFAT resulted in six Australian groups touring to 10 countries, presenting 28 concerts and 18 workshops. The multiplier benefit that the nation derives from such a small investment is immense.

Occasional funding is provided for one-off exploratory projects, often with no follow-up funding. Belvoir and the Sydney Theatre Company travelled to India in June 2012 funded by DFAT, to investigate possibilities of artist exchange. However, no further funding has been made available to take up opportunities established during the visit. Belvoir has been negotiating overseas tours this year, including *Wild Duck*

touring in May to Vienna and Amsterdam. However, other tours are unlikely go ahead without support.

Belvoir's experience not only highlights the need for adequate funds to be committed up front, but also for a more flexible government response.

It also highlights the consistency and follow-up planning needed for building successful relationships. DFAT targets its 'priority countries' which vary from year to year, a policy that creates logistical problems for long-term touring arrangements. While refreshing its priority countries annually may suit the government's diplomatic objectives, darting into countries on a one-off basis with no follow-up will not result in long-term relationships for major performing arts companies. Without those relationships, developing tours into the future is almost impossible.

Yet the Federal Government has agreed Australia should develop its cultural footprint in Asia. Asia is a complex and diverse environment. To engage in cultural exchange requires new resources to support cultural collaboration and experimentation over a period of time. A reallocation of current funds is an inadequate and piecemeal response.

The *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper, released last year, highlighted various pathways to deeper engagement so that 'Australia will have stronger, deeper and broader cultural links with Asian nations'. They include:

- Encourage cultural and arts communities in Australia to become fully part of the region through two-way collaboration and partnership arrangements, including through training and capacity building.
- Re-examine government activities that support artists to achieve success in Asia and promote Australia as a culturally vibrant and open country, including through the Government's consideration of the Review of the Australia Council.
- Revamp the Australian International Cultural Council to better coordinate our support for cultural and artistic organisations to enhance promotion of Australia as a culturally vibrant and open country.
- Strengthen cultural diplomacy and exchange to build trust, understanding and confidence in our cultural, political, security and economic relationships.

None of these pathways are possible without adequate resourcing. Australia needs an increased cultural export fund to enable Australia to better respond to international opportunities, undertake more significant cultural diplomacy and further position itself as a creative and exciting partner for innovative investment projects.