

National Cultural Policy Submission

Dylan Imeneo

Submitted: On behalf of a for-profit arts business
As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide)
As an artist
As an individual

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

I think this goal, out of all of the pillars, has been the most properly achieved and supported, we now live in a society that is increasingly synonymous with proper recognition of First Nations peoples (I do mean within art **specifically**, not in all areas of life, of which so many have been sadly neglected)

A Place for Every Story

A place for every story is great in principle, but there is NOT a place for every story, if you are in classical music, even composing new classical music like myself, you will know that there is no place anymore for traditional music, the restraints stem from the way music is envisioned in the funding landscape.

Music has ALWAYS received less funding than every other "tangible" art form, no performance of any musical work has ever made a composer \$500 million at auction, nor would it ever be expected to, frankly visual art price tags are an indication ONLY of the rampant organised crime and fraud that exists within the art world and should not be applauded but condemned.

A musical work may sell tickets, but every performance takes years of experience, usually a financially dubious decision to obtain a degree in music, and labour time in extreme quantities, the sales figures that classical music ensembles produce are deceptive due to its extreme cost.

The Centrality of the Artist

Utterly non-existent. Let me be frank, artists in my field are underpaid, or work for free, or at a loss by any labour standard, a recent performance of my own works

(organised by myself) cost me a substantial amount of money (in the area of \$3.5k), for which I recouped approximately \$500, plus whatever I can make from album sales once the mixing and mastering is completed. For this work I also committed labour time and resources far in excess of \$3k (at minimum wage). I also underpaid the labour I hired for this concert, well below minimum wage, the performers were thankful to receive so much support.

Outside of classical music, when working on commercial projects at a competitive rate I would be making approximately \$4 per hour, well below minimum wage also. This reflects that attitude to audio and music work in Australia in general, from my experience I cannot conclude that "centrality of the artist" is of any import to Australian government unless they run everything in pursuit of profit and not art.

Strong Institutions

Within my own discipline of classical music the institutions are very resilient, but they are also dying, not from a lack of popularity, or refusal to adapt and develop, but because of a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of classical ensembles and organisations, the labour and skill required to produce high quality classical music is expensive by its very nature. See above.

Reaching the Audience

Classical music has a very good audience in Melbourne for a city of its size; most places around the world do not play host to such talent as can be found here. The problem here is simple, let me give a real life example:

I was part of a recent choral performance with over 150 performers, some with instruments.

The choir all worked for free and attended upwards of 20 hours of mandatory rehearsals in the ensuing weeks, and had been generally preparing for the performance for several months at regular choir rehearsals, of which there is a paid membership.

Six or so of us, including myself, gave up personal time to help set up for the performance, cater our own food and drink, transport items etc. I personally worked dangerous heavy lifting manual labour from 7am-3pm the morning of the performance and from 10pm-2am that evening, this was all volunteer.

We sold out 2 performances of approx. 250 people at an average of \$50 per ticket for just over an hour long performance.

The general comment was that the performance was fantastic, and though ticket prices were a bit high, it was definitely worth it.

After what was by all metrics a successful show, when including venue hire, performer labour for the instrumental professionals involved, catering, truck hire, insurance, programs, video and audio recording, editing, and any additional costs, the ensemble made a collective loss of **at least \$10000**.

The audience is not enough. Support is needed from government.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

The First Nations pillar is important to me as an artist and individual, however it is perhaps not within the usual scope of my own professional discipline.

A Place for Every Story

The legacy of European music is still important, even as we enter a new era of acknowledgement about colonialisation, which I very much welcome.

The Centrality of the Artist

I have said my piece, see above.

Strong Institutions

Without institutions that can rely on funding or making back SOME money on ticket sales, there can be no confidence in the strength of these institutions, and no money to commission new works by living Australian composers. Without new life and vitality these institutions become weak, which starts the cycle once again.

Reaching the Audience

Without an audience art dies, but it also dies without government support; the audience is there but they are not enough on their own.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

Some recognition of the fact that economic viability IS not and MUST not be regarded as the purpose of art or arts funding, very few artists have ever made large amounts of money, we find value elsewhere, but without support from governments for smaller voices art WILL become the domain of the wealthy alone, which is by definition not a healthy or representative landscape at all.