



Australian Major Performing Arts Group
SUBMISSION
to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
FOREIGN POLICY WHITE PAPER**

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Introduction: foreign policy and the arts

The arts have a vital role to play in advancing Australia's foreign policy priorities.

Through their contribution to public diplomacy, the arts offer unique opportunities to reflect Australia's values and identity as a stable, sophisticated and creative nation that is both culturally diverse and socially cohesive. Cultural ties promote positive images of our multicultural community, offer forums for fostering people-to-people, business-to-business and government-to-government relationships, improve market access for Australian cultural exports and promote Australian tourism and education.

Further, in a world where rising populist nationalism has the potential to create distrust and hostility between cultures, the ability of the arts to build people-to-people understanding and respect becomes even more important.

A coordinated strategic approach that includes effective planning and resourcing is required to take full advantage of what the arts can offer in an international context, and Australia's major performing arts companies are pleased to be able to contribute to the development of this white paper as a step towards realising this vision.

Australia's 'major performing arts' (MPA) companies inspire millions through theatre, circus, contemporary dance, classical ballet, classical music, opera, musicals and comedy.

The Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG) is the umbrella group for these companies (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. They are often positioned as national or state 'flagship' companies, bringing a level of respect and gravitas that can be particularly powerful in certain diplomatic settings.

In addition to the majors, a diverse range of other key performing arts companies also tour the globe, often working strategically with Australia Council support to nurture international audience and sector connections, and offering their own unique capacities to leverage people-to-people links.

Public diplomacy as a key pillar of Australia's foreign policy

It is recommended that the white paper positions public diplomacy, including cultural diplomacy, as a core pillar to advance Australia's security interests, business and cultural prosperity.

The unique potential of cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is founded on 'the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding'.¹ The benefits are felt long-term, through building people-to-people relationships, enhancing socio-cultural understanding or creating positive environments for trade and foreign investment.

In particular, the performing arts have the ability to draw people together in relatively 'neutral' settings to share experiences on an immediate and very human level. Music, dance and physical theatre can transcend language, while theatrical performance can take audiences on narrative journeys that build empathy and insights into unfamiliar situations and cultures.

This unique potential, which can go well beyond image or brand building, will not be fully realised unless it is acknowledged as a central component of Australia's foreign policy.

Other nations take cultural diplomacy very seriously. China, for example, sees it as central to the way it engages internationally, and Australia needs to be able to respond and reciprocate, given China's importance in world order, the Asian region, trade and as a named priority country.

AMPAG members acknowledge that recognition and support for cultural diplomacy have been growing in Australia; however, they see it as still proportionately less developed and less well resourced here than in other comparable territories such as the UK,² Canada, Germany and Scandinavian countries.

Economic benefits

World Creative estimates that cultural and creative industries generated around 29.5 million jobs globally in 2015, and revenue of around US\$2,250 billion annually (see Appendix 3). In Australia, the cultural sector is a major driver of national income, contributing \$50 billion towards GDP, with over \$4.2 billion from the arts.³

In relation to tourism, around 40% of all international visitors to Australia undertake an arts activity,⁴ and the arts can also be a key influencer in attracting tourists in the first place. Tourism Research Australia reports increases in international tourism in 2016 across a range of

¹ Milton C. Cummings, Jr. Ph.D., *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: a Survey*. Center for Arts and Culture, 2003, p. 1. www.culturalpolicy.org

² For example, the British Council Mission states: "The British Council's founding articles set out the belief that the world will be a better, safer, more prosperous place if people and peoples have a 'friendly knowledge and understanding' of each other and that the United Kingdom's long term influence, economic growth and security benefit greatly from that. Everything the British Council does going forward must and will be aligned with this mission to contribute to the best future for the UK in the world." www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/press/british-council-improved-engagement-and-governance

³ 2008/09 ABS figures, quoted in *Arts Nation: An Overview of Australian Arts*, Australia Council, March 2015; page 36; <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/arts-nation-final-27-feb-54f5f492882da.pdf>

⁴ *Arts Nation*, op cit, page 8

activities, with holiday visitors up 16%, nights up 12% and spending generated through visits to festivals and cultural events increasing by 16%.⁵ The impact of arts tourism on the economy also extends beyond the purchase of a single ticket as it can stimulate related activities such as flight and hotel bookings, food and other retail activities.

On the world stage, Australian major performing arts companies regularly embark on a large range of high-profile and prestigious international engagements each year, showcasing the excellence of Australia's artistic practice through tours and festivals. These engagements offer strategic opportunities for building trade relationships as well as furthering the country's cultural diplomacy efforts. The synergy goes both ways: for example when MPA companies tour a large-scale prestigious work enabled by support from government and sponsors, the connection allows sponsors to align their brand with memorable events.

A strong international profile for Australian arts also contributes to the reputation of our creative industries, and of Australia as a sophisticated innovative society open to collaboration and investment.

There is potential to build on the international positioning of Australia as both an attractive tourist destination and a productive place to do business through close partnerships between DFAT and Tourism's international communication strategies. Similarly, there are opportunities to increase expenditure by international tourists on Australian arts and culture during their visits. This builds greater capacity in our arts organisations, which in turn generates greater public good domestically.

Again, to make the most of these opportunities requires good lines of communication across portfolios as well as good planning and resourcing.

Cultural exchange and capacity building

International collaborations, co-productions and the international exchange of principal performers through guest artist experiences are examples of cultural reciprocity that benefits Australian performing arts companies and their audiences, as well as their international partners.

Such activities contribute to our own arts companies' capacity to create a diverse range of vibrant work for Australian audiences and allow Australian creative expression to extend to new international audiences. They also facilitate the exchange of creative sensitivities or approaches between Australian artists and their colleagues overseas.

"It's important that we be part of a bigger international conversation. We certainly have the talent and imagination to be working with partners from all over the world." Marion Potts, then Artistic Director, Malthouse Theatre

National security

As noted previously, the cultural exchange that typically takes place through fields such as the performing arts can build human insight and respect between cultures, based on a heightened understanding of a nation's values in all its diversity.

This in turn can reduce people's susceptibility to stereotypes and the kind of hostile disinformation that can exacerbate national security concerns. It also helps keep people-to-people lines of communication open even when official ties may be strained or broken.

⁵ *International Visitors in Australia: Year ending March 2016*, Austrade, Tourism Research Australia; http://www.ra.gov.au/documents/ivs/IVS_one_pager_March2016_V2.pdf

Making the most of our cultural assets

Effective public diplomacy requires clearly articulated country priorities and the development of multi-year cultural engagement strategies underpinned by resources to enable a sustained program of activities. In addition there should be reactive opportunistic capacity to leverage public diplomatic value from international arts and cultural performances and exchange that are driven by arts sector priorities.

Challenges to international engagement

Barriers that can limit international engagement by performing arts companies fall into three inter-related areas:

- those unique to Australia, mainly because of its geographical location: “The fact that it takes a minimum of 10 hours on a plane to tour anywhere is a pretty big barrier for Australian work.” (Belvoir), including:
 - costs of shipping freight, flights and accommodation
 - time differences for Skype/phone meetings with international artists/companies
- those related to the nature of performing arts touring, including:
 - long timeframes for planning; for example, Sydney Symphony Orchestra started planning its 2014 tour of China about three years before the tour and locked down the schedule one year prior
- those related to funding and resourcing:
 - the fact that planning is often reliant on funding and vice versa; timeframes can be incompatible
 - the need to rely on multiple funding sources, including government, philanthropic, sponsorships and the company's own reserves as well as contributions from host countries and revenue from ticket sales.
 - the lack of dedicated funding for cultural diplomacy, which means relying on companies' goodwill to garner financial support through a myriad of sources and to work through the red tape and uncertainty of attracting government investment; limits the capacity of both companies and government to respond to strategic international opportunities. It takes strategy, coordination and resourcing to overcome such barriers. In doing so, we create opportunities not only to develop the ambitions of our artists and the excellence of their practice, but also to make the most of these assets to further Australia's national interests more broadly.

“We have to be good at this if we want to have a cultural presence internationally because we can't just hop on a train to get to the next country.” Belvoir

Strategic planning

DFAT's role in developing a more strategic long-term plan for our cultural engagement with the world is critical. Piggybacking diplomatic and business events on companies already touring and collaborating presents opportunities that can be productively leveraged, but it should not replace a more considered strategic approach.

Other government agencies, particularly the Australia Council, the Ministry for the Arts (through the Catalyst fund), and Austrade, have important roles in developing the capacity of performing arts companies, including supporting them to reach international audiences.

Good work is being undertaken to increase the coordination and strategic understanding of international cultural engagement for the advancement of Australia's interests. However, there is still more to be done. This includes further clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various parts of government to enable effective cooperative action and more timely communication with each other and the sector, to increase knowledge sharing and maximise the leveraging of scarce resources.

Priority regions and territories

The arts offer cultural diplomacy opportunities in regions where Australia has long established relationships as well as territories where connections are still evolving.

DFAT's annual 'focus country' program, *Australia Now*, spotlights Germany in 2017 and Japan in 2018, while current priority countries for the Catalyst fund's International and Cultural Diplomacy Stream are China, Germany, India and Singapore.

Understandably, Australia's priority countries attract additional DFAT resources including staffing to support outreach. However, the capacity of our established posts in other countries to positively impact cultural exchange is also greatly valued by visiting Australian arts organisations.

It must also be acknowledged that, while an annual country focus can be useful, building relationships takes time and multi-year strategies are required to support effective engagement with a particular territory.

Among the major performing arts companies:

- **Asia** is of interest to a number; for example, the cultural 'bridge-building' tours to China by the Australian Ballet and major symphony orchestras; regional development and education initiatives in Asia by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, West Australian Ballet, Circus Oz and Musica Viva; international collaborations by Malthouse Theatre and Black Swan State Theatre Company.

As noted earlier, China in particular understands and responds to cultural diplomacy. "China is also an important future focus for western classical music. Depending on the source, between 60 and 100 million Chinese children are learning a western musical instrument and nine out of ten children in the top-tier Chinese schools are learning the piano or violin.⁶ It is estimated that the middle-class in China will swell to some 850 million people in the next 15 years and China is developing one of the biggest markets in the world for western artforms." [Sydney Symphony Orchestra]

"China makes sense as it shares our time zone and there is a significant trading relationship between us." [Black Swan State Theatre Company on its 2016 production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in collaboration with the National Theatre of China]

- **Europe** continues to be a natural focus with our strong western traditions; examples include collaborations (Sydney Dance Company), showcasing excellence and unique Australian angles on the classics (Belvoir, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Bell Shakespeare).
- **UK** will benefit from building on shared cultural traditions and heritage (Belvoir, Malthouse, ACO, Australian Ballet), particularly in response to the potential change in the UK's international focus following Brexit.
- **South America** is emerging as a market of interest for a range of industries; opportunities to build on cultural relationships deepened during the Brazil 2016 Year of Focus, giving

⁶ Ross, *Symphony of Millions: Taking stock of the Chinese music boom*, The New Yorker, Jul 07, 2008

organisations such as Circus Oz an opportunity to expand discussions about future outbound engagements

- **US**, also in flux, will benefit from cultural diplomacy in keeping the lines of people-to-people communication open and maintaining Australia's profile as a friendly dynamic nation.

Major venues, festivals and leading performing arts companies around the world are important organisations where strategic arts and diplomatic relationships can be nurtured.

See also Appendix 2 for insights into the experiences of some major performing arts countries in different territories.

Adequate resourcing

AMPAG believes it is important that the government's priorities are supported by the allocation of adequate resources to enable cultural diplomacy to build a sustained strategic approach to the advancement of our cultural, social, diplomatic and economic interests.

Currently a large proportion of major international performing arts cultural exchange relies on the goodwill and support of cultural organisations, philanthropists and corporate sponsors. Government's funding approach should ensure a fair level of reciprocity – goodwill is not a sustainable substitute for adequate funding.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides support through a complex matrix of relatively small funds including:

- the International Relations Grants Program, comprising highly competitive Cultural Diplomacy Grants that distribute a total of around \$500,000 annually, as well as funds of a similar size administered through various country or region-specific councils that can include cultural initiatives
- \$3.5 million available for internal annual budget bids by 100 diplomatic posts, with grants awarded to individual posts ranging from around \$7000 to 300,000 each year
- Austrade's export market development grants.

Significant in-kind support can also be provided by posts on the ground – although this is somewhat subject to serendipitous alignment. Value-add from posts can include leveraging local knowledge and relationships to:

- facilitate effective social media strategies and traditional media interest
- build new local audiences in the country visited
- attract additional non-government financial support
- support the development of future cultural exchange and advancement.

Training is strongly encouraged to help posts build their capacity and ambitions to facilitate and leverage visits from cultural organisations in both priority countries and those with which Australia has more well-established relationships.

Arts portfolio agencies also provide funding for international activities through:

- the Australia Council, which provides grants for international travel and to organisations that engage in international activity, in order to support artistic, market and audience development
- the Catalyst Australian Arts and Culture Fund, which currently has an International and Cultural Diplomacy stream that has supported a number of international engagement

initiatives. However, a serious lack of transparency is impacting both applicants and DFAT strategic engagement.

Use of arts portfolio funding also raises questions about the merit of diverting scarce arts investment to meet cultural diplomacy priorities. This should be a secondary consideration within the arts portfolio. Close cross-portfolio coordination is required to build the ongoing capacity of the cultural organisations as well as maximise their impact and opportunities internationally.

In summary

- DFAT's Public Diplomacy Strategy and the work of its Public Policy Division are positive initiatives. However, they must be built upon and recognised as core activities of the department rather than seen as peripheral or supplementary.
- A strategic Public Diplomacy/Cultural Diplomacy Plan needs to be a key pillar of the white paper, acknowledging the contribution of the arts to advancing Australia's foreign policy agenda across trade, tourism, national security and cultural prosperity.
- Similarly, the Public Diplomacy Division should take on a central role in the DFAT structure, with capacity to attract and retain high-calibre personnel. Stability in the retention of effective staff in this area in recent years has generated additional value.
- DFAT needs more resourcing to enable the development of multi-year strategies as well as take advantage of opportunities as they emerge. This should entail:
 - an increase in targeted government investment through the foreign affairs portfolio, and
 - increased government capacity to facilitate further support, including resourcing posts to leverage financial and in-kind support 'in country', such as developing skills and strategic alliances covering such aspects as venues, social media, media, and corporate sponsorship.
- AMPAG has previously recommended that the Catalyst fund does not continue in its current form; however, in the immediate term Catalyst needs more transparency and timely communication with DFAT around its decision-making if it is to contribute effectively to foreign policy objectives.

Appendix 1: AMPAG members

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
West Australian Ballet	Western Australia
West Australian Opera	Western Australia
West Australian Symphony Orchestra	Western Australia

Appendix 2. Select examples

Sydney Symphony Orchestra in China

Cultural bridge-building | Showcasing excellence | Enhancing Australia's diplomatic, economic and business ties

In June 2016, in the South China city of Guangzhou, an ensemble of 20 musicians from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) held a day of musical workshops and rehearsals with the talented students at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music as part of a program with the City of Sydney.

The workshop was part of the City of Sydney's week-long schedule of activities in Guangzhou to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the sister-city relationship between Sydney and Guangzhou. The SSO opened the City of Sydney's program with a special gala concert attended by City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore and Mr Chen Jianhua, Chairman of Guangzhou's People's Congress.

The orchestra has toured China four times and was in 2014 named the winner of the Australian Government's inaugural Australia–China Achievement Award in the arts category. It has shared a Memorandum of Understanding with Xinghai Conservatory since 2012.

"We see music as a vehicle to bring people from different nations closer," says Sydney Symphony Orchestra Managing Director Rory Jeffes. "Our activities in Guangzhou were a testament to this, with our gala concert featuring our concertmaster Andrew Haveron joined by violin professor Li Xu from the Xinghai Conservatory of Music in Bach's Double Violin Concerto. Our workshops with students from the Xinghai Conservatory saw a day of cross-cultural communication through music – an extremely inspiring experience for all involved."

"The SSO's thoughtful long-term approach to China – underpinned by effective partnerships with musical institutions and performance venues, well-executed outreach, and a focus on identifying what will interest Chinese audiences – continues to be a model of how major Australian performing arts groups can make an impact in China." Australian diplomatic post in China

Australian Chamber Orchestra in Europe, the UK and US

Showcasing excellence

As a touring orchestra, the ACO has notched up 565 concerts in 271 cities across 45 countries on 58 international tours.

Most recently, in July and August 2016, the ACO toured to prestigious festivals in Switzerland, Denmark, Scotland and the USA, and presented a season of critically acclaimed concerts of *Weimar Cabaret* with Barry Humphries and Meow Meow in London. The tour included a reception hosted by the Australian High Commissioner to the UK following the opening night of *Weimar Cabaret* at Cadogan Hall in London.

Such events enable both the diplomatic post and the ACO to maximise their bilateral relationships through inviting key guests to the concerts and associated events.

ACO Artistic Director Richard Tognetti AO also recently held a prestigious position as Artist-in-Residence at the Barbican Centre's Milton Court from November 2016 to March 2017.

"Probably the greatest chamber orchestra around today." *The Guardian (UK)*, 2016

West Australian Symphony Orchestra in the United Arab Emirates and China

Cultural bridge building | Education | Showcasing excellence

In October 2016 the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) embarked on a three-stage international tour with performances in Abu Dhabi, Beijing and Shanghai.

WASO was the first Australian major performing arts company to tour to the United Arab Emirates, and Australia's first representation at the prestigious Beijing Music Festival. The project involved a tour party of 107 people, including 89 WASO musicians. The visit represented a key milestone in the *Symphony Cultural Bridge Project* – a historic three-way partnership between WASO, the China Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO) and Australia China Business Council (WA).

In Abu Dhabi, the orchestra was invited to perform an all-Wagner program in the opening concert of the Abu Dhabi Classics Season. Guests at the event included His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development, His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), His Excellency Zaki Nuss eibeh, Cultural Advisor at Ministry of Presidential Affairs, along with numerous foreign ambassadors and dignitaries.

In China, WASO presented two educational programs on the opening day of the Beijing Music Festival with the company's Education Chamber Orchestra (EChO) and Brass Quintet performing for students at two leading Chinese schools in Beijing. In the final leg of the tour, WASO performed in the Shanghai Symphony Concert Hall with a program including an iconic work of Australian music, Peter Sculthorpe's *Kakadu*.

WASO will build on this initial engagement during their return visit in 2018.

"This tour enables us to forge exciting new relationships in China and the United Arab Emirates that have broad implications for our nations. These alliances are significant, and we are proud they have been established and nurtured through an artistic connection."

WASO Chairman Janet Holmes à Court

Circus Oz in South Korea

Sharing skills

Recognised with the 2013 Governor of Victoria Export Award, Circus Oz has toured to 27 countries across five continents, performing its uniquely Australian form of contemporary circus to four million people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

In 2016 Circus Oz led a two-week masterclass program at the Seoul Street Arts Creation Centre (SSACC) in South Korea. The invitation followed a visit by Mike Finch, former Circus Oz Artistic Director, early last year to Korea to give a presentation on contemporary circus, which is relatively new in Korea, and which led to ongoing conversations with the SSACC.

On a reclaimed industrial estate, SSACC offers a venue to create artworks for the streets, foster artists to be active on the streets, and discuss street culture. Opened last year, works created there will be catalysts for street art around the country, including Seoul.

For Circus Oz, this program was delivered by Sue Broadway, a Circus Oz company member and highly experienced performer and director of circus and physical theatre. Across the two weeks she worked with 12 students from a range of arts backgrounds. They included martial artists, theatre performers and dancers, with masterclasses mainly focused on aerial training.

"The future here in Korea is about developing a new direction for contemporary circus which is based in a mix of traditional Korean sensibility and contemporary circus... The music here

is so beautiful and the sense of choreographic interest and design is so beautiful that I think there's a really big future for this mix." Sue Broadway, Circus Oz

The Australian Ballet in China

Showcasing excellence | Sharing skills | Enhancing Australia's diplomatic, economic and business ties

The Australian Ballet's five-year strategic plan sets goals that include performing regularly in key cultural centres around the world and achieving recognition as the pre-eminent ballet company in the Asia Pacific region.

In 2015, a tour of China provided an exceptional platform for the company to demonstrate Australian excellence in the arts to a significant international audience in Beijing and Shanghai.

The tour reached 10,000 people in the theatres, 755 through community engagement activities, 84,000 through a historical exhibition in the Shanghai Grant Theatre foyer and many more via media coverage in China and Australia as well as digital content accessed globally.

The company worked closely with the Australian Ambassador to China and Consul General in Shanghai, who hosted pre-performance events to which they invited their networks. The Victorian Minister for the Arts also utilised the tour to bring a delegation of Victorian arts leaders to Shanghai and hosted counterparts in Shanghai to the pre-performance Consulate event.

In 2017 the Australian Ballet has so far held a welcome reception for the National Ballet of China; it will work with international choreographers, répétiteurs, costume and set designers, and engage in international dancer exchanges. It will welcome high-profile international guest artists as well as introduce the company's new International Resident Guest Artist, David Hallberg (Bolshoi Ballet and American Ballet Theatre) to Australian audiences.

The Australian Ballet is also working on a co-production of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* with National Ballet of Japan, which will premiere Australia in Melbourne, then Sydney and Tokyo.

"Each tour is an opportunity to demonstrate Australia's talent, position Australia as a sophisticated and cultural nation, create opportunities for business and government to build relationships, share skills and strengthen relationships within the arts sector to mutual benefit."

The Australian Ballet

West Australian Ballet in Indonesia

Cultural bridge-building | Sharing skills

In August 2015, Aurélien Scannella, Artistic Director of West Australian Ballet (WAB), was invited to attend the first Indonesian Ballet Gala presented by Ballet.id (Ballet Indonesia Foundation). Ballet.id is a non-for-profit company donated to growing awareness and understanding of classical dance, cultivating Indonesian dancers and audiences, and paving the way for more regular touring engagements in the region.

The Gala featured ballet 'stars' from Australia and around the world, including WAB soloist Christopher Hill and Australian prima ballerina Juliet Burnett, and its success evidenced a growing appetite for classical dance in Indonesia.

Subsequently, WAB was invited by the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and Ballet.id to present two performances at the Jakarta Theatre, Taman Ismail Marzuki on 6 and 7 August 2016. The tour leveraged the momentum gained through the success of the first Gala in 2015 and was supplemented with an extensive Knowledge Exchange Program (KEP) by WAB to provide support towards the development of the emerging Indonesian arts community.

In 2017, WAB has been invited back to perform at a Gala Dinner in Jakarta as part of an Australian Trade delegation.

“Having an Australian ballet company travel to Jakarta is very important in building a cultural bridge between our two countries.” Aurélien Scannella, Artistic Director, West Australian Ballet

“Skills exchange is a very important element of the tour.” Jessica Machin, Executive Director, West Australian Ballet

“The tour will help further strengthen important cultural ties with Australia’s’ nearest neighbour. This will be an extensive educational and entertainment experience, but it also symbolises the strong and maturing partnership between our two nations.” WA Minister for Culture and the Arts, John Day

Sydney Dance Company in Germany

International partnership

A co-production between the Sydney Dance Company and Germany’s Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company, *Lux Tenebris* had its European premiere in Frankfurt with performances from 8 September and then in Dresden from 29 September, after premiering in Sydney in February 2016.

“The collaboration represents a bridge of art communication, not only with another country but also with another continent.” Jacopo Godani, Artistic Director of Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company

In 2017, Sydney Dance Company will tour to New York, Boston, Swarthmore and Amherst from 24 February to 12 March with their trilogy *Frame of Mind*, *Raw Models* and *Wildebeest*.

Bangarra in the US and France

Cultural exchange

On the back of a critically acclaimed national tour, Bangarra Dance Theatre took its 16-member dance ensemble to New York and Paris in September/October 2016 as part of its 24th international tour.

In New York, the company performed *Spirit* – a collection of iconic works from their 27-year history – at the prestigious 13th annual *Fall for Dance* Festival, the only Australian company on the bill. And in their first standalone season in Paris, Bangarra performed *Ochres* at the Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, known for its unique collection of over 3,500 works from the world’s Indigenous cultures, including the spectacular painting transformation of the museum’s rooftop by prominent Indigenous artist Lena Nyadbi from Warmun in Western Australia, which can be seen from the top of the Eiffel Tower.

The performances formed just one element of the company’s residency at Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, which also comprised public talks, workshops and screenings of Stephen Page’s acclaimed directorial feature film debut *Spear*.

“Presenting our artistry and storytelling on the world stage is a highlight of the year for us. Bangarra is a passionate cultural ambassador for Australia, with a distinct and profound

voice. Our ability to connect with audiences without the limitations of language enables us to share Indigenous history and grow artistic relationships between Australia and countries all over the world.

Bangarra will tour Europe in 2017, throughout the Asian region in 2018, into North America, including Canada in 2019, and back to Europe in 2020.

“For us it’s about learning from the countries we’re visiting and acting in our capacity as Australia’s cultural ambassadors. It’s not just about performances on the stage, but workshops, film screenings and in some cases exhibitions.”

Sydney Theatre Company in the US

Showcasing excellence | Australian angles on the classics

Sydney Theatre Company’s *The Present* is playing on Broadway NY until mid-March 2017, starring Cate Blanchett and Richard Roxburgh.

The Present – Andrew Upton’s adaptation of Anton Chekhov’s first play, *Platonov* – marks the Broadway debut for the company, although several other STC productions have played in New York, including *Hedda Gabler*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Maids* and Upton’s adaptation of Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya*.

“Cate Blanchett and Richard Roxburgh have a combustible chemistry. You won’t take your eyes off them!” *Entertainment Weekly*

“(Cate Blanchett’s) presence in *The Present* makes it an instant event on Broadway; but the play and production are more than worthy, thank you very much. What’s more, the excellence of the entire acting company of 13 makes it abundantly clear why the US producers went to the expense of importing them from Australia.” Steve Suskin, *The Huffington Post*

“Sydney Theatre Company achieved more for Australian public diplomacy in three hours in the theatre tonight that I have in two years.” Then Ambassador Kim Beazley on *Uncle Vanya* (according to those at the opening night reception at The Kennedy Centre)

Malthouse Theatre in China and the UK

Collaboration | Reciprocal engagement and exchange | Contrasting angles on the classics

Melbourne’s Malthouse Theatre collaborated with the National Theatre of China in 2014 to produce *The Good Person of Szechuan*. For Marion Potts, the company’s Artistic Director at the time, this was one of her standout experiences of the year, despite the challenges.⁷

“We had to contend with distance, language and cultural differences, quite apart from the normal challenges of putting on a show. But those challenges are the very reason you undertake these kinds of collaborations because you learn so much from them.”

For Potts, it is the nuances of such cross-cultural collaborations that can be most illuminating for arts workers and audiences: her awe at seeing Australian actors doing Chinese aerobics on stage; or an Australian set designer having to recalibrate her sense of space because she is suddenly seeing the world through a Chinese lens.

In the UK, Malthouse’s production of *The Shadow King*, a re-imagining of *King Lear*, was invited to perform in London in 2016 as part of ‘Shakespeare Lives’, a year-long cultural diplomacy campaign from the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport designed to commemorate the life and works of William Shakespeare, 400 years after his death. Through

⁷ *Arts Nation*, op. cit. p 28

the Shakespeare Lives campaign, the GREAT campaign partners and the British Council celebrated the influence of Shakespeare on culture, language and education across the world, and together with Volunteering Services Overseas, raising funds to support child literacy around the world.

'Sharing our favourite Shakespeare moments and inspiring the world with the magic of his creativity is surely cultural diplomacy at its best.' UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport

The Malthouse production of *The Shadow King* was created by actor Tom E. Lewis and director Michael Kantor, who won a Helpmann Award for best direction. The play reimagines King Lear as the head of a remote community embattled by itself over mining rights, inheritance and wealth, transporting the classic blood-soaked tragedy to the story-steeped and resource-laden terrain of Northern Australia. A violent tale of two indigenous families at war over land, identity and legitimacy, told through modern English, Kriol languages and with a score performed live by an onstage band, the production fuses new text, video and Aboriginal 'dreamtime' songs to create provocative and memorable theatre.

The entire original cast performed in London. The production not only affirmed shared cultural traditions, it also reimagined and shaped Shakespeare into a uniquely Australian creative work.

Most recently, Edinburgh critics and audiences were treated to an innovative production of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* – a collaboration between Malthouse and Black Swan State Theatre Company (Perth). Performances in Edinburgh sold out as audiences and critics reacted enthusiastically to a mythical story deeply rooted in the Australian landscape, which explores the coming to terms with an ancient land and the guilt of a colonial past.

The Scotsman called it "an explosion of theatrical power as fierce as it is contemplative, and so original that no-one who sees it is likely to forget it."

"Cultural exchange is not just about our points of difference, it's about what we have in common," Marion Potts, Artistic Director, Malthouse Theatre 2010-2015

Black Swan State Theatre Company collaborates with National Theatre of China

Cross-cultural insights | Sharing skills

In August 2016, Black Swan State Theatre Company presented a two-week season of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* developed in collaboration with The National Theatre of China, bringing together Chinese and Australian designers and Western Australian actors in a unique production with cross-cultural opportunities.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle, a Bertolt Brecht play originally based on an old Chinese fable, was Black Swan's first international collaboration.

"It is a Chinese fable, adapted and written by a German playwright, brought to life in English by a Chinese director using a mixture of Western and Chinese techniques for an audience in Perth!" exclaimed Dr Wang Xiaoying, National Theatre of China Vice President and the play's director.

According to Natalie Jenkins, Black Swan's Executive Director, "One of Black Swan's goals is to establish global collaborations, breaking down the isolation of Perth and Western Australia. China makes sense as it shares our time zone and there is a significant trading relationship between us. The Black Swan Board seeks, through strategic projects, to engage new audiences, and our collaboration with the National Theatre of China acknowledges the large Mandarin-speaking community in Perth. The collaboration provides audiences from both backgrounds an insight into each other's culture through theatre."

The company hopes to tour to China in 2017. "Perth has sister city relationships with the cities of Chengdu and Nanjing. Western Australia has a sister state relationship with Hangzhou, which is located in the province of Zhejiang and is celebrating 30 years of that relationship in 2017. ... So the stars are aligned!" Natalie Jenkins, Executive Director, Black Swan State Theatre Company

Belvoir in the UK

Showcasing excellence | Australian angles on the classics

Belvoir theatre company took its production of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* to London's prestigious Barbican Centre in October/November 2014.

Two of Belvoir's artists, Simon Stone and Eamon Flack, also presented the Lab, a two-day program of masterclasses for 25 emerging UK theatre artists, demonstrating that Australians are able to lead in an area previously seen as a place for English expertise.

Work of this nature promotes Australian artists more broadly, as well as emphasises Australia's position as a sophisticated and creative nation with a rich culture.

The show was met with great audience and critical acclaim, with 4 and 5 star reviews in prestigious publications such as *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and the *London Evening Standard*.

"In each [review] the freshness of the Australian voice and the distinctiveness of our theatrical offering was noted. This production clearly contributed to the perception of Australia as an intellectually rich, forward thinking nation." Belvoir

This initiative has spawned further high-quality engagement, with Belvoir taking Australian directors and writers to the UK to restage its productions with UK actors in association with UK companies: *Medea* in association with the Gate in 2015 and *Seventeen* in association with the Lyric Hammersmith now. In both instances, playwright Anne Louise Sarks has conducted masterclasses.

Bell Shakespeare in Asia

Sharing skills

An Australian national touring company, Bell Shakespeare has taken its work internationally to New Zealand, UK, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and more recently China.

In 2015 the company piloted a series of student workshops in Beijing and in 2016 delivered a creative leadership presentation, developed in association with Heidrick & Struggles, to corporate leaders in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore. In addition the company live-streamed Shakespeare workshops to schools in Seoul, Korea direct from the Sydney Opera House.

In 2017 artistic residencies will be delivered into schools in Singapore and Shanghai, alongside an expansion of our leadership programme across the region.

"There are substantial opportunities for Bell Shakespeare's education program throughout Asia. Shakespeare's universal themes lend themselves to cultural collaboration and with a globally regarded education program, we are perfectly placed to support students and teachers." James Evans, Associate Director, Bell Shakespeare.

Appendix 3. Cultural Times

– the First Global Map of Cultural and Creative Industries

<http://www.worldcreative.org>

