

APAM WIRE #9 | Summary Notes
Adaptations and Innovations in North American Performing Arts Markets
Thursday 19 August 2020, 10:00 AEDT

Speakers:

BS: Boomer Stacey, IPAY/PACT

KB: Krista Bradley, APAP

RW: Ruth Wikler, TOHU/MICC

TW: Tim Wilson, WAA

Panel Host:

CB: Collette Brennan

APAM Host:

NV: Naomi Velaphi

Welcome & Acknowledgment of Country

NV: Good morning everyone, thank you for joining us today for APAM Wire #9. I'm Naomi Velaphi, Program Producer at APAM.

I would like to acknowledge the custodians of land on which I live and work, the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nations. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional lands this digital platform reaches and extend this acknowledgment to First Nations people with us today and elders past, present and emerging.

Introductions

Panel Host – Collette Brennan, CEO of Abbotsford Convent.

Krista Bradley, Director of Programs and Resources, APAP, which is the leading service organisation for the performing arts and touring industry. It's best known for APAP NYC – 3600 colleagues from across the globe gather in New York each January. Skills base and knowledge base program alongside 1000 showcases, 360 exhibitors. APAP NYC works with a number of platform events that showcase full length work through festival presentations including Under the Radar, GlobalFest and COIL Festival.

Tim Wilson, Executive Director of Western Arts Alliance. WAA is a regional market and platform serving the Western USA and Western Canada. Universities are the backbone of the organisation.

Boomer Stacey, Executive Director of IPAY which is International Performing Arts for Youth which is a showcase event dedicated to youth audiences. Based in the US but it's a global organisation. It's a boutique showcase event (when live), with 500 participants seeing work together. IPAY held its 42nd annual event in January this year.

Ruth Wikler, Deputy Director of Programming at TOHU. TOHU produce Montréal Complètement Cirque in July. It's a boutique single discipline market. The 6th edition was held online this year.

Conversation

Collette: Our moorings have shifted – dramatically. How are you seeing the emerging impact of COVID 19 on artists and arts organisations in regard how American and Canadian arts leaders are starting to reorient their work and thinking about global engagement?

Tim

- Time of transition and process for many has been gathering information and sorting out what's what.

- When pandemic first hit, USA was slow to react. Dominos now falling. First pushing performances to Fall season, Fall season then pushed to Spring and now many presenters are asking will there be a 2021 season at all?

Ruth

- RW is an American living in Canada.
- Canada currently has closed borders with USA, so the virtual space is keeping us connected.
- When can we resume international touring, we don't know but we can remain connected virtually?
- Circus as an international artform. RW has noticed that dialogue around the artform has blossomed in the virtual space with now more dialogue than ever before for this artform.

Krista

- Lots of job losses for artists, managers and organisations but a lot of innovation.
- People are finding ways to connect than before, using space to reach the gap and connect in times of needs. Artists finding ways to bridge social isolation through livestreaming works. We are innovating ourselves out of this.
- Creativity and innovation the role of the day.

Boomer

- The other thing we are noticing is this shift in timelines.
- We are recognising nothing is definitive anymore.
- The conversation is less crisis orientated and people are calmer. Everyone has now calmed down from panic that we will never go international again.
- Producers talking to artists and starting to work together. It's exciting to hear and to plan based on what's happening in other places.

Collette: While we don't know where we are heading through and post this pandemic, you are noting these "reorientations" from the sector. How are each of you approaching the role of your organisations within this regeneration specifically in regard to the purpose of gathering locally, nationally, and globally?

Ruth

- Contemporary circus, it's still a young discipline and not on the radar of all presenters.
- Crucial time for sector development. An outcome of the conference in July was the launching of peer moderated working groups. Co-led by leaders from the sector in different fields these working groups are meeting monthly to advance the sector. So its work needed to be done anyways and now we are less busy we are doing that.
- This is one way in which the market has developed. Sales/transactional is less useful at the moment and building a shared dialogue seems more useful.

Krista

- The power of networking is critical right now.
- APAP is actively convening different types of networks – BIPOC, unemployed people.
- There are working groups that APAP has developed to address inequity: labour, contracts, codes, ethical partnership and cancellation. These working groups work locally and globally and are built on what we learn together as peers.

Tim

- The silver lining of the crisis is that it will accelerate change. Pandemic has exposed fundamental fault lines in society and industry. We have no choice but to deal with them.
- Changing the ways we engage with our communities and artists. Relationships and networks are so important for learning. They are important to us and inform how we respond in this moment.

Collette: In a way, these networks have never been more important. We need our colleagues more than ever.

Each of you were already adding in incredible layers to your platforms, to move us beyond a transactional approach to a relationship approach, as well as tackling issues in regard to who is represented in these platforms. Added to this – we have COVID impacts in the mix. For a global sector that has always done business through gathering – how are you approaching this in terms of your own work? And what ways do you encourage those listening to engage through your platforms?

Boomer

- In terms of Gathering we're trying to provide as many opportunities as we can.
- We're seeing a shift in power dynamics through a younger generation who were more digitally connected pre COVID – the rest of the sector now have to catch up.
- The barriers to access are changing. We're seeing people engage in the digital space that we don't traditionally see in person.
- We'll never lose a live element from what we do – everything we do will be hybrid opportunities. We're hosting gatherings in community and then connect those groups as well as connecting to those development series and connecting international programs to local festivals.

Tim

- WAA has always been focused on change and innovation and taking risks. We're small and fairly nimble and it's important for us to try new things. Not everything works but we can try.
- The virtual conference is an opportunity to partner (with Arts Mid West) to lead by example, to show that we rely on each other. We need each other to navigate this crisis.
- We believe in sharing and exchange nationally and internationally it has been part of WAA's approach for many years and we will continue to move forward with this work.
- Whether hybrid in person / virtual conferences, we are changing the way we operate and that opens new opportunities for connecting for our participants and constituents. You don't have to fly to LA, you can still have an experience that is meaningful to you.

Krista

- Robust online presence at APAP.
- We're focused on removing barriers to travel, removing barriers to participation. Easier to join APAP at whatever price point they can.
- In terms of international friends – how will we program those 5–7 days both in real time for time easy to attend from overseas and also some recorded sessions for people to access based on your needs making it easier to access the work and conversations.
- Building affinity and networking not just in January. How do we lead up to the conference by connect before in November and December? Exploring showcases – how can people have a shared experience that would replicate seeing a show together in real time? Increasing access and extending opportunities to connect.

Ruth

- Most of everything we did in July was an experiment.
- We found out that lowering then barriers to access allowed people from all over the world to propose their projects. We tripled the number of folks signing up. Our number of countries went to 25 to 37.

Collette: Let's think about the challenges and changes that artists and arts organisations are facing – and the vital roles they will play in regenerating and reanimating our communities. In what ways will your platforms engage with sector issues and opportunities and enable the ongoing Australia–North America relationships to be nurtured?

Tim

- Complexity of showcasing within the digital realm. One issue, different artists have different technology, WAA interested to solve how can we experience that live performance to virtual performance and mitigate limitations from technology. Solution was for WAA to produce live showcase and hired two producers in LA. We rent the equipment, ship to the artists – and we will deliver to them so producers can work with them remotely. If they have to do audio/edit they will do all that.

Collette: Love the generosity from Tim of sending the kits out. Challenge to the funders, venues how can we be of service to artists to assist artists feel connected and profile their work appropriately in this environment.

Krista

- We need to advocate for each other. Sessions that highlight how presenters are rallying around artists. Providing space, income, hiring them not just for performance but rethink how to engage with communities.
- Advocating for artists and developing ways for them to protect themselves. How do we equip artists with the language and resources to advocate for themselves? APAP undertaking a pilot with Google – how do you effectively live stream. We need to do better as it's not going away.

Boomer

- IPAY building partnerships with agencies and funding bodies. Engaging deeper than normal. It's about open participation.
- So many countries that IPAY haven't intersected with for example Malaysia. Now easier than ever to remove those barriers.
- Invite new artists is a huge thing for us and exciting. I hope there will be more diverse work on stage and provide connections. This is huge opportunity for us.

Krista

- Excited about the whole value of discovery which is really important for APAP. The ability to have a platform that allows presenters to see much more work around the globe is super exciting. We all know that when we're planning international work it's the sense of discovery, planning, getting to know each other. We have the opportunity to engage with that

Ruth

- Artists making work for this moment. Presenters staying in step with artists as they continue to adapt so important. Stay more connected as artists moving forward.
- Re-formatting the pitch sessions they are not just pitching touring shows it might be about support for an idea or an engagement activity. Encourage artists to present into a market of ideas. Presenters connecting with the great ideas of artists and honouring artists as the generators of those ideas.

Boomer

- Playing field has changed – no one is filling a 1200 seat theatre anymore. New world is different. Going to the artists and presenters changing the nature of the presentation and rethinking how programming happens.

Tim

- WAA seeing a spectrum of presenters' responses. Everyone is buffeted by the same wind, but responses are very different.
- WAA interested in equipping the sector with information for example – licensing, models for engagement, safe opening protocols.

Collette: Presenters need help with it all. Conversations between artists and presenters need more depth so everyone understands each other.

Krista

- Differing examples of COVID related programming are important to be shared. We as APAP want to share these programs innovations with the field.

Collette: Finally – how do we stay engaged through your platforms... What are the things we can look forward to in your programs and gatherings that may be virtual, physical and or a combination?

Krista

- Look out for virtual watch parties, engagement with global issues – APAP will partner with ISPA, CMA around climate change what does it mean for mobility across all borders – and a new digital platform to play with.

Boomer

- IPAY launched Showcase and Place this week – 3 x showcase in place delivered over an extended period of time. App runs throughout all events and enables connection. The 2nd and 3rd showcases won't run through our traditional selection committee, the process will be more open and accessible.

Tim

- The showcase program described earlier will be interesting to see the artists bring it all together. Also excited about the Indigenous programs, connecting those artists and professionals through the platform. As we have a lot of travel money that we don't need, we are converting that into scholarships for indigenous artists to participate at no cost. And the technology will be exciting, to virtually bump into someone and start a conversation. Or even group conversations.

Ruth

- We called our four days a launch of a network. We are still in the period where we are doing it for the first time so it's free. So no reason not to join. You can sign up for all the groups you want to be part of.

Important dates to note

WAA / Arts Midwest 2020 Conference 6–9 October with Preconference 1–2 October

Extended deadline for the Amplified program to September 2020

<https://www.artsmidwest-waa-2020.com/news/amplified-call-for-proposals>

APAP NYC 8–12 January 2021

IPAY 19–23 January 2021

Further information

<https://www.artsmidwest-waa-2020.com/>

www.apap365.org

www.montrealcompletementcirque.com/professionals

www.ipayweb.org

<https://melbournefringe.com.au/guide-me/vcr-fest/>