

AUSTRALIAN
PERFORMING
ARTS MARKET

APAM

APAM Gathering at DreamBIG
14 - 24 May 2021



Government of South Australia
Arts South Australia



August 2021

Contents

Summary Report
By the Numbers

3 – 10

11 – 13

In Review

APAM Gathering at DreamBIG Festival

Adelaide

14 – 24 May 2021

The APAM Gathering at DreamBIG Festival was held alongside Adelaide's iconic DreamBIG Children's Festival and focused on work for multigenerational audiences. The Gathering was attended by 307 national and international colleagues, representing 29 countries, and included 29 Showcase works presented at DreamBIG, alongside 52 Profile presentations by Australian and New Zealand artists and organisations, 5 In Place events including a digital In Place, and an extensive Exchange program.

The event was APAM's first hybrid Gathering and it took place on the lands of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains across the following dates:

14–24 May digital program

19–23 May in person program

[Full program schedule available at this link.](#)

The Gathering preparation occurred within the global pandemic of COVID-19. Australia's international borders have now been closed for over 12 months and predicted not to re-open until mid 2022. With the exception of a very small number of New Zealand delegates attending through the trans-Tasman bubble, all international delegates participated digitally.

DreamBIG Children's Festival

Adelaide

19 – 29 May 2021

DreamBIG Children's Festival is South Australia's iconic biennial arts festival for schools and families that places its audience at the centre of fresh, inventive, imaginative and inspiring arts experiences. With a national and international profile, more than 2 million South Australian children have participated in the festival since its inception in 1974.

Produced by Adelaide Festival Centre with partnerships across the city of Adelaide, DreamBIG welcomes school students and families on a biennial basis. The program included more than 50 shows, events and workshops during the festival across 19–29 May, including 10 world premieres, 2 Australian premieres and 10 Adelaide premieres.

[Discover more about DreamBIG.](#)

Gathering

APAM's first hybrid Gathering comprised sessions through curatorial streams including:

+ SHOWCASE

Curated and presented as part of DreamBIG, 29 Showcase works were presented in full length to public audiences, with full production values and were led by or featured collaborations with Australian and New Zealand artists and companies. Participants at the Gathering purchased individual tickets to the Showcase works using a discount code, enabling them to purchase tickets ordinarily priced at \$30 for \$20.

The digital program featured a curated selection of 15 digital showcases that explored the practice and process of the Showcase artists. Additionally there were 6 digital works available to experience as Showcase interactive works. 72% of participants engaged with the Showcase work.

+ PROFILE

Profile saw 52 presentations from artists and companies from Australia and New Zealand over 6 sessions. All Profile sessions were presented online with 3 also being scheduled simultaneously within the in person program as watch parties.

Projects featured in Profile were selected by a national curatorial panel through a competitive expression-of-interest process, offering opportunities for artists, companies and groups to share their repertoire, ideas and ambitions.

The APAM curatorial panel for the DreamBIG Gathering included: Angela Conquet; Annette Shun Wah, Contemporary Asian Australian Performance; Ali Murphy-Oates, Moogahlin Performing Arts; Bernie Haldane, Auckland Live; Luanne Poh, The Artground; Nadine McDonald-Dowd, QPAC; Nikki Ashby, Country Arts SA; Noel Jordan, Imagine; Rosemary Hinde; Susannah Sweeney, DreamBIG. Festival.

The Profile categories were –

+ Here's Our Idea // 18 works in development seeking commission or presentation.

+ Here's What We Made // 26 works with a completed premiere seeking further presentation opportunities.

+ Here's How We Work // 8 presenting organisations share the innovative ways they are working with artists and companies.

+ IN PLACE

In Place sessions offered participants a window into the contemporary performing arts sector locally and offered insight into the approaches and collaborators of The Mill, Dance Hub SA, Light Adelaide, Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide Festival, Adelaide Fringe, Illuminate Adelaide, WOMA Adelaide, and Oz Asia Festival. Vitalstatistix cancelled their planned event.

+ INITIATIVES: FIRST TIMERS AND FIRST NATIONS INDUSTRY PROGRAM

16 people participated in APAM's First Nations Industry Program and 17 in the First Timers program both of which were held online.

+ EXCHANGE

Curated by APAM and the First Nations Advisory Group, Exchange included panels, roundtables and networking. The Exchange program hosted 25 talks and roundtables involving 54 artists and speakers.

A key component of Exchange was a half-day event – NEIGHBOURHOOD. The day was curated by Theatre Network Australia (TNA) and featured perspectives and offerings from local artists. NEIGHBOURHOOD was co-presented by TNA as part of their devolved Australian Theatre Forum (ATF) program in 2021.

Participants

+ 307 attended the full Gathering

+ 138 of whom were international participants, representing 29 countries.

+ The remaining participants were domestic with 39% from Victoria, 16% from New South Wales, 7% from Queensland, 7% from Western Australia, 26% from South Australia, 2% from Tasmania, 2% from Northern Territory and 1% from the ACT.

+ Of the Australian participants 24%, identified as independent artists.

+ APAM supported the digital participation of 89 international visitors from 29 countries.

+ Registration for the APAM Gathering at DreamBIG were in 2 categories – in person and digital attendance. In person attendance featured 3 price points: \$481 for independent artists and individuals (national and international); \$630 for small to medium organisations; and \$745 for larger and government organisations nationally. Digital attendance featured 2 price points \$115 for independent artists and \$264 for organisations. In recognition of the scale of resource lost from the sector through the impact of the pandemic this was the most affordable APAM in over a decade.

+ The impact of the global pandemic affected participation by a larger than usual Indian delegation.



Image: Colleen Raven



Images: Colleen Raven & Sam Oster

Impact

The post-event survey, individual unsolicited feedback and extensive debriefing of key stakeholders has provided the APAM team with a wealth of data to review the successes and opportunities for improvement from the APAM Gathering at DreamBIG. The post-event survey was completed by 30 of 307 participants. Quantitative responses of note as follows:



Images: Sam Oster

+ 100% of people participating in APAM made new connections, and 90% deepened existing relationships. Of these, the majority made up to 10 new connections and deepened a further 10.

+ Survey: 100% of participants identified the Profile and Showcase works as a good match with the attendees.

+ 60% of survey participants found the works and ideas presented as part of the Profile Program represented a diversity of practice, and 80% found the sessions exciting and relevant.

+ 40% of participants' primary reason for participating was seeking or offering presentation or commissioning opportunities. For 33% it was networking with peers.

+ The three most valuable aspects of the APAM Gathering at DreamBIG were

1) Building relationships in the Asia Pacific region 70%

2) Engaging in important sector and geographic conversations 67%

3) Developing diverse, interdisciplinary relationships across the performing arts 63%.

+ 87% of participants found the Gathering valuable for creating new opportunities.

+ 93% of participants found the Gathering valuable for increasing their knowledge and skills.

+ 65% of participants considered participation in APAM value for money.

+ 93% of participants will continue to participate in online or hybrid events after participating in the Gathering.

+ 93% of international participants believed the Gathering showcased high quality Australian artists, companies and practice.

APAM's evaluation over the period 2020–2024 will be undertaken by BYP Group who, towards the end of 2021, will reconnect with Gathering participants to seek further input on the outcomes of connections and relationships begun and deepened through the APAM Gathering at DreamBIG.

The Response

A quick note to say thank you so very much for creating the hybrid opportunities for those of us only able to join digitally. The entire experience encouraged connection, inspiration, inclusiveness, future collaborations and opportunities. The swapcard platform has been wonderful, and I'm still catching up with the 'on demand' videos for those events I couldn't join at the specific event time. Of all the digital and/or hybrid events for colleagues in our field I've attended throughout this past year, APAM and DreamBIG were the absolute best!

– Rebecca M.

Podsednik, Lincoln Centre Education

I was satisfied with the overall experience, particularly with the opportunities to engage with one-to-one. I am also appreciative of the consideration the organisers showed to adjust to the time zone differences for international participants.

– Survey participant

Great online platform. Excellent ability to make connections and chat to presenters, especially international presenters in different timezones.

– Survey participant

This was absolutely a good use of my time and resources. It was such a great opportunity to engage with a variety of work, practitioners and global colleagues.

– Survey participant

Focus on relationships, not transactions. When connections are made with set goals and an agenda to receive something in return, you can close yourself off from other opportunities and ideas you might never think of otherwise. Building relationships takes time and effort, and they don't always yield results and benefits in the short-term. APAM is a startpoint for meaningful relationships to be developed and nurtured, not a silo in which deals are made.

– Profile Artist



Images: Sam Oster

Learnings

With a program of rolling Gatherings scheduled over the coming years, the APAM team is committed to testing, trialling and responding to ideas and feedback.

Since the global pandemic hit just weeks after the APAM Gathering at Asia TOPA in 2020, its impact on international engagement and national and international touring has been catastrophic, with venue seasons and festivals cancelled or indefinitely postponed and many artists and companies losing work and engagements that have been years in the making. APAM's focus since March 2020 has been to continue to support artists and presenters to remain connected and in a productive dialogue through Gatherings and the year-round work of the APAM Office.

In constructing a hybrid event, close consideration was paid to the intersecting journeys of the digital and in-person participants. All participants started together virtually and ended the Gathering program in the same way. The digital program was a 10-day program which was carefully scheduled to take into account global timezones and screen fatigue, with a daily offering of between 90mins and 2.5hours. Most sessions were also available for on-demand viewing following their scheduled screening. The in-person program was built around the extensive DreamBIG Festival program of workshops, interactive experiences and performances. Participants were able to see multiple performances and experiences daily with school students and general public audiences.

The global pandemic continued to create uncertainty that impacted aspects of the delivery of the Gathering. As noted above the unfolding health situation in India meant that despite expecting a larger than usual Indian delegation, final numbers were affected by participants withdrawing due to the impact of COVID-19.

Domestic attendance for the in-person program was also impacted by continued uncertainty with lockdowns and state border closures in the lead up to the Gathering. Many organisations still had interstate travel bans for employees in place which meant, institutions particularly, attended digitally rather than in person.

The APAM Gathering at DreamBIG was the first of two hybrid Gatherings that have been scheduled for 2021, with the second event scheduled for August alongside the Darwin Festival. Despite testing and trialling digital delivery and initiatives throughout 2020, the DreamBIG Gathering was the first hybrid delivery event and offered many learnings for the APAM Team and the sector in navigating new approaches to market development. For many participants, the Gathering was the first time that they had participated in a digital market; and for nearly all participants the hybrid market was a first. We are a national sector in transition to the digital realm with a lack of long-term investment and strategy in arts policy, meaning that many Australian artists and companies are well behind their international counterparts in the development of digital practice, distribution and market development. It is obvious that digital engagement will be an essential element in determining the future of international mobility.

The hybridity of the event added a layer of complexity to event communications with multifaceted information being developed about the two layers of programming and the mechanism of the digital platform. Our learnings around simplifying communications and engaging multiple modes of information sharing will be assisted over time by the sector's increased understanding and familiarity with digital and hybrid market events. The decision to use Swapcard as the digital platform for the Gathering was taken following a great deal of research on various platforms. We received universally positive feedback about the ease of use of the platform, with many participants praising its intuitive design.

The APAM Team will undertake a longer testing period ahead of the Darwin Gathering where we will be using the same platform. The ability to brand the platform strongly to make it feel less corporate and more in line with APAM's tone and approach was an important factor in the decision on the platform. We approached the showcasing of performance work within the platform in a very targeted way, and received strong support from artists who reported that this approach successfully supported and represented their work. For DreamBIG, we chose not to present full length recordings of live work on the platform – as opposed to the presentation of the six interactive digital works – but we may reconsider this approach in future Gatherings.

Alongside being the first hybrid Gathering delivered by the APAM Office, the DreamBIG Gathering was also the first bespoke Gathering targeted at a particular part of the sector. We worked closely with the children and families sector in programming the Gathering to showcase the innovation and quality of work that the Australian and New Zealand sector is internationally known for. Realising an opportunity to service in great depth an area of the sector that is so internationally mature, collegiate and networked was a long-held ambition for the APAM Office under the new model. APAM was well supported in this ambition by the Adelaide Festival Centre and the DreamBIG Festival team. The strength and diversity of the DreamBIG program was critical to the success of the Gathering.

The market development opportunity offered by the Gathering was significantly embraced by the Australian and New Zealand children and families sector, and we hope to develop other initiatives and programs to better service makers and presenters of multigenerational work. The implications of developing, delivering and communicating two distinct but connected programs simultaneously were felt on a small, tightly resourced team. The APAM team expanded to include digital producing expertise and built capacity across our multiskilled producers but were nonetheless under resourced for the ambition of the activity.

The learnings from our first hybrid Gathering have already been incorporated into the structure and planning for the Darwin Gathering. Although the hybrid approach was a direct response to Australia's international borders being closed, we are committed to continuing to work in this way as a means of providing greater accessibility for artists, producers and presenters nationally and internationally and in response to the likelihood of ongoing disruption from the effects of climate change. The APAM team is grateful for the generous and detailed feedback received from Gathering participants through the survey and other means which provide learnings and directions for improvements.

Partnerships

We are grateful for the ongoing support of the Australia Council for the Arts, particularly the international and sector development teams alongside the support of the Victorian Government and the staff and Creative Victoria.

Thanks to the Adelaide Festival Centre and the team at the DreamBIG Festival and the support of the South Australian Government through Arts South Australia. We also thank our partners at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations as well as Creative New Zealand, Canadian Heritage and the Consulate General of Canada in Sydney.



**APAM Gathering at DreamBIG
by the Numbers**

The following data has been drawn from Participant Registrations and recorded responses to post-Gathering Surveys and Evaluations.

Registered Participants

+ **307** participants registered to attend the Gathering

+ **138** of whom were international participants, representing **29** Countries. APAM supported the attendance of **89** of these participants.

+ **169** of whom were from Australia, of which:

- + 39% came from VIC
- + 27% from SA
- + 16% from NSW
- + 7% from QLD
- + 7% from WA
- + 2% from TAS
- + 2% from the ACT & NT

+ **26** participants came from NZ (representing 8.47% of all participants or 18.84% of international participants)

+ **75 (or 24.5%)** identified as an Artists.

With the other 75.5% of Participants identifying as:

- + 86 (or 28%) identified as Presenter
- + 83 (or 27%) identified as Producer
- + 24 (or 7.8%) identified as Government
- + 18 (or 5.8%) identified as Other
- + 14 (or 4.5%) identified as Agent Tour Manager
- + 6 (or 1.9%) identified as Advocate



Image: Colleen Raven

Gathering Programming

+ **15** local venues across Adelaide engaged through the program, through the following curatorial streams: Showcase, Profile, In Place, Exchange, Neighbourhood.

+ SHOWCASE

+ The APAM Gathering included **20** Showcase works from the program offering of the DreamBIG festival.

+ Of the **20** Showcase productions, **6** works were interactive performances, **18** were works created by Australian artists/companies, and **2** were works created in collaboration between Australian and International artists/companies.

+ PROFILE

+ **84** artists/organisations applied for a spot in the Profile program, across Here's What We Made, Here's Our Idea and Here's How We Work categories. **52** successfully presented in **1 of the 6** Profile sessions scheduled across the APAM Gathering.

+ **7** of the project/organisations which presented came from New Zealand

+ **10** of the projects identified as being Australian First Nations-led.

+ IN PLACE

+ **4** Adelaide small-to-medium arts Venues were engaged to host an In Person event. These venues included: Adelaide Central Market, The Mill, LIGHT Adelaide, Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute.

+ Through the In Place program **2** local organisations (The Mill, Dance SA) and **6** Adelaide-based festivals (DreamBIG, OzAsia Festival, WOMADelaide, Adelaide Festival, Adelaide Fringe and Illuminate) were featured in-person and digitally.

+ FIRST NATIONS INDUSTRY PROGRAM (FNIP):

+ **15** individuals were admitted to FNIP. Of the 15 successful applicants:

+ **2** came from Canada, **2** from NZ and **11** were Australian.

+ FIRST TIMER PROGRAM

+ **17** individuals were admitted to the First Timer program.

+ The First Nations Industry Program and First Timers were also supported by Creative New Zealand and Canada Council for the Arts.

+ The First Nations Industry Program and First Timers were also supported by Creative New Zealand and the Consul General of Canada / Canadian Heritage.

AUSTRALIAN
PERFORMING
ARTS MARKET

APAM



Australia
Council
for the Arts

CREATIVE VICTORIA