

SPOTLIGHT ON NINA LEVY

MANAGING EDITOR,
SEESAW MAGAZINE, PERTH



As performing arts was getting less of the spotlight in WA's media, arts journalists Nina Levy and her colleague Varnya Bromilow were determined to see our State's vibrant and innovative sector receive the coverage it deserves. Sitting in the middle, between the arts and the audience, Nina and the Seesaw team act as both critics and champions to spark exciting conversations about the arts among artists, audiences and the wider community.

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Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

I'm the editor of an online magazine that covers performing arts (including music) and visual arts in Western Australia. My role involves all aspects of writing and publishing reviews and feature articles – deciding what stories we're going to include, commissioning writers, editing copy, liaising with publicists and uploading copy and photos to the website. I'm also involved in the management side of things, liaising with the team to plan the future of the mag.

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

In school, I loved humanities and my strongest subject was English literature. I enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts at UWA, and decided to major in English in the second year. That's also when I started ballet classes and really fell in love with the performing arts.

After just two years of ballet classes I auditioned for the Bachelor of Dance at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) and started to coach and teach. By the time I was mid-way through my third year at WAAPA, I was co-leasing a dance studio and after I graduated, I picked up casual work at various schools as a specialist dance teacher. That inspired me to enrol in a Graduate Diploma in Education and become a high school dance teacher.

So, how did you get into editing?

I wanted something more, and I'd always wondered if I could write reviews as a critic of performing arts. It's never easy breaking into a new field, so I started by doing some casual work editing Ausdance WA's Dancewest magazine. Soon, Ausdance offered me the role of Communications Manager and freelance work in arts education started flowing in from the WA Museum and Art Gallery of WA. I then went on to write for Dance Australia magazine and The West Australian and partnered with fellow freelancer Varnya Bromilow to launch Seesaw Magazine online in May 2017.

How would you describe yourself?

I'm a very conscientious creative who's also quite empathetic, which I know sounds like a contradiction for a critic. But I think a lot about how other people feel and have a reputation for being diplomatic. I'm not the type of person who gets off on being clever at someone else's expense. I have first-

hand insights into what it takes to create a work, so I'm always conscious of that and hopefully know the difference between what needs to be said and what doesn't.

What do you love most about the industry?

In the arts industry in WA, we always punch well above our weight. Perth is one of the most isolated cities in the world and yet we've got this wonderfully vibrant and innovative creative community. In fact, that's what really inspired us to start Seesaw – we felt that WA's amazing arts sector deserved more coverage with decent critical writing. There's so much happening here, particularly in the independent arts sector.

What's the best part of your job?

While dance is where my greatest passion and personal experience lie, I love covering theatre and visual arts too. I now enjoy access to a broader range of arts through my work and feel very privileged to be invited behind the scenes of many different works. I've also had the opportunity to mentor numerous young writers in my role, and especially enjoy working on our program for emerging First Nations writers.

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

No matter how small an opportunity is, take it. And be willing to volunteer to break into the industry. Obviously, you need to make decisions you can afford to make. It's easier if you have some form of part-time work already (like I did with my teaching). And don't be afraid to put yourself forward and share examples of your work. Email editors or, better still, print your work and present it in person, or ask editors if you can have a coffee with them. Making the extra effort will really demonstrate your enthusiasm, and it won't go unnoticed.

And what's next for you?

Our business goal is to secure more funding for Seesaw and, longer term, I would absolutely love to see us expand our coverage of film and literature, ideally with a third editor.

Connect with Nina via email

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