FutureNow
Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council

Performing Arts

FutureNow is the Western Australian Training Council for the creative, leisure and technology industries. The Council is a skills advisory body that represents the voice of industry, advising the State Government on the training and workforce development needs of our industry sectors.

Current Industry Environment

The performing arts incorporate dance, from classical ballet to street style, live music including everything from local rock bands to the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, as well as theatre, opera, puppetry, circus and live entertainment. This is an industry with an immediacy that gives it an unmatched capacity to bring vibrancy and liveability to our cities and regions, drive inbound tourism, support community cohesion, and create connection and meaning for the people of Western Australia.

The establishment of the $3m Contemporary Music Fund is an acknowledgement of the potential contemporary music has both in terms of economic contribution and in building Western Australia's creative brand. Australia and Western Australia have a significant profile globally and this export market is key to growth for the sector. Contemporary Music has a scalable model, in that the same product can be sold an unlimited number of times (unlike for instance a live theatre performance or original artwork). While royalties per play on sites such as Spotify are controversially low, meaning that live touring is still the most lucrative income stream for artists, they do allow artists to achieve very broad audience access, and in this indirect way boost attendance and viability for live touring performances. As with visual arts, the market is highly saturated and standing out from the crowd is difficult, however overall there is significant potential for growth.

Funding support for the Black Swan State Theatre Centre, WA Opera, WA Ballet and the WA Symphony Orchestra, is provided at the national level through the Major Performing Arts Framework.[1] Access to this funding is dependent on a number of criteria around regional delivery, access and inclusion, curriculum support and support for emerging artists. Through meeting these criteria, Western Australia's major performing arts organisations are providing crucial access to the arts and importantly, sustainable arts careers. This in turn supports overall sector ecology and the small to medium performing arts sector, where emerging artists will often begin their careers.

Workforce characteristics

The Western Australian share of activity in the Music and Theatre Productions sectors is a little lower than population share (10.8%), at 8.2%.[2] This is consistent with similar industries though also indicates potential capacity to grow market share. Statistical analysis of the performing arts labour market is hindered by factors such as the high rate of self-employed artists, the seasonal nature of the work and audience demand for novelty (meaning that there is a large, ongoing exchange of labour across states and internationally when artists take their work to new audiences). A large section of the workforce will self-report as sitting within another field since their primary source of income may not be their performing arts work.

Job Outlook data shows strong jobs growth, and lower than average unemployment for actors, dancers and other entertainers, and stable growth and average unemployment for musicans and performing arts technicians.[3] This reflects ongoing global growth in the creative sectors, though is skewed away from emerging workers as above.

A snapshot of Performing Arts

Dance | Theatre | Orchestral | Contemporary Music | Festivals | Opera
Musical Theatre | Puppetry | Circus & Physical Theatre

$826M

National contemporary music revenue 2017*

Contemporary music is Australia's largest performing arts sector, and **revenue increased** 88% in 2017.*

Hungry for experiences

In 2017* Western Australian performing arts audiences:

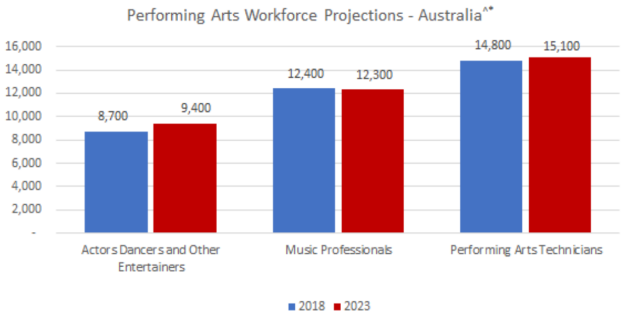
Grew by **11.5%** to **2.6m**
+
Generated revenue growth of **33%** to **$197m**

Revenue and **audience numbers grew** across every performance category in Western Australia in 2017.

The future workforce

Let me entertain you

Actors, Dancers and Other Entertainers should expect strong future growth in job prospects according to Job Outlook data**



References:
*** https://reports.liveperformance.com.au/ticket-survey-2017/states**
**** https://joboutlook.gov.au/Occupation?search=Career&code=2111**

Industry Developments

Data analysis and social impact measurement

"Our mission is to touch souls and enrich lives through music. We aim to be a world-class orchestra, which inspires through the quality of its performances and is renowned for its deep commitment to and engagement with the West Australian Community."[4]

The West Australian Symphony Orchestra's mission statement neatly captures their value, and points to the difficulty in measuring it. Rapid developments in the areas of big data and data analysis are creating new opportunities to target audiences and demonstrate outcomes, as well as new skills and knowledge requirements. The sector's capacity to thrive and contribute is partly dependent on government and private support, and the skills and knowledge to rigorously demonstrate public value, social impact, and non-fiscal or indirect return on investment will be core to achieving an optimally functioning creative sector.

Technology

The performing arts are by design reliant on ticket sales, audiences and the physical location of the theatre or venue, and are influenced in different ways by digital evolution. Industry sees significant potential to reach new audiences through evolving technologies such as virtual reality, which may allow remote audiences to experience live performances, however these remain in the early stages of development to date, and will require changes to the Actors/ Live Performance award to enable distribution via technology.

Personal safety

Sector priorities have centred around participant safety in recent years, including a focus on the safety of children in learning environments in the performing arts, which was supported by the development of a nationally accredited skill-set for teachers and tutors working with children in the performing arts.[5]

The safety of patrons, venue and event workers, and performers has also been a priority, and a local response to the Me Too cultural shift has been the establishment of Safer Venues WA, a not-for-profit organisation with the remit to improve the safety of patrons, workers and performers in Western Australian venues, particularly women.[6] At the national level, Safe Theatres Australia has been established to "drive lasting cultural change to eliminate sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination in the sector."[7] WA Music with UWA hosted a four-day symposium in July 2019 on gender diversity in music and the arts, and this priority area is viewed as directly linked to improving attitudes in industry around women's position and role in the performing arts.

Workforce Opportunities

Nurturing talent

A recent Australia Council report on contemporary music, Born Global: Australian Music Exports,[8] highlights that export income from Australian artists is highly concentrated, with 10% of artists accounting for 97% of total export income. This dynamic can be found across the talent-driven performing arts industries, and can be at odds with national principles for vocational education, which focus on direct employment outcomes. The cost of gaining qualifications has increased, and when mapped against potential earnings in the arts and cultural sectors, becomes prohibitive for many prospective students.

This phenomenon directly impacts on the sector, which relies on a vibrant ecosystem of organisations and performances at the grass-roots level to deliver the '10%' of talent behind most of the sector's economic growth. The high cost of training also has a negative impact on the diversity of voices to be found across the sector, with people from CALD, Aboriginal and lower socio-economic groups being less likely to be able to access training, and contribute their voice to the cultural landscape.

The value of creative thinking and technical creative skills in the broader workforce is widely acknowledged, and anecdotal evidence suggests that performing arts graduates are finding employment in a range of sectors,

including in diverse areas such as finance, health and IT, across the state. Applying different metrics to the provision of funding support for a range of performing arts related qualifications could support their accessibility, ensure a fertile breeding ground for emerging talent, and deliver benefits for the sector, community, and broader economy.

Skills and Training Strategies

Changing skills needs

The sector continues to report a need for an increasingly sophisticated knowledge in the area of income generation. Marketing, outreach, customer relations management, and a comprehensive use of social media are essential tools to reach a targeted market and campaign for funds, and require sound data analytical skills to execute.

Artists also require a working knowledge of intellectual property and copyright laws to assist them in protecting their product. Small business and freelance career management skills continue to be important, and career management is also key, especially for elite dancers.

WA Music has identified a lack of legal knowledge in the contemporary music workforce and provides "Pop-Up Legal Practice" sessions to members.[9] Knowledge of international markets is vital for contemporary musicians, as is audience development and data analysis, and an ability to build and nurture business relationships. Direct engagement with audiences through social media is industry standard and sophisticated skills in this area are necessary for artists.

Mental health

The performing arts sectors have a common focus on the resilience, self-care and mental health of their workforce. Often challenging conditions make it difficult for performing arts workers to achieve sustainability and recognition in their careers, contributing to documented mental health issues in the sector. Following the release of a report into mental health in the performing arts by Victoria University in late 2015, Entertainment Assist was established to reduce 'the shockingly high rates of anxiety, depression, suicide, isolation and other matters associated with working in the Australian entertainment industry'.[10] Workers need access to self-care knowledge, tools and skills, and people managers need a good understanding of the resources available to them as well as the limits of their responsibilities and liabilities. The sector therefor welcomes a project at the national level to review sector needs and address training gaps in the CUA Arts and Culture Training Package. The project acknowledges "there is a need for nationally-accessible training at a vocational level designed for workers and learners to address the mental wellbeing skills gap identified by industry. Implementing proactive training at the vocational level will equip workers with the skills required to perform and sustain a creative career in industry."[11]

Emerging practitioner initiatives

Most of WA's performing arts institutions offer programs to support emerging creatives to build their reputations, skills and careers. The Blue Room Theatre supported 48 mentorships, internships or residencies over the course of 2018. These included $500 mentorship funds for artists to upskill their teams.[12] WA Opera and Wesfarmers Arts have been providing mentorship opportunities to young graduates for ten years, supporting seven emerging artists in 2019/20.[13] Through its Composer-in-Residence programs, the WA Youth Jazz Orchestra (WAYJO) annually supports two emerging composers to develop new works for a large jazz ensemble, offering commission fees and artistic mentorship.[14] Contemporary Dance company Co:3 Australia, offers Co:Y Training, a program for the next generation of dancers, that replicates the training methodologies of their main company.[15]

Many other examples exist, however a notable gap is found in the contemporary live music sphere, where the structure of the industry is different. Dancers, actors and technicians are often employed by dance or theatre companies or venues, whereas musicians may secure a contract but are not employees and do not have access to employee benefits. These workers need support to develop self-employment and small business skills to ensure their security and sustainable careers for the long-term.

Please Get in Touch

FutureNow is continually seeking broad input from stakeholders and representatives in the Western Australian Performing Arts sector. If you would be interested in providing your perspective on this snapshot or related workforce matters for your sector, our Creative Industries Industry Manager would love to hear from you:

Ann-Marie Ryan | Industry Manager - Creative and Cultural Industries | Information Communications Technology

0412 033 038 | amryan@futurenow.org.au

References

All references accessed 8.11.19

1 https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/programs-and-resources/major-performing-arts-framework/

2 IBISWorld Report R9001 Music and Theatre Productions in Australia May 2019

3 https://joboutlook.gov.au/Occupation?search=Career&code=2111

4 https://www.waso.com.au/about-waso/the-organisation/annual-reports

5 https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CUASS00054

6 https://www.facebook.com/safervenuesWA/

7 https://www.safetheatresaustralia.com/

8 https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/born-global

9 https://wam.org.au/resources/legals/

10 https://www.entertainmentassist.org.au/our-research

11 https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/pwcau.prod.s4aprod.assets/wp-content/uploads/20180921150058/FINAL-Culture-and-Related-Industries-Industry-Skills-Forecast-and-Proposed-Schedule-of-Work-200920181.pdf

12 https://blueroom.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TBRT-Annual-Report-2018.pdf

13 https://www.waopera.asn.au/company/youngartistprogram/

14 https://wayjo.com/education/emerging-composers/

15 https://co3.org.au/coy-training/