

# Southern Exposure

Annemarie Kropf investigates how Australia and New Zealand compare in terms of support for young performing artists

A few months ago, Australian dancer and choreographer Fiona Bryant was taking part in an artist-mentoring programme called Kickstart when she heard about a new possibility. As part of the Australia Council for the Arts' Opportunities for Young and Emerging Artists (OYEA) initiative, the government had developed a programme called ArtStart to provide financial assistance to recent creative arts graduates committed to establishing a career as a professional artist. In order to receive up to AU\$10,000 (€6,000), the applicant has to present a five-year business plan, demonstrate potential for artistic excellence and display a strong commitment to his chosen field.

'The funding for the ArtStart programme is not to make art,' says Libby Christie, executive director for arts funding at the Australia Council for the Arts, stressing the goal. 'It's to support activities to get your business plan off the ground as a young artist.'

And so, Bryant, who has a masters' degree in choreography, set to work on her application, submitting it this past October. 'It was a little bit daunting as grant writing isn't taught very well,' says the Melbourne-based Bryant. 'When I looked at the recipients for ArtStart grants, there were a lot of visual artists. Visual artists get taught how to write [grant applications] really well at arts school. Dancers are notorious for being terrible at writing what they want to do. That's something some of the young artist programmes are trying to rectify.'

In December, she received the good news and nearly AU\$10,000 was available to her starting in January for a yearlong grant.

'Dreaming is not something we're encouraged to do,' Bryant says. 'If we articulate something we're dreaming of, then we sound like fools.'

Bryant plans on using the money to produce additional promotional material such as a show reel and website, as well as receive additional dance training.

'It's an interesting thing,' she says. 'A lot of sceptics out there say that sports are over-funded and the arts are under-funded. But there are a lot of opportunities for young artists and there's lots of fire in young communities to make things happen. I've become quite aware that there are a lot of initiatives. I feel really well supported. Often, if I'm looking at my email, there are so many things to apply for!'

Started in 2008, the OYEA programme will provide AU\$6.6m through 2011 to young artists. A national initiative to help the future of Australian arts, the range of programmes available is designed to increase the pro-

fessional networks of young and emerging artists, develop their skills, support performing arts companies to present their work and give rise to projects using new technologies to engage artists and audiences. The programme has six components: creative residencies and commissions, artist-run initiatives, interdisciplinary arts residential laboratories at youth festival *Splendour in the Grass*, an online arts community called 'The Program,' and a young and emerging artist award with the Australian Business Arts Foundation. The last

component, national mentoring programmes, includes the recently launched Jump, which will offer to 30 young artists each year a 10-month mentoring partnership to help build their professional skills and develop their chosen arts practice. Applicants are asked to suggest a mentor, preferably having already approached them before submitting the application. While artists need to be living in Australia as citizens or residents, their chosen mentors can be anywhere in the world as long as they are avail-

able via online technologies.

'There's been a big campaign to launch it,' says Christie. 'We used lots of social networking media, which is how you reach young artists.'

Jump is managed nationally by Youth Arts Queensland (YAQ), a regional organisation that strengthens youth arts and cultural development. 'YAQ has a long track record of running successful arts mentoring programs going back 10 years and was able to respond to the tender requirements with a lot of know-how and a new decentralised model to support national service delivery,' says Julie Woodward, chief executive officer at YAQ. In addition to coordinating the roll-out of the localised program delivery through partner organisations around Australia, YAQ will also manage the national marketing campaign, oversee the achievement of the programme's goals and broker partnerships with local and state government authorities and the wider Australian arts industry to ensure Jump's long-term success.

While each state will run a slightly different programme model to take advantage of local development opportunities, broader skills development - including business skills - will be a key component of Jump throughout the country, Woodward stresses. In Queensland, Jump participants will be offered YAQ's accredited arts business training programme, Navigation, which focuses on project planning and budgeting, working with communities, grant writing,

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marketing, occupational health and safety/risk management, making presentations/pitching and design essentials.

Woodward says YAQ has communicated with a vast range of arts organisations, such as youth orchestras and music departments of universities to spread the word. Jump is currently accepting applications for artists aged 18 to 30 across all art forms.

Bryant, 25, says she's noticed in the last few years that the maximum grant age for young artist programmes has increased to 30. 'It looks like it's taking people a lot longer to establish themselves as artists,' she surmises. 'They can't write a grant application!'

Woodward has a possible reason for this age increase. 'Definitions of what we in our industry refer to as "youth" is federally regarded as 30, but can differ from state to state,' she states. 'There could be a number of reasons for this – people staying longer in formal education and post-graduate programmes. It may also have something to do with the realisation that artists can take many years to develop. Allowing a few extra years to be eligible for specific emerging artist programmes can only benefit our industry over the longer term.'

Woodward says that federally funded programmes such as Jump and others in the OYEA initiative are critical to the development of Australia's next generation of arts leaders since there have been no 'significant' increases in funding in recent years at the state level. She is still positive about the performing arts scene in the country, however.

'I think at the moment the performing arts in Australia have fared much better than their counterparts in Europe and North America due to the global financial crisis having a much softer impact on the Australian economy,' she says. 'In terms of artistic vibrancy, the Australian performing arts sector continues to punch above its weight internationally and there are very exciting things going on at the small and independent level particularly among artist collectives.'

Bryant, who is married to a musician, agrees about the vibrancy of the Australian arts sector.

'The sheer number of practicing artists makes it better to be in Australia,' says Bryant, who moved to Brisbane six years ago and lives in an artistic community. 'I feel well supported. There are more programmes available. In New Zealand, there is just not the same number of practicing artists.'

#### Music Education in New Zealand

In early July 2009, the Christchurch-based National Centre for Research in Music Education and Sound Arts (MERC) held its first conference in conjunction with the 31st conference of the Australia New Zealand Association for Research in Music Education (ANZARME). About 40 people attended the conference, whose theme was 'ANZ music education practices – a research perspective.' Thirty-five papers were delivered in eight sessions which covered topics such as early childhood, school music and community education.

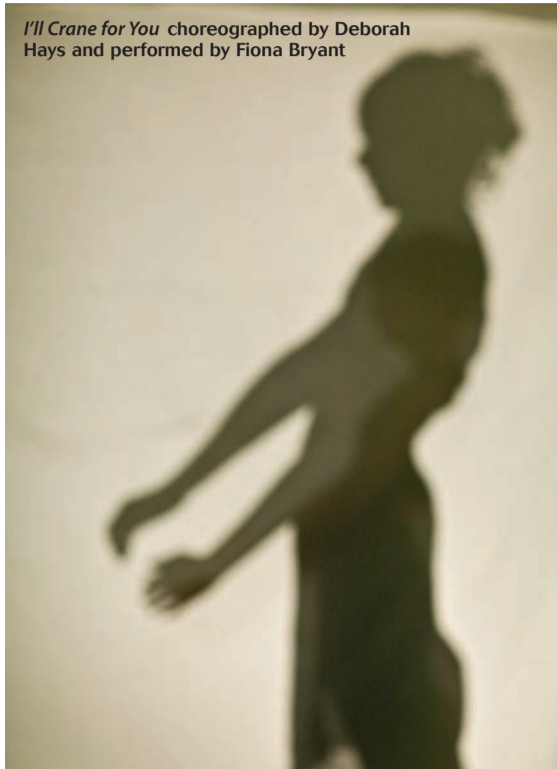
'There wasn't a great deal of difference,' says David Sell, adjunct professor at the University of Canterbury and co-director of MERC, about the findings by the two countries. 'We were thinking along the same lines and had similar sorts of problems.'

'One thing we did notice is that there's more money in Australia,' adds Roger Buckton, senior lecturer at the school of music at the University of Canterbury and manager of MERC. 'They're getting funding from central and state governments.'

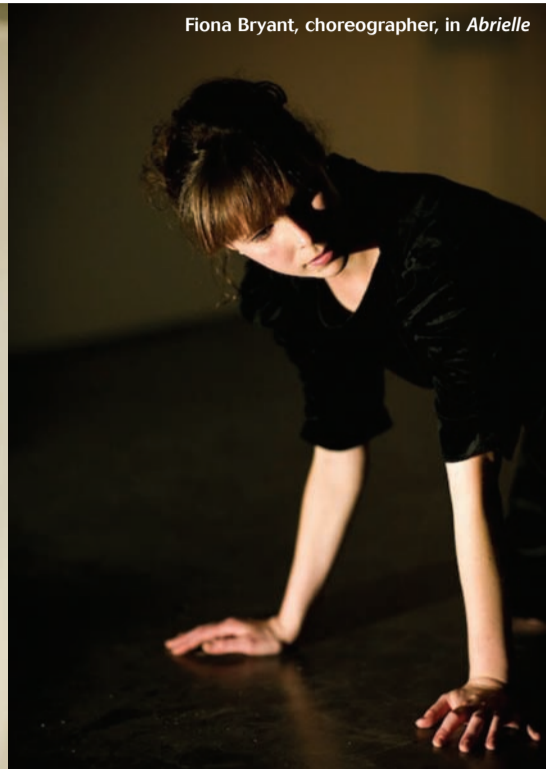
Set up in 2006 at the University of Canterbury, MERC serves as the national hub for the coordination of and contribution to research in music education and sound arts. Its funding mainly comes from the university.

Funding is one of the main issues hitting music education in New Zealand. 'What's happening, to a great extent, is that the parents who can afford it will insist on

*I'll Crane for You* choreographed by Deborah Hays and performed by Fiona Bryant



Fiona Bryant, choreographer, in *Abrielle*



it with their children at the expense of those who are lower on the socio-economic scale,' Sell notes, noting that parents will pay for private music lessons rather than demand it in the schools.

There are no grants available for young musicians via the Ministry of Education, however, various agencies and sponsors do offer assistance. For example, the Pettman Junior Academy, operated through the University of Canterbury, offers scholarships to young musicians at the secondary level. Creative New Zealand, which is directly funded by the government, will also offer assistance to musicians looking to study abroad.

Sell says that New Zealand is pretty similar to other countries when it comes to the school sector. 'Music used to be part of the curriculum, but now it's part of the arts,' he says, noting that the other categories are visual arts, dance and drama. 'It's not compulsory to have a music programme. The schools must have an art component, but it's up to the school whether music is prominent or not.' He adds that music tends to be pretty strong at the early childhood level, but then gradually starts to phase out or become an optional subject.

'I feel the word that is very apt is that the state of music is marginalised,' Buckton says. 'It's not that anyone has said that there will be less music, but there are more [school] subjects in the same amount of time.'

One thing that is helping music education in New Zealand is the influx of Asian immigrants. Sells says that Asian families will go around, interviewing schools with strong music departments. 'From our angle, it's quite a good thing as it's forcing schools to offer more,' Sell says.

'The Asians have a strong desire for classical music,' Buckton chimes in. 'I sometimes think there would be many a folded institution if not for the Asians.' ■

[www.merc.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.merc.canterbury.ac.nz)

National Centre for Research in Music Education and Sound Arts

[www.yaq.org.au](http://www.yaq.org.au) – Youth Arts Queensland

[www.jumpmentoring.com.au](http://www.jumpmentoring.com.au) – Jump

[www.austaliacouncil.gov.au](http://www.austaliacouncil.gov.au) – Australia Council for the Arts



MERC directors (l-r) David Sell, Merryn Dunmill and Roger Buckton



Australian Youth Orchestra