

**Hong Kong Arts Development Council  
International Arts Leadership Roundtable 2017**

**Closing Discussion**

**Full Transcript of the Closing Discussion by:**

**Moderator:**

**Dr. WONG Ying-wai, Wilfred  
Chairman, Hong Kong Arts Development Council**

**Panelists**

- 1) Mr. Timothy CALNIN  
Director, Tai Kwun – Centre for Heritage and Arts  
(The Jockey Club CPS Limited)**
- 2) Mr. Doryun CHONG  
Deputy Director and Chief Curator of M+  
West Kowloon Cultural District Authority**
- 3) Ms. Connie LAM  
Executive Director, Hong Kong Arts Centre**
- 4) Mr. TANG Shu-wing  
Artistic Director, Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio**

Wilfred WONG:

We've now finally come to the last session.

In this world of the arts, you have to be open-minded and you have to be prepared to move on with time. What proves a successful formula in the past is not going to hold true forever. So, we have to balance between continuing with the traditional heritage and risk-taking. We have to leap into the future. In this final session of the Roundtable, we have four very distinguished respondents from Hong Kong arts bodies. Hopefully after what they have heard in the previous three sessions, they will be able to relate what are the problems? What are the ways the things should be moving? What can be applied to Hong Kong.

Now, I would like to conduct the session more in an open manner. Each respondent will have 5 minutes, then we'll throw open the panel to the floor for discussions. As this is the final session of the conference, I am sure many of the participants have questions or viewpoints that they would like to express. Also, I would like to encourage all our overseas speakers to also chime in and challenge our respondents. As you know, whatever our respondents say may not be correct, or may not be the same as the ways you see things. So, feel free to challenge them. I think in this way will offer us a better idea of what's happening or what should be happening.

So, let me introduce our four respondents. To my left, Mr. Timothy Calnin. He has held senior position with leading musical and artistic organisations in Australia, Europe, and Asia. Earlier he was the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra for 6 years, and he was the Director of Performing Arts at the Sydney Opera House before he was appointed as Director of Tai Kwun.

Then, we have Mr. Doryun Chong, the Deputy Director and Chief Curator of M+, a new museum of visual culture which will be open in the near future in West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong. Doryun has worked together with HKADC in curating Hong Kong's participation in the Venice Biennale in 2015 and 2017, and hopefully in 2019 as well.

Then we have Ms. Connie Lam. A home-grown arts administrator, Executive Director of Hong Kong Arts Center since 2009. Connie also has rich curatorial experience in various art form.

Finally, we have Mr. Tang Shu-Wing. Shu-Wing was the former Dean of the School of Drama of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. He's currently artistic director of his own Tang Shu Wing Theater Studio and his works are revered in international stages including the Shakespeare Club in London.

So, may I now pass the mic to Mr. Calnin.

Timothy CALNIN:

Thank you very much. It's sort of quite difficult to be a respondent in this situation, because the topics that have been covered in the last day and half have been so diverse. But there are a few themes that came through quite consistently that I thought might be interesting to return to.

One was this concept of excellence, which is something that is really hard to define. And I think, funding organisations and arts organisations are always challenged by coming up with a meaningful way to be able to measure the success artistically and creatively. Australia Council for the Arts took a very interesting decision about 15 years ago, I think it was which was to ask the arts company themselves to work out how they would define their success and how they would measure their quality. It was a challenge that enabled each organisation to think about meaningful ways of being able to critique itself. And it's a difficult thing because you want to get a big range of opinions and trying to synthesise something. I think at the heart of it was trying to come up with something that would allow organisations to evolve and develop.

I think it was a very interesting process. Because I think, ultimately organisations were consulting a very wide range of opinions and views, and trying to work out interesting ways to describe their achievements. I think it also develops a certain level of humility about what you're doing well, but also what you're not doing so well, and what you might do to address that in the future. I think that's where it became quite instructive.

So, if I could give you the example at the time I was the Director of Artistic Planning at the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, we were sort of contributing to this process by devising our own way of measuring success. I used to consult an artistic committee from within the orchestra, so it was made about 8-10 musicians. We would also invite a panel of external people from the arts, generally whom we would invite to performances throughout the year, and we would also consult with guest artists who came regularly. And so, over a period of say 5 years, you would be asking people whether there are strengths or weaknesses within the ensemble that you could develop.

This tends out to be an extremely worthwhile thing for performing arts ensemble which is always in the process of evolving and developing. You are getting some really good objective reviews of your activities, and you are able to then build on that. We work with experts in that field, bringing guest conductors, or guest soloists who have a specialisation in that field, and see whether we can develop and improve. It is actually an extremely constructive thing in the pursuit of excellence.

So, I think it's something that's in a way, the successful assessment of artistic quality is something quite organic, and if organisations really commit to examining their performance. Because you know, you tend to want to speak, talk it out, and report as if you're doing an annual report which celebrates everything. If you are quite humble about it, you can produce something that then allows you to focus in area where perhaps you're not so strong and do something about it.

Doryun CHONG:

Echoing what Dr. Wong just said earlier, M+ museum will open in the near future. But we like to say more critically that the museum has been operating and functioning for the last 6-7 years, as you made reference that HKADC and M+ have worked together for 3 times in Hong Kong participation in the Vienna Biennale. Apart from this, we have organised about 20 exhibitions over the last 6 years or so, as well as the building of the museum's collection has been going on. So, as an institution, we would like to think we are very much doing one of our purposes of serving the public first and foremost here in Hong Kong.

So, to make a relationship between what I'm doing, because I'm not here just to talk about my institution, but makes a relationship between that and the conversations that have been going on since yesterday, going kind of backward order, boundary is something that I think about a lot, especially in relation to disciplinary boundaries, because M+ is a museum of 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>th</sup> century visual culture, and that's defined mainly through 3 disciplinary pillars of design and architecture, moving image and visual art. We often talk about how these 3 disciplinary pillars are distinct on their own, but contain many diversity and multi-layers, many mediums and materialities. In the meantime, we also explore the intersections and overlaps between these disciplinary pillars. So, there were a lot of talk about cross-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary. These are terms that all institutions are grappling, whether or not if you're calling yourself as a "Museum of Official Culture". But even if you're just a contemporary art museum, because just to take one disciplinary or one medium of contemporary art, that itself has expanded and diversify in such great ways that there's no serious museum in the world that thinks, "oh we are only interested in paintings and sculptures."

And as a new institution, so much of our job is setting up the new infrastructure. It's great theoretically, sometimes also in practice, to talk about breaking down the boundaries, willfully and intentionally undermining the existing structures. But when you're in the stage of business of setting it up, then there's also great power in necessity of thinking about the boundaries, and the specificity contained within those boundaries before you start talking about revising and restructuring. In fact, those two things happen simultaneously.

I am also thinking a lot about applications of digital technologies. Obviously, as a 21<sup>st</sup> century museum you cannot not do that. I don't think it's even a matter of great debate whether to do it or not. But also I think it comes with many challenges, and it's not something that we have talked about greatly. Amongst other colleagues of contemporary museums around the world, there is brewing discussion about the sort of violence, or even the uncontrollability of opinions in the social media space, and how that can really affect the work that we do on-site. I don't think we have really figured out how to handle this.

So, now I'm bringing to the first plenary topic about the audience ("Connecting the Arts with Audiences"). This is not just the audience that's coming to your doors, to your physical venue, but also the audience that their own institutions

have been working in the last few years to reach out, to reach into digital space. Perhaps under the naive understanding that this expansion is just an expansion of our democratic ideal, but in fact, I think the behaviours, the attitude and developing culture in the social media space is not something that we quite know what it is yet. So, that great challenge is something that is facing us, and that will also affect our face-to-face audience as well.

So, all of these topics that came up yesterday and today have provided a lot for thought. Thank you.

Connie LAM:

I have taken a lot from these 2 half days, and as I only have 5 minutes, so I can only pick a few points to share.

The first thing I want to share is the importance of cross-festivals collaboration. I hope next time HKADC will invite the Hong Kong Tourism Board to join the talk, because if we think Hong Kong as a cultural city, we need more promotion. And as Dr. Carey (Chair of Festivals Edinburgh [UK]) shares, there have been collaborations between different festivals in Edinburgh. Actually, Hong Kong has a lot of festivals and mega-events, as well as a lot of very interesting things. If we can coordinate and to promote, we can really help each other to develop audiences as they need different types of programme.

Second, I really concur with Ms. Yau (Chief Executive Officer, The Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection [Hong Kong]) the importance of upscaling the audience. We need to cultivate audience so that they are not just enjoying, but also actually participating throughout the process, so they can gain more nutrition from the experience. We need to have critical mass audience, but in the meantime we also have to build up more connoisseur audience. So, they can criticise and then we can make further improvement. I think this is really important. With audience conversion, I think Hong Kong can have more power and resources to have better programming internationally.

Third, I also have some thoughts about the technologies for the arts infrastructure. We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we have AI, AR and VR. I think technology is not only for the future, but it also can embrace the past. We really need to make good use of technology for better archival purpose. In the Hong Kong arts scene, we have the Asia Art Archive but they cannot collect all of what have happened throughout history. Like the Hong Kong Arts Centre, we have a very important boxed theater which has raised a lot of young or small-size theatre groups. We are keeping a lot of videos but we don't have budget to digitalise them all. These are the very important part and past of the history of Hong Kong. And I think it's really important for the technology.

And lastly, I agree with what Mr. Brault (Director & CEO, Canada Council for the Arts) said earlier that we the arts funders are not to support excellence, but the quest for excellence instead. This is something I really encourage and hope to see arts funders in Hong Kong also embracing it. Thank you.

TANG Shu-wing:

Thank you Dr. Wong for inviting me here. I just like to share some of my observations from my personal experience of speaking with a number of institutions and fellow artists and audiences. It is not necessarily a criticism.

In previous sessions, arts and culture are defined or redefined by languages that policy makers, arts administrators and funders used. Correspondingly, art and culture should be like this or like that, and above all, they have values only if they've taken part in social and economic policies. Words like, arts for change, personal growth, diversity and behind all these, there's only one fundamental concept: art and culture must be positive. Positive from the point of views of the government and funders, or in substance that the majority will value its presence. Some words that constantly come up in the conference are strategy, collaboration, sustainability, engagement, education and creativity. And we should do everything that attain some positive value, and the building of hardware and infrastructure to realise these policies.

But art is about feeling and expression, it is about creating a unique artistic vocabulary to express that feeling. Expression does not involve good or bad, right or wrong. It's only a matter where they're strong enough to express that feeling, and the audiences are there to experience and stretch their own imagination which has no form. Artists are a special kind of professional. We make a living on the depicting the sure notion of human being through artificial meanings. Whereas in daily life we play artificial game in a very serious manner. No matter how hard we set up rules and regulations, we cannot stop tragedies and comedies happening everyday in real life.

Creation is without sky. We try to get hold of certain fundamental values like authenticity and beauty, but operational side of a creative work often involve values opposite to the original ones. Once buying and selling occur, the entire purpose of creativity will be shifted largely to economic means, rewards and social status. Hardware and infrastructures are constantly built, but as an art practitioner, I found the software is operating not smoothly, if not totally against the hardware which wears often, because very often the artistic content is not a major concern, but its documentation on all level is, because they are proofs of the realisation of a successful event, justifying the input of resources so that everybody is happy. But, this is the reality that we cannot change for the time being. We can only work around it to make it better. So, let's go back to basics.

What is the most important thing we need in life, particularly in art and culture? I cannot give you an answer. I just invite you to think about certain things. Personally, I don't think that artists can solve every problem, and don't think that we should and we could do everything. I don't think that new is automatically better, and don't think that knowledge automatically induces a better life. Every move in a policy is adjusting the benefits of various sectors. New things create new interested parties and new game players which are automatically challenging old ones. And, don't over emphasise the facts that arts equals life, and that every citizen can be an artist in this absolute term.

We, artist, are a strange human being. I'm sorry to say that but it's true, especially good artists. We are hypersensitive, passionate and sometimes too passionate. We're very easy to formulate likes and dislikes. We lie to others in a very smart way, because the truth is often very painful. We don't need to talk. If good artists meet, we just have a coffee, have a few works, and we know approximately 50% of how they are working without actually seeing their

works. We are egoist, and we often retreat to solitude. We are constantly shifting between order and chaos, between having forms and no forms. We are also very vulnerable, because we are often the first to be executed by a totalitarian government, but also the first to receive budget cut in democratic societies. Not many parents are happy to see their children situating in such position. But life is full of contradictions. Life is above all a spiritual training. Good artists have strong minds and strong bodies to endure hardship. So, for young people who have this aspiration, don't hesitate because you live only once. But be better prepared for a tough life.

To many, technology can solve many problems in daily life. That's true. But, more subtly, it induces the bigger of economic return and a higher social status. The overall publicity in society is that any individual succeeds if he can master technology to his service. And here lies the notion of fear. Fear of being left behind in national and international competition. If you stop that means you are going backward, but in many cases it's not true. You stop, and you see things more clearly. In some occasions, if things have laid here for thousands of years, just let them stay as they are. Do not introduce technology to alter anything. This will create a breaking of stratum in a human foundation. In the 50s-60s, people have fewer means but happier family values. The question of technology whether it is an end or a means? If it is an end, why is it an end? If it is a means, what is the end then?

Regarding boundaries, I would often cite Richard Wagner about the total works of art. He believes that every art form can be combined together under the notion of drama and that is opera. It induces the highest aesthetic experience. But to me, it's a personal feeling of the object that we are going to enjoy or consume. I don't think that the aesthetic value of the Cello Suite of Bach is less than the aesthetic values of Ring Cycles of Richard Wagner. It's just different. About boundary, anti-boundary or no matter the term you invent, as a practicing artist, I really advocate young artist should learn their skills firmly in their own discipline before you talk about cross-disciplines. We often find young artists having a lot of smart ideas but poor techniques. Throughout their lives, they would work around that's smart mentality and that's the end of their career. Thank you.

Wilfred WONG

Very good and very heavy indeed. Now, a very interesting dialogue is happening. Our speakers have previously spoken on different plenary topics, themes, but in this session, I don't want to confine them to any of the topics. For our overseas speakers, this is your last chance to give us more inspiration before you go home. Anyone would like to comment?

Andy STRATFORD  
(Managing Director,  
FutureEverything  
[UK])

Well, I'd like to be kicked-off. I think that's said in last speech was absolutely fantastic, it was very good finale today to an extent. I would like to just ask the panel and picking upon that point about it's only about positive. How can we allow a safe space for failure? Because you need to know failure before you can have success. So, I agree it's not all about positives. Where is the safe space for failure?

Timothy CALNIN

It's a great question, actually. When you're in an organisation that are sort of results focused, you have to make space for a process for experimentation. I suppose institutions that have a broad enough platform are able to nurture more experimental or developing artist in perhaps a less exposed way, not on the main stage, but in the right kind of environment.

Hearing Mr. Tang's talk reminded me and I think it probably reminded everybody in the room why we work in this business. Because we are so stimulated by the proximity to a fresh and unconventional way of looking at things and challenging what is normally accepted every day. I think when it comes to finding that space where it's permissible to fail, where you don't have to be 100% success at every turn, you have to be listening to what the artists want.

I think that one of the dangers that we all encounter when we are working in larger institutions is that we become increasingly distant from the artists themselves. We have to constantly go back and listen to the artists rather than assuming we know already what the artists want, need and expect. So, I think that's actually something we have to really take pretty much to heart. I think, just like this panel today and yesterday's panel, having practicing artists on every panel is a really vitally important part of this kind of conference. It constantly reminds us of our responsibility to ensure that we are listening primarily to those creative voices.

TANG Shu-wing

Space should be a space of treasuring the quest for failure. Very often, failure is another success, and that is really important. It trains our minds, it trains our techniques so that we become better, yet it's also painful and difficult. In Hong Kong, we often say that we should invite great international masters to teach here. It's fantastic if it happens, but we should also groom our own international masters. Apart from looking outward, we should also look inward to see what we have, what we lack and why. We cannot solve this problem just with the work of artists. There should be a collective effort.

Wilfred WONG

Any comment from the floor?

Wai-Luk LO  
(HKADC Council  
Member)

I'm Lo Wai-luk from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, I want to answer Mr. Stratford's question. I remember the first production, the pioneer production of the Seagull is a big flop. It was only the vision of Stanislavski that eventually, not only made Seagull more than a master work, but make Chekov a master of not only modern drama, but drama. So, the vision of arts presenters and artists are very important. I agree we need to support the quest for excellence. We are not only supporting the already proven good work, we need to support budding artist and good vision. Although that vision may not be well-equipped, we still need to give them resources. Thank you.

Connie LAM

When we talk about failures, what we have to define what failure is. At the Hong Kong Arts Centre, we always do something very niche, that means they may not be easily be understood by everyone. If our programmes are evaluated with Key Performance Indicator (KPI), the numbers of audiences may always indicate failure.

A few years ago we worked with Samson Young (a Hong-Kong artist working primarily in the medium of sound performance) on the "Sonic Anchor", a sound-art project. So, we needed to first figure out how many people were expected to come? How should be we promote, as most of the artists may not be known to a lot of audiences. So, when we start to do some new projects, our KPI is about the learning process and how to grow. We have to embrace failure but the most important thing is sustainability. Over a few years of work, "Sonic Anchor" is now known to a number of people.

Doryun CHONG

So, there are couple of things that popped into my head in relation to that question.

The first thing is what I think is a really brilliant description of an institution where I used to work for, where the director at the time said that she wanted her museum to be a safe place for unsafe ideas. I of course understood and all of us understood that unsafe doesn't mean something political or ideological, but speculations, imagining different possibilities, and not necessarily accepting the idea that are already established or widely accepted. So, I guess that's sort of the kind of ethos that I think a lot of contemporary institutions or festivals or organisations already worked with.

The second thing that popped into my head was one art critic who said that as a contemporary artist, if you have 10% success rate, then you're very successful already. So, I think all of us working with living art forms with living artists know that what we're not looking for is always success, whatever that means all the time, and that it is really very much part of a process. And I think it is that if 90% is failures or it's not quite success, and I think that's the great rich space where professional criticism happens, that's where all our audience as a critic also happens. I don't think any of us expect that everybody comes in and all of them will love everything that we present. I think what makes everything what we do really vibrant is that there is a whole range of opinion about what we present, and then that what makes discourse happen. And then, that's what... it's actually the engine, a motor of what we do.

Rupert MYER  
(Chair, Australia  
Council for the Arts)

A lot has expected of arts funding agencies. Even in the last 24 hours we've talked about diversity, inclusiveness, traditional and experimental arts, large and small companies, geographic diversity, young and old participation, ingenuity, boundaries, technology, audiences, education, and I probably left a lot of others as well. There's a saying in another sector that if you stand for everything, you stand for nothing.

So, my question to the panelists is that if funding agencies really want to stand for something there, what they can't afford to not focus on?

Cath CARDIFF  
(Senior Manager, Arts  
Development Services,  
Creative New  
Zealand)

That's a very good question and resounds very well with us, because we have the same issues, and we have been debating this. I agree, for an organisation like ours which is operating in a very small country of only 4.5 million people (New Zealand), but everyone expect us to have world class this and world class that. In many cases we do, but on other cases we don't. How many opera companies, how many orchestras can you afford in a situation like that. Some people don't like to have that conversation. So, what can we focus on, that's different? For us, it's very much our indigenous culture, our expanding diversity, and we have made that decision that we are going to focus both on high quality but also diversity. That will mean that we cannot invest in something, and you have to be courageous about that. But, in my experience if you tell people what you're focusing on, if you say that it's what you want to do, most of them will get onboard with it somehow. It's if you don't tell them, and you pretend that you're trying to do everything for everybody, that people get crossed.



Tisa Ho (Executive Director, Hong Kong Arts Festival)

A couple of strategies have been there to do with excellence and quality, while I agree completely about the need for failure, about the need for space for failure, and we are not dealing with products, so the process is important.

I very much appreciate what Simon said earlier about having different definitions of the KPIs for different types of organisations. I agree with Mr. Tang about looking at growing masters. In this context, therefore, we should then not to penalise success but also build successes. So, it's great to have space for experimentation, great to have new things, great to break the boundaries; but where there's work that sits within the disciplines that they are therefore, like the Bach Suite, will remain important. So, I want to say a word to keep that balance so that as we are very involved in the new, and the next, and what's chasing us, what we have to respond to; I think one of the values of the arts are some universal human values expressed in great works that we should continue to treasure.

Timothy CALNIN

I just been thinking about Mr. Myer's challenges to us, and maybe thinking again about the research that you mentioned yesterday at the beginning of your presentation, that Australia Council for the Arts produces every year which is a sort of view of how the arts are going, like an annual health check of the arts in Australia, and how they're evolving and developing. I think it's a quite profound research, as with every 7 years it's linked with the census, so you get a really deep, broad national perspective. It brings up issues, trends, developments and also highlights areas of weakness. That enables the art funding bodies to consider where to be placing the emphasis, what sectors need support. Perhaps there are some corners of the arts which are gradually disappearing, and maybe that's a natural part of the process? They're really difficult things to actually grapple with. But I'm sure that the depth and quality of the research is something that really does profoundly informed the decisions Australia Council for the Arts made about where to place its funding dollars.

When Ms. Winsome Chow (Chief Executive of HKADC) and I had an initial chat about this, there's clearly a great need for Hong Kong's arts scene to have similar kind of research and analysis available, in order to be able to really inform where best to place the financial, resources and emphasis to achieve something. At this stage, we can't say that 98% of people living in Hong Kong regards the arts as an important part of their lives and make so worthwhile contribution. I think we'd all love to be able to know what that number is.

Actually, if it's less than 100%, let's use that as a challenge to develop over the next few years, so that we can increase that level of recognition participation and appreciation. That, to me is a really, important thing that needs to happen to be able to inform some quite long strategic decisions in the arts in Hong Kong.

Richard GRANT

Can I just come back to this question of failure? Because I think it's quite important. There are various ways of looking at failure, aren't there? If you're a public funding body as the arts councilors, failure could be that the people and the institutions you're investing don't make money and not sustainable, and fall over. And that's sad for public institution funding the arts, because it shows that your investment hasn't worked out in a profitable way. But if you take that as your only criteria, what are you going to do about the artist who in a group or solely produces work, and actually he doesn't really worry about financial remuneration?

So, if you use financial remuneration and sustainability in a structural sense as a measure of failure, you're setting yourself up for a very difficult choice about what you do, about sustaining artistic creativity which is in my view probably not about success or failure at all. It's about the creativity.

Simon BRAULT  
(Director & CEO,  
Canada Council for the  
Arts)

I would suggest that this question of success and failure is a constant question. Just give an example, this year Canada is celebrating our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and our Ministry of Culture organised a big celebration. For Canada Council of the Arts, we decided that we would put 35 million CAD to have artistic projects that would be legacy project, but never mentioned the idea of celebrating. Because for a lot of Canadian including the indigenous people and the French speaking people, there was nothing to celebrate. So, we use the idea "Marking the Anniversary." We made a big call for proposal and received 2100 artistic projects. We only kept 200 so the rate of success is fairly low, while those projects were funded at a very high level, a half of million dollars each.

So, I read a lot of those proposals, saw many of those shows and some are coming yet for because it's 2017 and beyond. Some of those shows were not as good as the proposals were. For me, failure is when it's boring. Failure is not when you know that it's not completely achieved, mastered or well attended. For me, failure is when you decide as an art council to invest in artistic creation, and what you see is boring, repetitive, predictable and average.

So, I think about this question of success and failure, artistic success is certainly not something easily measurable, but every time you take like 60 people who know more or less about the arts, they will come rapidly to the conclusion that it's interesting or not interesting. If it's not interesting for me, it's kind of a failure. But we took risk, so that's really okay. For me, art has no responsibility to be beautiful. It's not about being nice or being positive. Like Macbeth, there is nothing nice there. I think the biggest problem we have now is what a lot of people call "Grant-preneurship". People will develop an idea of how to master, how to get a grant in a way that is very high, and some organisations are very good at it. But it's not because you master the language and you can convince the jury that your project is good, that it will be an artistic success and that it will last. Most of the time when you're so perfect in your proposal, the show you will present will be a little boring, and for me that's failure. So, that's my personal view about that. Thank you.

Rosa Huey DANIEL  
(Deputy Secretary  
(Culture), Ministry of  
Culture, Community  
& Youth; Chief  
Executive Officer,  
National Arts Council  
[Singapore])

I am going to attempt to bring the two ideas together regarding the question Mr. Myer asked about what should funders like us do and the idea of failure.

Interestingly, perhaps for those of us who are funders, it is actually to understand whether there is market failure. As a state-body, with state money, you really don't want to go into something which the market is already functioning quite well. This is never something which is static. You need to have a good sense of where it looks it's taking off, and you need to know how to get out of that. These are difficult conversations, but you need to go to the next area. As arts funders, we have to get our data right, have a good sense of what's lying ahead, and understand the changes in the operating environment which is now becoming increasingly fast. We also need to know where you can help the arts move ahead, because if we don't look ahead, many artists don't do that, the arts community cannot afford to do that. If we don't talk to people and benchmark where the best people are going to all different areas that the arts needs, then as a funder you're not able to put your limited resources in the right places.

I would share Singapore's great challenges because we are so small, and small country cannot afford to make big mistakes. So, we're trying very hard to understand what's going on, and try to put things forward if we think there's a market failure.

Lynn F. C. YAU  
(Chief Executive  
Officer, The  
Absolutely Fabulous  
Theatre Connection  
[Hong Kong])

On the subject of failure, I'd like to make a point about flip side which is success. Everybody wants every arts group to be successful, the company himself and the funders. But there is also a danger on pinning too much on the success and wanting it to be totally sustainable.

All too often we've been asked, "Oh, this is a really great project, but we really cannot fund you anymore. It's so successful, you have to be sustainable on your own." I think there are two levels of danger here. First of all, if something is very successful, why should a company become the victim of its own success? It does not make sense. If you want to create great masters from our young people, you've got to sustain that company. And therefore, it is up to funders to be extremely bold to be able to say, "Right, I'm going to bet on this horse and I'm going to put money there, so that you have funding for the next 10 years to grow. Not 3 years not 5 years, but 10 years." So, I think this is really what we should be gunning for, before we even start to look at growing masters, which I totally agree with.

Secondly, can we define the word sustainable? I do understand that we're not in the environmental situation. But when something is sustained because it has clock the box office of what? 3000 people? It doesn't necessarily mean it's successful. It means that it's got the number of bonds on seat, it has got the spectacle under fireworks. It can mean that. So, I think putting the span on the work, I really like to invite funders to have serious dialog with artists. Because I do think we're still worlds apart in some way. And this is a way we can move the arts forward. It's not about high art or low art. It's about how do we bring the human values to get with the funding issues. And there's never, never an easy answer, but I think we have to start this dialogue. Thank you.

Sorcha CAREY  
(Chair, Festivals  
Edinburgh [UK])

So, to represent a few from the Celtic fringe and another two small nations, Scotland and Ireland, where I was born, in this conversation around failure, I've been reflecting a lot on a quote that I came across from the very well-known Irish playwright Samuel Beckett, and it's something that has always sort of followed me through my professional life, and that is, "Try again, fail again, fail better." So, even in failure there are benchmarks for success. So, I think we could all learn from that.

And one of the things that has really struck me from this incredibly stimulating two-days, spending time with experts from around the world, is the importance of language. I've learned so much hearing colleagues from different environments and different contexts speaking about similar issues, but actually using very specific languages that comes from those contexts. It occurs to me, sort of returning to Simon point about "Grant-preneurship" and some of the conversations that we had yesterday about the shift in debate from the arts' drive for economic development and driving tourism to a sense of needing to engage with audiences and communities. Too often the arts – I suppose because we are all chasing the money, there's been a lot of talk of chasing the money and where the money should go – the arts are led by needing to speak those languages, and by finding ways to reflect what we do in the languages of other agendas. There is a great value in translation that translation is absolutely

critical. But the art of translation is actually about truly understanding the authentic language of the original and then finding a way of expressing that to a wider audience, to wider communities, and to different speakers of different languages. I think we need to focus more on that, on finding our true authentic language, and then finding ways to translate that retain our authenticity.

Wilfred WONG

Thank you. May I suggest one minute to each of our panelists to round up the discussion?

TANG Shu-wing

About failure, maybe the funding body can consider making the category of funding weakness rather than funding strength. Because we write proposal, the first line usually is, "I'm very good at this, and I want to achieve this." No, sometimes it's nonsense, and we know that. So, ask them to write what you are weak in and then tell me how you can improve your weakness? That could be another way around.

Connie LAM

Next time, we should have more potential funders coming to this conference. I think it's really important because what the arts is for daily life, it's not only for people who just like art. The arts may not necessarily be a solution, but it can let us enjoy life.

Doryun CHONG

I'm still mulling over what Mr. Myer was asking, that what could funders afford not to support and stand for. And also in relation to what Simon just said, when it's just boring and not interesting, then that's failure. I've been thinking about this a lot. Maybe the world actually has too many artists, too many organisations, too many art events, and I think we are also kind of blind to the whole capitalist logic of constant growth, accumulation, and expansion. So, in order to fail better next time, you don't perhaps have to fail so many times in between.

Timothy CALNIN

I wanted to thank Ms. Yau for putting a few words on the agenda in the last couple of days. I think wanting to have a definition of sustainability is a good one, because it's a word that is just bounced around, sort of somewhat meaninglessly. What do we really mean by sustainable? Obviously there's a kind of business sustainability, but surely there is a sustainability of an organisation to remain stimulating, vibrant, and dynamic. That is the essential part of sustainability.

The other great thing that Ms. Yau said yesterday was, which I loved, the insistence on mindful presence. We really didn't touch on this, but in the discussion of technology and the role that technology plays in the arts, it can often reduce things down to something so trivial, and so meaningless that we don't focused on it. And that, I think one thing that will always be vitally important quality in the performing arts in particular, is that shared experience of several hundreds people in a room silently contemplating something that is going on, with everybody mindfully present. That's something you can't have delivered by technology to you individually, because it's about a shared experience. I think that's something that we all cherish.

Wilfred WONG

Thank you. The last two days have brought a lot of meaning to this type of international conference. Because even for us, we don't get a chance to have a dialogue like this too often, and it's so difficult for us to really engage meaningfully in very serious discussion like this. The presence of our overseas visitors becomes a facilitator. You have stimulated a lot of the thinking and I think these two days have changed the way I look at things. Should we just encourage strength rather than weakness? Should we take away grounds when you become successful? I mean, these are all things that funders have assumed that it should be the case. And for me, I need to learn to be more courageous to stand in front of politicians, because very frequently the funding system was coined because the politicians wanted to do certain things. They wanted to show the results or have more audience. We, HKADC, as the conglomerate of arts practitioners and administrators, should have the courage to stand in front of politicians and say, "That's not the way things should be done." I like to cite Confucius saying, "Balance. Everything has to be balanced." And this is the message I took. Thank you.

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