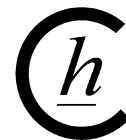


Annual Report 2006



CURRENCY HOUSE

Presented by Katharine Brisbane
at the 6th Annual General Meeting of Currency House
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The year 2006 has brought Currency House some hard work and hard thinking; and each step brings with it new opportunities. Platform Papers have been our most visible activity, beginning with the publication of Platform Papers No. 7, David Throsby's *Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy?* which was launched at the Wharf 2 theatre by Cate Blanchett on 8 February. This broadening of our brief by an internationally-known cultural economist, and the endorsement of a famous actor, has raised the status of the series and brought it wider recognition by the public and the press. In consequence David Throsby has spent much of his year in speaking engagements around Australia, in Europe and China.

Platform Papers

Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy? was followed in April by Amanda Card's essay *Body for Hire? The State of Dance in Australia*, Stuart Cunningham's *What Price a Creative Economy?* and last month Jonathan Biggins' *Satire—or Sedition? The Threat to National Insecurity*. Card's case for restructuring dance companies was not popular but its ideas are already making a mark, notably within the Sydney Dance Company. Cunningham has used his paper at a variety of public-speaking sessions to promote his plan to include the arts in public policy for innovation. Its launch in Brisbane was by the Deputy Premier, Anna Bligh, and was followed by events in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland. And Biggins' popularity as a comedian and satirist ensured a full house and TV coverage at the STC. We regularly seek partnerships with organisations sympathetic to the issues raised by each paper; and only the cost of travel and entertainment prevent us from extending public speaking and debates further.

Excerpts of Platform Papers now appear regularly in the daily press and on websites like newmatilda.com and ArtsHub. Subscriptions have been taken out by the major arts ministries, funding bodies and allied authorities—and most recently by the library of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The recently-issued discussion paper on arts policy by ALP arts spokesman Peter Garrett reflects his reading of the papers, particularly our argument that support for the arts should begin with the practitioner. We hope to carry Platform Papers into the regions in the new year with Lyndon Terracini's *A Regional State of Mind: Making Art Outside Metropolitan Australia*

For all this we are particularly indebted to our volunteer editor, John Golder, on whose rigorous standards of style and content we have come to depend totally. He has had to learn the hard way the fact that those with something to say, no matter how eminent, don't necessarily have the skills of an author.

All these are small advances but if we can begin to raise the voice of the artist at a time when public debate is growing harder to achieve, then it is worth our while. Publication, however, remains expensive and we continue to rely on our friends' encouragement. We were fortunate this year in receiving a generous offer from the Keir Foundation of \$8,000 a year for two years, and are deeply grateful to Phillip Keir and Sarah Benjamin for their initiative.

Other Publications

The editing of George Ogilvie's autobiography *Simple Gifts* has been my main work over the year. It was published on 1 September and had wide and favourable commentary. It was in our view an important document about an actor and director's life through the transformational period in Australia covering the rise of state-subsidised theatre, and the 'golden age' of the film and television industries. Next year George will record a reading for the ABC. We had two successful launches, at NIDA and the Arts Centre, Melbourne, and both organisations have our thanks.

Welcome to TV. This history of commercial television by Nick Herd is the outcome of an ARC grant to the University of Technology Sydney, for a partnership in which Currency House played a part. We hold an option to publish and the matter will be decided next February after we receive a copy of the manuscript.

Arts and Public Life Breakfasts

These have proved a powerful way of making friends and arousing interest in our work. The Sofitel Wentworth Sydney, who hosts these breakfasts for the business community, has been extremely warm-hearted; the new General Manager, Alex Penklis, has volunteered his support for a third year and his personal engagement with the venture. Our speakers this year were the former diplomat Richard Broinowski, who told how his violin became a tool of cultural exchange; John Bell on moving from the old Nimrod to the corporate world of the Bell Shakespeare Company; and Paul Field, General Manager of the Wiggles, on solving the tension between artistic and commercial imperatives over their 15 years of exponential growth.

The breakfasts have also brought us two board members, Sandra Jones and Greg Quirk, and a small but growing group of donors. We have also cemented a friendship with the Australian Business Arts Foundation. The NSW branch manager, Donna Payne, has undertaken to find us a mentor next year, under their AdviceBank scheme, to enlarge our contacts and recommend specifications for the upgrade of our website.

Finance

The 2006 balance sheet shows retained earnings of \$32,566.15, which is very pleasing. We now have stock valued at \$90,000 and have reduced the overdraft by \$12,000. However, the figures include the unexpended sum of \$10,000 raised in subscriptions towards the publication of *Simple Gifts*.

We also received notice in September of endorsement for charity income tax exemption, retrospective to July 2001, which is assisting us in applying to foundations. This heroic task has been achieved by Greg Quirk, for which we offer our heartfelt thanks. This is in addition to our endorsement as a deductible gift recipient.

Conclusion

We have achieved, and continue to achieve, a lot with small resources. We have an efficient and dedicated Executive Officer employed two days a week: Polly Rowe, who joined us at Easter after Eamon Flack moved to Company B. We have a hard-working Board and a small group of loyal members. I thank them all sincerely. With more resources we could achieve more than we do. These are difficult times, as every arts organisation is finding, and if, with our talking and our publishing we can help find new ways to make our performing arts more democratic, more inclusive and more reflective of ourselves as a nation, then we shall be doing our job,

Katharine Brisbane

Chair

