



samag
Seminars for Arts Professionals

MARCH SEMINAR SUMMARY

Unlocking the schools network – bringing your art to the classroom

Chair

Vicki Stanley, Education Manager, Australian Chamber Orchestra

Panel

Linda Lorenza, Head of Education, Bell Shakespeare

Phyllis Rowlinson, Educator and Librarian, White Rabbit Gallery

Jennifer Trezise, Senior Educator with the NSW Arts Unit and the Regional Arts Coordinator for Western Sydney for the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET).

While there is increasing pressure from governments and the private sector to engage with young people through schools, many arts organisations don't know where to start. What are the messages that will really grab a teacher's attention? What are the best ways to reach them and what timelines do you need to work to? And, how do you make your programs relevant to the curriculum?

To help answer these questions SAMAG convened an expert panel to provide examples of successful programs and practical tips on how to bring your art to the classroom; thereby helping your organisation build a sustainable future.

Both the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) and Bell Shakespeare have a wide range of programs for young people. These include general performances and open rehearsals, as well as programs for talented students. Bell Shakespeare also has programs that engage and build the skills of teachers.

For talented students, the ACO runs Combined Schools Workshops each year to bring together talented young string players from a number of schools with members of the ACO and its Emerging Artists program. Under the guidance of the ACO, students participate in small group rehearsals, Masterclasses and tutorials and then come together to present an informal performance for friends and family. The ACO also runs the Parramatta String Players, a three-year project in which ACO players and members of its Emerging Artists Program work with talented string players from the City of Parramatta and surrounding areas.

Bell Shakespeare runs Student Masterclasses and builds the skills of teachers through Teacher Masterclasses. It has also established a partnership with the Division of Professional Learning, Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney that allows teachers to use Bell Shakespeare Education Professional Development activities towards a Masters of Education. They also provide a Regional Teacher Scholarship that gives teachers working in regional NSW access to a series of Teacher Masterclasses.

While this range of activities are out of the reach of most arts organisations, Phyllis Rowlinson, the Educator and Librarian at the White Rabbit Gallery, showed what can be done by a small arts organisation utilising the unique qualities of the organisation and working hard to meet teachers' needs. To introduce teachers to the White Rabbit a cocktail party was held. Invitations were sent to school Principals and they were asked to bring four of their staff. In line with the philosophy of the White Rabbit, Phyllis encourages teachers and students to explore the space and interpret the art in their own way and emphasises that "the Gallery belongs to you". Phyllis asks teachers what she and the gallery can do for them and provides a range of resources that meet these needs and are tailored to the school curriculum. Large classes are divided into

Sydney Arts Management Advisory Group **E** info@samag.org **T** (02) 8250 5722 **W** www.samag.org **P** PO Box 18, Leichhardt NSW 2040



Communities
arts new



SAMAG is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW
and by the Australian Government through the Arts Council, its arts funding advisory body



The 2010 SAMAG Seminar Series is supported by the City of Sydney



samag
Seminars for Arts Professionals

MARCH SEMINAR SUMMARY

small groups and gallery attendants are available on each floor to answer questions. Phyllis's advice: "Make it as easy as possible".

Jennifer Trezise is a Senior Educator with the NSW Arts Unit and the Regional Arts Coordinator for Western Sydney for the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET). She coordinates major arts events and festivals for students and teachers in NSW schools, from kindergarten to university entrance, across the arts. Jennifer provided some very useful advice and information for arts organisations. She let us know that each Region has a small fund that schools can use for festivals, workshops and other arts programs. Jennifer also recommends charging for activities, as they are more likely to be valued if there is a financial contribution and the additional funds can help meet the costs of an activity or program. She also reminded the audience not to forget the schools in Western Sydney.

In terms of aligning programs to the curriculum, Jennifer emphasised the importance of always relating the activity to the curriculum. Teachers have to justify why they want to take children to a particular activity, so they need to see its core purpose and value within the context of the curriculum. When it comes to working across a number of States, Linda recommended looking at the key ideas and the main aims of each subject area, and noted that the current issues associated with working across a number of States and Territories will be addressed by the introduction of a national curriculum.

When it comes to the scheduling activities, schools generally plan their program of excursions and other activities in the September of the previous year. It was therefore recommended that organisations send their information before the end of third term. For Bell Shakespeare this is a complex process of planning and budgeting. For small organisations, because of funding and other considerations, this can be a particular challenge and they may need to rely on their relationships with individual schools to be able to slot in activities outside their scheduled program.

Which brings us to the next challenge, how to find the right person to contact at the school. In high schools it may be the Head of Department. In some primary schools it will be the Principal, others may have a coordinator of excursions. In other schools the right person may be the coordinator of creative arts. You may have to call a number of times to identify the right person and to make contact with that person. Sometimes it can be hard to find the right person, but once you have they can become a long-term advocate of your program, even letting you know when they change schools. One audience member asked: "How do you get past the school secretary?" Jennifer suggested making an effort to find out the person's correct title which is 'school administration manager', using their first name, and including the word "today" in your opening remarks e.g. "How are you today?" Bell Shakespeare uses actors from the Actors at Work program to call schools. The actors embrace the challenge of getting through to the right person and use a very personal approach. Another organisation hires teachers to call schools.

Linda also recommended contacting professional teacher associations as they hold annual conferences and training days and can include your brochures in the information satchel for the event. Teacher associations can also circulate information about your programs to their members. Linda also suggested using a simple feedback form to collect contact details and information about what classes and texts they are teaching in the next year. This information can be put into a database.

In terms of the grabbing a teacher's attention, Jennifer says you only have three seconds in marketing to engage a person's attention. Therefore, it's important to think about how you describe your 'product' i.e. "what's on the top of the page", think of using a catchy name e.g. "Jump stART" and how you package it e.g.

Sydney Arts Management Advisory Group E info@samag.org T (02) 8250 5722 W www.samag.org P PO Box 18, Leichhardt NSW 2040



Communities
arts new



SAMAG is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW
and by the Australian Government through the Arts Council, its arts funding advisory body



The 2010 SAMAG Seminar Series is supported by the City of Sydney



samag
Seminars for Arts Professionals

MARCH SEMINAR SUMMARY

email or brochure or DVD. Jennifer recommended emailing the contact person directly, each public school teacher has an email address in a common format: firstname.surname@det.nsw.edu.au (e.g. jennifer.trezise@det.nsw.edu.au). An audience member asked: Is email enough? The panel agreed, that you also need to send information in other formats e.g. brochures or flyers, a CD or DVD, use social media such as Facebook, and perhaps send free tickets to opening night. Jennifer also suggests making an appointment to see your contact person so you can show them what you are planning.

When thinking about how to market your product, it is important to remember that all schools promote themselves through their arts programs. Market your product as an opportunity for enrichment and opportunities for children. Other 'product' suggestions included offering a question time at the beginning or end of the show. Linda recommended having a short pre-show talk to engage the audience in the story and point out things for them to look for during the performance. Phyllis again emphasised the importance of providing resources for teachers.

It was also mentioned that these days' schools are concerned about health and safety and child protection issues and, as a result, each external excursion requires a lot of paperwork. It was suggested that there is value in being able to take an activity or event to the school. Otherwise, the venue could prepare a risk assessment sheet that can be used by teachers, as Phyllis has done for the White Rabbit.

While unlocking the schools network may seem like a big challenge, it is important to remember that involvement in the arts can greatly enrich the lives of children and through the development of good relationships, good planning and timing, and thoughtful product design and marketing you may well succeed.

For examples of programs for schools have a look at the following websites:

<http://www.aco.com.au/Default.aspx?url=/education-programs>

<http://www.bellshakespeare.com.au/learning/intro>

<http://www.whiterabbitcollection.org/>

Other resources

The Arts Unit, Department of Education and Training – includes contact details for Regional Arts Coordinators

http://www.pau.nsw.edu.au/arts_unit/index.htm

The Professional Teachers' Council NSW (PTC NSW) links to professional teacher associations.

<http://www.ptc.nsw.edu.au/Content/Common/pg-Associations.seo>

Sarah Evans

Sydney Arts Management Advisory Group E info@samag.org T (02) 8250 5722 W www.samag.org P PO Box 18, Leichhardt NSW 2040



Communities
arts nsw



Australian Government



SAMAG is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW
and by the Australian Government through the Arts Council, its arts funding advisory body



The 2010 SAMAG Seminar Series is supported by the City of Sydney