



# Emerging Producer Xchange (EPX)

2021 – 2022 Evaluation Report

**Metro Arts + The Mill**



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"There is absolutely no better way to dive into a career in Arts Management than this program. The opportunities to grow, learn and network are second to none. The direction and growth I've experienced this year has completely surprised me in the best way, and it has been the most challenging year to date. But I truly feel like this is a career I was meant to have and I would not have known this without the EPX program."

– Year Two participant

"With a shortage of producers, a program like this can fast track emerging producers to get the industry understanding and experience which means that better art can be made."

– Year One participant

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Cover image: *Mad Dance Festival 2022* at Metro Arts. Image by James Reiser.

This page: *Rhythmology* at Mad Dance Festival 2022. Image by Jack Ellis.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all who have been involved in the EPX program whose energy, wisdom and commitment have contributed to the development of this model.

To the artists whose work was supported during EPX.

To the emerging producers who participated in EPX.

- Milly Walker
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- Lamise Hamouda (did not complete)

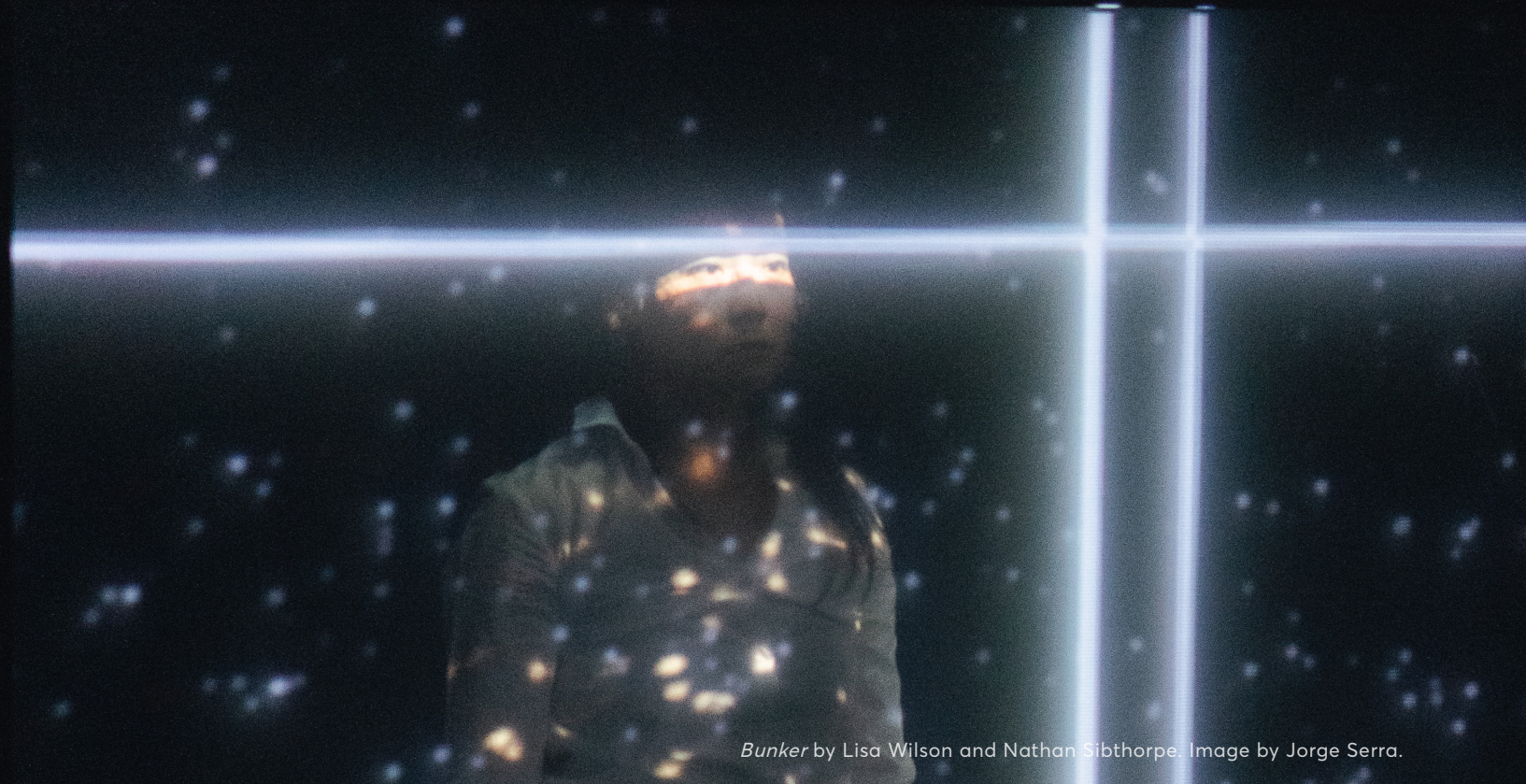
To the staff at Metro Arts and The Mill who took the initiative in designing and continuously improving the program.

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To Fieldworx, who evaluated the program over the two years.

And finally, to the Ian Potter Foundation for generously supporting the EPX vision.





*Bunker* by Lisa Wilson and Nathan Sibthorpe. Image by Jorge Serra.

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## About EPX

The Emerging Producer Xchange (EPX) was an experiential learning program that sought to address the shortfall of professional development opportunities for emerging producers in the performing arts. EPX was piloted over two years (2021 and 2022) with two cohorts of emerging producers receiving on-the-job training and development through paid positions. Six emerging producers completed the program.

EPX was developed and initiated by Metro Arts and delivered in partnership between two multidisciplinary small-to-medium arts organisations: Metro Arts (Brisbane) and The Mill (Adelaide). Each organisation hosted an emerging producer cohort over each year of the pilot program. Differences in each organisation's capacity and role within their state's arts ecology meant EPX needed to be flexible and adapt to varying organisational needs.

Independent evaluators, Fieldworx, were contracted to evaluate the process and impacts of the EPX pilot. Evaluation consisted of online surveys, workshops, and interviews with the emerging producers, partnering organisations, and artists.

This report evaluates the EPX pilot as a singular program rather than differentiating between each organisation. Relevant differences will be identified where necessary, with more detail provided in the preceding *Year One Evaluation Report (October 2021)*.



# The EPX Model

## Why

Australia does not have enough skilled performing arts producers. This means independent artists have limited opportunities to reach audiences and tour quality work nationally and internationally.

## Who

EPX is a 12-month experiential learning program for emerging producers designed and delivered by small to medium arts organisations.

## How

**Concurrent delivery**  
by arts organisations

**Safe learning environment**

**Bootcamps**  
for collaboration & learning

**Hands-on producing**  
works, shows or tours

**Networking**  
at industry gatherings

**Flexibility**  
to harness opportunities

**Reflection**  
to ensure needs are met

## What

SKILLS DEVELOPED

**Producing**  
Bringing projects to life

**Programming**  
Venues and festivals

**Communication**  
Building connections between stakeholders

**Logistics**  
Ensuring nothing falls through the cracks

**Problem solving**  
Joining the dots

**Business**  
Pitching, sponsorship, ticketing & funding

**Negotiation & advocacy**  
For self & artists

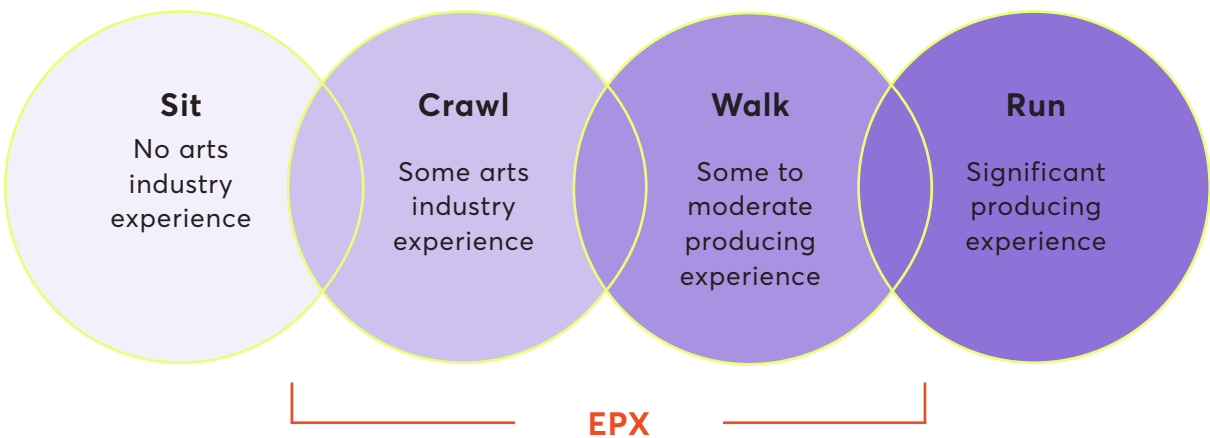
## Impacts

SHORT-TERM & ANTICIPATED  
LONGER-TERM  
IMPACTS

- Quality creative product for communities, venues and festivals
- Audience engagement through access to diverse stories
- Sustainable work and wellness of artists
- Career exploration and pathways for emerging producers
- Industry growth and sustainability of the supply chain

# Producers Experience Continuum

The Producers Experience Continuum (below) was developed to better understand the 'fit' between the development needs of a producer and what EPX could deliver. The analogy of learning to sit, crawl, walk, and run recognises that an emerging producer can exist along this continuum and continue to develop skills, experience, and a portfolio of produced work.



Understanding participants' previous experience and the organisation's capacity to provide support was critical to ensure the strongest benefit to all parties. For example, participants with no industry-relevant experience (Sit) required significant investment of resources and time to establish a base level understanding of the industry, placing significant and potentially unsustainable strain on a small-to-medium arts organisation.

Participants who understood the arts industry but had no producing experience (Crawl) required an investment of time and resources to establish foundational producing skills, including an initial period of training and dedicated ongoing professional development and support. Those with some producing experience (Walk) required less initial investment from the organisation. Small-to-medium organisations who lack the capacity to deliver a higher level of support may be best suited to a participant at the Walk phase of the continuum.

EPX requires organisations to reflect on their own capacity to support and nurture an emerging producer to target participant recruitment appropriately. A mismatch here could result in a participant not receiving the level of support and development needed or overburdening the organisation. For these reasons it is recommended EPX is targeted to emerging producers in the 'Crawl' or 'Walk' phases of the producing journey.

## Early impacts

### For emerging producers

#### Skill development

Participants entered the program with varying levels of producing experience and confidence. Skills gaps were identified by each emerging producer through a skills audit. The skills audit provided a framework for understanding individual professional development needs as well as monitoring program impacts (see Attachment A). The approach to skills development was based on host organisations operational capacity, existing programming commitments and the needs of the participant.

The table below shows changes in skills confidence based on participants self-assessment. The level of change varied between participants depending on their prior experience, identified priority areas, and the projects they were involved in (see Attachment B).

	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E	Participant F
<b>General producing</b>	Medium	Already confident	Medium	Medium	Very high	Already confident
<b>Programming</b>	Very high	Medium	High	Very high	High	Medium
<b>Communication</b>	Medium	Already confident	High	Medium	High	Medium
<b>Venues and touring</b>	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
<b>Contracts and legal</b>	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High
<b>Logistics</b>	Medium	No change	Medium	High	Medium	High
<b>Business</b>	High	No change	High	Medium	Medium	High

"[EPX] came as a consistent learning curve, getting more and more involved with each project...working through these first-hand is vital as every problem presented a chance for improvement as a producer."

– Year One participant





Wilbur The Optical Whale by Indelability Arts. Image by Nick Morrissey.

EPX also sought to develop 'soft skills' acknowledged in the industry as important for a successful career as a producer. Five of the six participants developed their professionalism, problem solving, advocacy, flexibility, resilience and ability to 'get things done'.

Regardless of producing experience, all emerging producers had the opportunity to work independently. This allowed participants to develop their producing skills in real time and make mistakes in a safe environment. This hands-on experience is at the core of the EPX model and was extremely valued by participants.

"[EPX] allowed me to learn on the job in a team environment, where I was supported, however I was also given a great deal of autonomy to "own" tasks and projects as my confidence grew."

– Year Two participant

### Career pathway

In addition to the standard EPX activities, one emerging producer was provided the opportunity to work beyond the host organisation and experience the diversity of the arts industry through a secondment to a major festival.

After working at Metro Arts for four months in EPX, the emerging producer began a paid associate producer role at Brisbane Festival. She was involved in producing 10 Brisbane Festival events during her secondment from July to September 2022.

This experience allowed the emerging producer to apply the skills and knowledge developed at Metro Arts to the festival context, further developing her existing skillset and broadening her experiences as a producer.

*"The opportunity to work outside the host organisation offered upskilling in producing in a Festival context and was extremely beneficial."*

*"Producing is the sort of role that you can't learn how to do without just doing it – you're always learning as you go and problem solving. The skills I developed over the first few months at Metro really set me up to go into a similar role in the festival context."*

Working as an associate producer at Brisbane Festival has also expanded the emerging producer's network at the local and interstate level, including Sydney and Melbourne.

This opportunity would not have been possible without the skills and connections established at Metro Arts through EPX.





*You're All Invited to My Son Samuel's Fourth Birthday Party* by Paper Mouth Theatre. Image by Dylan Michenberg.

## Industry connections and career pathways

Opportunities for industry connections and networking were embedded within EPX including personal introductions, participation in key industry events (eg APAX, APAM, Honey Pot, industry nights) and host organisation-led opportunities such as the EPX Bootcamp and producer mentor sessions hosted by The Mill.

The EPX Bootcamp, a curated learning and development event, was a highlight of the program. Hosted each year by Metro Arts in Brisbane, Bootcamp brought together emerging producers and organisations for a series of mentoring and development sessions and meetings with industry leaders (eg Queensland Theatre, QPAC, HOTA, Dead Puppets Society, La Boite).

*"The program exposed me to such a wide variety of artists and industry in such a short period of time, something that would have taken me years to do on my own."* – Year Two participant

These events served to introduce emerging producers to others in the industry and help them see beyond the 'bubble' of the host organisation. This has deepened participants' understanding of the performing arts ecology and their awareness of career pathways and opportunities within the industry.

*"[EPX] gives you the key to open the door... it gives you the confidence and teaches you how to look further into the arts industry locally and nationally."*

– Year Two participant

## Industry connections

EPX provided formal opportunities for networking at key industry events. The Mill actively supported emerging producers to build networks and contacts across the Adelaide performing arts scene, including one-on-one introductions.

*"My local networks have really grown because of the industry contacts I have made through EPX. When jobs or contracts come up, people are asking me to apply...artists are also asking if I want to collaborate. EPX has been super useful."*

*"These contacts have been fundamental in securing freelance work and growing a career as a performing arts producer."*





*Fertile Ground by Ashleigh Musk and Michael Smith. Image by Jade Ellis.*

Following EPX, five of the six emerging producers were employed as producers within arts organisations or working as independent producers. This includes two past participants directly employed by their EPX host organisation and three who continue to work with the host organisation in a freelance capacity.

### One year on

Since finishing EPX at Metro Arts in 2021, a past participant has been working as a freelance producer in Brisbane. In addition to other freelance projects, she returned to produce a Metro Arts commission that premiered in May 2022.

She believes EPX has 'fast tracked' the process and instilled the confidence to pursue a career as a producer.

*"There is no studying to be a producer. It's something you learn by doing other degrees and then learn by doing. It takes a long time to build your skills as a producer. The program opens your eyes to the knowledge and connections you need – not that you're finished at the end of it – but young producers can be ready to produce work much faster."*

*"Without EPX speeding up a lot of the knowledge, connections and experiences, I wouldn't have become a fully freelance arts producer as fast as I did. It sped up the process."*



*This Ain't No Pussy Show* by The Farm. Image by Jade Ellis.

## For organisations

The primary driver of EPX was to increase the number of skilled and experienced emerging producers in the industry. However, the program has also positively impacted the host organisations ability to produce quality work.

Over the two-year pilot, the organisations observed the following benefits:

- Greater support for artists
- Higher quality of works produced
- Greater exposure to new and emerging artists through participants' existing networks
- Increased opportunities to support emerging and independent artists
- Strengthened relationships between organisations
- Introducing new perspectives to the organisation

Targeted recruitment of suitable emerging producers was a key contributor of organisational impact. This includes the realistic and effective identification of the organisation's capacity to support an emerging producer.



## For artists

"The creative work can only flourish if the process around which it is developed, staged and marketed is functional and supported..." – Artist feedback

EPX's experiential learning approach meant emerging producers had real impacts on artists and the quality of their work. In total, 702 artists were supported by emerging producers over the two-year pilot.



**702 artists supported**



**72+ projects**

Support from emerging producers took pressure off artists, allowing them to focus on their creative practice. Artists who were supported by the emerging producers said this helped them to be more innovative in their practice, supported their wellbeing, and assisted them to understand more about working with venues.

"Having [the emerging producer] on site and involved ensured that everything ran smoothly. She took care of the logistics while also offering creative support and an outside eye when needed... [She] helped us to complete our project successfully, to realise the full performance potential of the work, and to pull off a financially viable fringe season." – Artist feedback

"...it is a joy and relief to work with a producer to carry the weight and logistics of the projects so the work can reach its full potential with as little stress as possible."

– Artist feedback

"Creating, developing and staging work is time intensive and emotionally taxing depending on the work. So to have a producer work with you on the logistical matters, and to be there as a sound board and outside eye is incredibly practical, and also very comforting."

– Artist feedback

## Key learnings

There was a strong commitment to continuous improvement throughout the EPX pilot, with multiple opportunities for reflection. Early learnings and recommendations were identified in the *Interim Process Report (July 2021)* and the *Year One Evaluation Report (October 2021)* and implemented by the host organisations.

### Critical success factors

The following critical success factors were developed through this process of continuous improvement and provide a guide for future delivery.

- 1 Embed the values of flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness.
- 2 Ensure program timing suits the programming commitments and needs of the host organisation.
- 3 Recruit emerging producers for the level of experience the host organisation has the capacity to nurture and support (see Producers Experience Continuum).
- 4 Provide appropriate remuneration for emerging producers.
- 5 Negotiate a part-time, full-time or casual contract to suit both the organisation and the emerging producer
- 6 Ensure the host organisation has the resources needed to support an emerging producer.
- 7 Clarify roles and expectations, including of mentoring and on-the-job training.
- 8 Provide on-the-job practical training experiences within a safe work environment, including opportunities to lead projects where appropriate.
- 9 Allocate time and opportunities for structured development and reflection.
- 10 Include a skills audit at the beginning of the program and measure impact.





*Womb* by Samuel Hall. Image by Daniel Marks.

## Conclusion

EPX achieved what it set out to do. Through hands-on experiential learning, it provided emerging producers with on-the-job training to fill the gap between producing theory and practice. The EPX pilot has demonstrated a significant impact on the lives and career pathways of emerging producers and artists, with 5 out of 6 employed as producers following the program.

EPX has the potential for long-term impact on audiences' access to quality performances and the broader sustainability of the performing arts industry. A nationally coordinated rollout across small-to-medium arts organisations could contribute to rebuilding and strengthening a depleted performing arts industry in the wake of COVID-19.

## Attachment A: Skills audit

### General producing

#### Programming

- Commissioning
- Co-productions
- Festival programming
- Venue programming

#### Venue / Touring

- Large scale touring
- Mid scale touring
- Small scale touring
- Rural touring
- Site-specific productions
- International touring

#### Contracts and legal skills

- General contracting
- Commissioning writers
- Contracting creative team
- Contracting artists
- Contracting stage management
- Rights and royalties
- Expenses and per diems
- Venue contracts
- Contrats
- Visas - Confidence level
- Intellectual property
- Digitising work
- Live streaming
- Music rights

### Technical and logistics skills

- Tour scheduling
- Transport
- Health and safety
- Risk assessments
- Filming and photography
- Live streaming
- Interstate travel
- International travel

#### Communication

- Marketing and publicity
- Communicating with press
- Website management
- Social media
- Data gathering

#### General business skills

- Interpreting key financial statements (including P&L Statements and Balance Sheets)
- Forecasting, budgeting and cashflow management
- Income diversification
- Understanding of legal obligations in running a business
- Accessing business resources and expertise
- General business skills needed to run a small business
- Skills and resources to balance my wellbeing and business success
- Leadership skills and capabilities

## Attachment B: Projects supported by emerging producers

### Participant A

#### Creative developments/Artists in Residence

- Demolition (Polytoxic)
- Us & All of This (Liesel Zink)
- Sounds from the Ferryman's Hut (Volfruit)
- Ghost Story (Kristen Maloney)
- Little Bits
- On the Shoulders of Giants (eXcelsior)
- Batshit (Leah Shelton)

#### Performances

- When We Speak (Camerata)
- Mad Dance Festival
- Fertile Ground (Ashleigh Musk + Michael Smith)
- White Woman (Jenni Large – Cancelled)
- Collision (Casus Circus)
- Brisbane Festival (WereDingo – Karul Projects, Wilbur the Optical Whale – Indelability Arts, Agapi – Cancelled)
- B'day Battles (Pink Matter)
- Cabaret Festival

#### Other

- Pink Matter/Wanida Serce Produced Artist
- Counterpilot/Nathan Stibthorpe Produced Artist (Truthmachine at Darwin Festival)
- Season of Surprises
- For the Record (Cancelled)

### Participant B

- Brisfest
  - Funny Mummies – Jenny Wynter,
  - This Ain't No Pussy Show – Kate Harman
- MAD Dance Festival 2022 Planning/grant writing
- Restrung Festival – Installations, laneway and theatre performances.
- TAFE CoP Night
- Pink Matter/Wanida Serce Produced Artist

### Participant C

#### Independent Artists

- Britt Plummer
- Post Dining (Steph Daughtry and Hannah Rohrlach)
- Gabrielle Nankivell

#### Projects

- The Mill 2021 Fringe Season
- The Mill Breakout Residency program
  - Britt Plummer: The Baroque (Centre Stage Residency)
  - Jo Zealand: The Circle Show (Brink Residency)
  - Cynthia Schwertsik: Bureau d'Exchange (Spotlight Residency)
  - Thomas Fonua: MAMA (Spotlight Residency)
  - Jess Clough-MacRae: Trimates (Free-range Residency)
  - Lucy Haas-Hennessy: Autoeulogy (Free-range Residency)
  - Samuel Hall: Womb (Free-range Residency)
- The Mill Umbrella Music Festival Season (6 creative live music events)
- The Mill 2022 Fringe Season



## Participant D

### Projects

- The Mill 2022 and 2023 Fringe Season
- The Mill Breakout Residency program
  - Caitlin Ellen Moore/Papermouth Theatre (Centre Stage Residency)
  - Daniel Jaber: A Work In Progress (Free-range Residency)
  - Samuel Lau: Walk of the Ancestors (Brink Residency)
  - Olenka Toroshenko: I Am Root (Spotlight/Brand X Residency)
  - Emma Beech: Here We Are (Centre Stage Residency)
- The Mill Dance Launchpad program
- The Mill Masterclass program

## Participant E

### Primary producer

- The People's Dance Party (Special Event) by Bring A Plate
- Get To The Chorus (cancelled)
- Mad Dance Festival:
  - Rhythmology by Ty Goddard
  - Thirteen (Creative Development) by BKB
  - Distinct (Creative Development) by Annikki Chand
- Brisbaret by Sophie Banister and Thien Phan
- Our Blood Runs In The Street by Shane Anthony
- Artist In Residence
  - Linnea Tengroth
  - Jasmine Leung
- Mastercard Priceless Moments pitching

### Associate producer

- Face to Face by Emily Wells
- White Rabbit Red Rabbit by Belloo International Women's Day Event
- Disturbo (Creative Development)
- Show Ponies for Brisbane Writer's Festival
- Where We Meet by Eve & Kitch
- Mad Dance Festival
  - Betwixt by Pink Matter
  - Vogue Night by House of Alexander
  - Dance Battles by Mad Dance House
  - Pop Up DJ Activations with QUIVR

## Secondment to Brisbane Festival

- QPAC Playhouse Season
  - Holding Achilles by Dead Puppets Society (Bris) and Legs on the Wall (Syd)
  - Manifesto by Stephanie Lake Company (Melb)
  - Sunshine Super Girl by Andrea James and Performing Lines (Syd)
- Raise the Roof with events curated by:
  - Michael Zavros
  - The Good Room
  - Patience Hodgson
  - Counterpilot
  - Briefs Factory
  - Point Productions
- Brisbane Festival Program Launch Event
- Riverfire by Australian Retirement Trust VIP Event

## Participant F

### Primary producer

- Sunny Tribe District by Robert The Cat
- TAFE Queensland Community of Practice
- Emerging Artist Xchange 2023
- she is by Huda Fadlelmawla

### Associate producer

- Brutal Utopias by Stephen Carleton
- Mad Dance Festival (outdoor/community activations)
- Brisbane Festival (ZOOOM, Mistero Buffo, Batshit)
- BUNKER by Lisa Wilson & Nathan Sibthorpe
- Bear with Me by David Megarritty
- Counterpilot works
  - Adrift
  - Breaking
  - Not a Cult\* Touring
  - Collaborative Development Workshop
- Betwixt by Pink Matter (Adelaide Fringe Tour).