

# **CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE**

## **PROGRAMMING POLICY**

**UPDATED AS AT AUGUST 2020**

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## PURPOSE

This Programming Policy has been developed for the following purposes :

- to provide a clear statement of the overall objectives for programming, in all its forms, at the Canberra Theatre Centre (the CTC), which is part of the Cultural Facilities Corporation (the CFC);
- to provide a framework against which programming decisions generally will be made; and
- to provide a framework against which individual proposals for programming will be assessed.

## BACKGROUND

### Statutory context

The Programming Policy has been developed in the context of the statutory functions of the CFC, as they relate to the CTC.

Section 6 of the *Cultural Facilities Corporation Act 1997* (the Act) states that the functions of the CFC are:

- (a) to manage, develop, present, coordinate and promote cultural activities at designated locations and other places in the ACT; ...

The CTC is identified in Schedule 1 of the Act as a designated location. Programming at the CTC, which represents an aspect of the management, development, coordination and promotion of cultural activities at that location, is therefore one of the statutory responsibilities of the CFC.

### Industry context

The CTC generates 70% - 80% of its operating revenue. This revenue is dependent on a reliable supply of program which is sourced externally. Programming at the CTC generates a considerable economic impact for the Territory, and contributes to its visitor economy

The CTC's programming is directed at:

- increasing the security of supply of theatre product;
- delivering a strong venue brand for the CTC and consumer confidence in the CTC brand;
- presenting a broad range of high-quality theatre product for the people of the ACT and visitors to Canberra; and
- providing intrinsic benefit to the people of the ACT.

## DEFINITION OF PROGRAMMING AND TYPES OF THEATRE PRODUCT

Programming is defined as the entire product that is presented at the CTC's venues and covers the following four categories.

- **Venue hire:** product that is presented by a hirer.
- **Buy :** product that is presented by the CTC.
- **Shared risk :** product in which the CTC shares financial risk with a producer.
- **Investment :** creative development of theatre product which may or may not result in a final production

Performing arts genres suitable for programming in the CTC's venues are as follows.

- Children's productions
- Classical Music – including choral, vocal and instrumental
- Popular Music
- Circus, Physical Theatre and Combined Arts
- Musical Theatre
- Opera
- Comedy
- Dance – including ballet, contemporary, cultural and dance schools
- Theatre – including drama, plays and Shakespeare
- Presentations – including graduations, meetings and debates.

## PROGRAMMING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### Programming goals

The overall objective of programming at the CTC is to assist the fulfilment of the CFC's statutory responsibilities and the delivery of the CFC's goals, as they relate to the CTC. The CFC's Strategic Plan identifies these goals as follows.

- **Customers :** audiences that are growing, diverse, engaged and entertained
- **Programming :** a diverse, high quality, entertaining and distinctive program
- **Business :** venues, systems and people that support high quality live performance
- **Leadership :** an integral part of the cultural life of Canberra and beyond

### Programming strategies

The CFC's Strategic Plan also identifies a range of long-term strategies for theatre programming, as follows.

- Program high quality, innovative shows that engage and entertain, and which include international companies and performers, digital programs, and connections to the Asian market.
- Ensure the range of genres presented at the Centre is appropriate for the venues, the marketplace and the supply of product.
- Provide culturally diverse shows as a part of regular programming, including shows featuring Indigenous cultures
- Program to complement existing festivals and foster new festivals.
- Develop and extend programming for new audiences, with a particular focus on young people.

- Support local performing artists.
- Support producers that take the financial risk at the Centre.
- Attract large-scale shows to Canberra on a regular basis, including opportunities for exclusive Canberra seasons.

## **PROGRAMMING CRITERIA**

Programming criteria have been developed to translate the above goals and strategies into specific elements that are either essential or desirable for each theatre product presented at the CTC. These criteria are as follows.

### **Essential criteria**

#### **1. Programming Balance**

The production contributes to maintaining a suitable balance of program in the venue. Productions do not clash with others in CTC venues that appeal to a similar demographic, and which could therefore damage both presentations' sales capacity, unless the net financial and intrinsic impact of such an occurrence on CTC is positive and actions to mitigate financial impact on presenters are undertaken.

#### **2. Venue Branding**

The production positively contributes to the promotion of the overall reputation and identity of the CTC, which requires high artistic and production values.

#### **3. Audience Sustainability & Development**

The production is able to demonstrate the capability of sustaining current and/or attracting new audiences.

#### **4. Reputation and viability of Promoter/Company**

The company or promoter involved in a production must be considered by the CTC to be viable i.e. able to meet its financial obligations to the CTC and able to deliver the production to the required standard.

#### **5. Sufficient time to Market and Contract**

The timing of presentation of the production allows sufficient time to contract the show and produce a marketing campaign.

#### **6. Financial Viability**

Where the presentation of the production involves financial investment by the CTC, any proposed allocation will be met within the CTC's budget for the relevant financial year or have CTC Board approval for access to the Theatre Reserve.

## **Desirable criteria**

### **1. Community Involvement**

The production is able to provide opportunities to collaborate with local arts groups in order to provide opportunities to engage, inspire and develop the local performing arts community.

### **2. Arts Genre Development**

The production is able to support performing arts development in Australia, including contemporary dance and programs for children and young people.

### **3. Education Program**

Where a production has a specific educational outcome, it is able to enrich children and young people's experience at The Centre through inclusion in CTC's Discovery and Learning Program.

### **4. Throughput of Audience**

The production is expected to provide a high level of throughput to the CTC and to assist in meeting annual targets for patron numbers.

### **5. Success in other markets**

The production has had financially and/or critically acclaimed past seasons.

### **Additional considerations**

There may be additional considerations noted such as available resources (including staff), operational stability, non-financial risks and sensitivities, conflicts of interest and the impact of not proceeding.

## **PROGRAMMING DECISIONS**

This Programming Policy guides all programming decisions.

Programming decisions may be made at one of three levels as follows, depending on the scale of financial risk involved.

### **Decisions by the Director, CTC**

The Director, CTC makes programming decisions where CTC budgeted expenditure on the theatre product is less than \$125,000.

### **Decisions by the Risk Committee**

The Risk Committee is a committee of senior staff of the CFC comprising the Chief Executive Officer; Chief Finance Officer; Director, CTC; Chief Operating Officer CTC; Head of Program and Presenter Services, CTC and the Manager, Program and Presenter Services, CTC. Its operation is guided by the Risk Committee Charter.

The Risk Committee makes programming decisions where CTC budgeted expenditure on the theatre product is between \$125,000 and \$250,000.

### **Decisions by the CFC Board**

The CFC Board makes programming decisions where CTC budgeted expenditure on the theatre product is above \$250,000 or in circumstances where access is needed to the Theatre Reserve.

## **REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

This Programming Policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required, to ensure its ongoing relevance and appropriateness, and will be made available on request.