

A DISCUSSION OF NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT

A review of new play development was conducted by the BC Arts Council in response to a request from the Council's Theatre Advisory Committee.

Publication of the attached consultant's report on new play development is intended to encourage feedback on the recommendations, prior to any discussion regarding implementation.

If you would like to comment on the contents of the report, please do so by writing or e-mailing the BC Arts Council by Monday, December 1, 2003.

Background Information:

- In 2001/2002, the Theatre Advisory Committee noted a significant increase in new play development activity. This increased activity appeared to be partly the result of the availability of incentive funding from other arts and cultural agencies; specifically, the revitalized focus on Canadian creation by the Canada Council for the Arts.
- The Theatre Advisory Committee was concerned that the BC Arts Council should focus its limited resources for new play development to support and complement this activity.
- The initial research that analyzed the BC Arts Council's existing support for new play development was conducted by Program Coordinator Stephen White. The resulting paper was taken for consideration to the Theatre Advisory Committee and to the Program Committee of the BC Arts Council.
- The BC Arts Council subsequently requested the paper serve as a focal point for a series of discussions with stakeholders that would be held to identify the most advantageous manner in which the Council could apply new investment to support new play development.
- Independent contractor Alison Azer was then engaged to carry out and report on three focus group discussions with playwrights, dramaturgs, artists engaged in collective creation of theatre, directors and producers of original work. The following report summarizes the discussions and recommendations of those focus groups.
- Please note that this report does not necessarily represent the views of the British Columbia Arts Council.

New Play Development in British Columbia: Reflections and Recommendations from the Theatre Community

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I. Executive Summary

According to members of BC's theatre community, new play development is experiencing a period of revitalization. The community is witnessing a growth in the number of collective creations, collaborations, first productions, and opportunities for the expression of cultural diversity. Yet limited resources continue to challenge the community's ability to take the necessary time and employ adequate resources to produce new work.

Discussions surrounding the allocation of new funding reflect the community's understanding of what support is needed to leverage its strengths and to mitigate its weaknesses. Several aspects of new play development ranging from writing to workshopping to production would benefit from additional funding. Yet a challenge that funders face is how to design programs that contribute to the long-term sustainability of the community while recognizing that such objectives are difficult to measure, particularly in the short-term.

When encouraged to set priorities for the support of new play development, members of the community favour a funding program that would provide additional time, help to offset risk, and encourage flexibility. The jury would then evaluate on the basis of an applicant's ability to describe the project and its outcomes. The program could support separate phases of new play development thereby complementing the contributions of playwrights, collective creators, producers and dramaturgs.

The British Columbia Arts Council, by bringing together members of the theatre community, has gleaned valuable insights and perspectives on what is required to foster new play development in the province. The Council will proceed by sharing this information with other stakeholders as it moves forward with its own program review and organizational planning.

II. Project Background

In the summer of 2002, the British Columbia Arts Council (BCAC) developed a paper to stimulate discussion regarding its support of new play development. The paper was distributed to a select group for comment and will be circulated more widely once it is approved by the Council. Based on the feedback to the paper thus far, BCAC decided to host a series of facilitated consultations with members of BC's theatre community.

The first two consultations were held in Vancouver on February 13 & 14, 2003 with playwrights and creators and producing theatre companies and dramaturgs respectively. While the sessions were held separately, each focused on the same three themes:

- **Taking the Pulse of New Play Development in British Columbia:** *What's new, what's working, and where are the gaps?*
- **Setting Priorities for New Play Development:** *Where should any new BCAC funds be spent?*
- **Measuring Outcomes:** *How would BCAC know if new funds were making a difference?*

In addition to representation from BCAC (Jeremy Long, Gillian Wood, and Stephen White), the following individuals attended the February consultations:

| Playwrights/Creators | | Producers/Dramaturgs |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Peter Anderson</i> | | <i>Dramaturg (Rachel Ditor)</i> |
| <i>Maiko Bae Yamamoto</i> | | <i>Axis Theatre (Marg Specht)</i> |
| <i>Aaron Bushkowski</i> | | <i>Belfry Theatre (Roy Surette)</i> |
| <i>Marie Clements</i> | | <i>Electric Company (Kim Collier)</i> |
| <i>Jay Dodge</i> | | <i>Green Thumb (Patrick McDonald)</i> |
| <i>Lucia Frangione</i> | | <i>Firehall (Donna Spencer)</i> |
| <i>Kevin Kerr</i> | | <i>NeWorld (Caymar Chai)</i> |
| <i>Martin Kinch</i> | | <i>Playwrights Theatre Company (Martin Kinch)</i> |
| <i>James Long</i> | | <i>Richmond Gateway (Simon Johnston)</i> |
| <i>Joan MacLeod</i> | | <i>Rumble Productions (Norman Armour)</i> |
| <i>Frank Moher</i> | | <i>Touchstone (Katrina Dunn)</i> |
| <i>Kathleen Oliver</i> | | |
| <i>Savannah Walling</i> | | |

The first two sessions, intended to accommodate a diversity of views and opinions related to new play development, stimulated a lively and healthy discussion. This paper attempts to present a sketch of the responses to the key questions posed by BCAC without attributing comments directly to individuals or the organizations they represent.

The findings of the February consultations, presented in Sections III to VI of this paper, were shared with the participants of the third and final consultation which was held in Vancouver on March 18th. This session sought to further clarify priorities for new play development. It was a joint session with representation from both playwright/creator and producer/dramaturg communities many of whom had attended one of the first two sessions.

In addition to representation from BCAC (Jeremy Long, Gillian Wood, Stephen White, and Chris Armstrong), the following individuals attended the March consultation:

| <i>Participant (Organization)</i> |
|--|
| <i>Norman Armor (Rumble Productions)</i> |
| <i>Dawn Brennan (Playhouse)</i> |
| <i>Aaron Buskowski (Playwright)</i> |
| <i>Rachel Ditor (Dramaturg)</i> |
| <i>Lucia Frangione (Playwright)</i> |
| <i>Ami Gladstone (Playwright)</i> |
| <i>Manami Hara (Playwright)</i> |
| <i>Kevin Kerr (Playwright)</i> |
| <i>Kugler (Dramaturg)</i> |
| <i>Glynis Leyshon (Playhouse)</i> |
| <i>Patrick McDonald (Green Thumb)</i> |
| <i>Bill Millerd (Arts Club)</i> |
| <i>Kathleen Oliver (Playwright)</i> |

The third consultation session sought to achieve greater definition around the priority areas for new play development. It gave participants an opportunity to prioritize the recommendations that arose out of the first two consultations. The findings of the third consultation are presented as Sections VII to X.

This paper, *New Play Development in BC: Reflections & Recommendations from the Theatre Community*, will be first circulated to individuals who participated in the consultation process and then presented to BCAC's Theatre Advisory Committee in May of 2003.

Findings from the February Consultations

III. Taking the Pulse of New Play Development in British Columbia

Participants in each session were asked to share their impressions of the current climate of new play development in British Columbia. There was a strong sense expressed by many that the climate is the most hopeful, innovative, and collaborative that they had seen over the last few years. The playwrights/creators in particular said they were 'thrilled' by and 'enthusiastic' about the development of new work which one participant described as a period of revitalization. This spirit is enhanced by opportunities for new markets and new funding.

*I feel that there is finally hope after a long, dry spell in new play development.
Playwright/Actor*

*Toronto is a scene that you have to break into, Vancouver is now a scene that you can
make things happen in.
Member of a Collective Company*

*Today's new work is much more entrepreneurial. There is a positive energy coming out
of collaborations among people who aren't willing to wait around until they are hired.
Member of a Collective Company*

Despite this optimism, participants remain concerned about limited resources and pressures to produce works before they are ready. Similarly, resource-based pressures have compromised the ability of writers and producers to take risks with their works. These challenges are compounded by the loss of talent to the more lucrative film and television industry.

*Big theatre companies are doing much less new work than they were in the late 1980s.
It is the smaller companies and the collectives who are doing the bulk of new work now.
Playwright*

*I'm bored by the theatre I see in Canada. Where are the risks?
Producer*

*Limited resources for development lead to the staging of work which is under-developed
and under-produced. We end up seeing too much 'green' work.
Playwright*

Participants were encouraged to be candid about their experiences in and observations of the current theatre community. In doing so, a number of common themes emerged which have been grouped into: signs of collaboration, pressures on new work, opportunities for greater success, and competing for resources.

Signs of Collaboration, Collectives, Diversity and Growth

Most participants, particularly the playwrights and creators, described the current landscape of new play development in positive terms. Indicators of progress include collaboration, collective creations, diversity, and growth.

- *Collaboration throughout the Theatre Community*
The theatre community is collaborating in exciting ways. Witness the collaboration among text-based writers and collectives, partnerships between emerging and mature artists and companies, mentorships like the pilot at Rumble, shared subscription series like *See Seven*, and joint projects such as the one for commissioning supported by the Vancouver Foundation. There may be interest in discussing the setting of common fee standards within the theatre community. While it may not be unprecedented, current interest in collaboration is clearly stimulating the creation and production of new work.
- *Increase in Collective Creations*
There is a growing body of work coming out of collective companies. A few participants attributed a renewed spirit of innovation in the theatre community to the collectives while one producer who had been involved with a collective several years ago mused 'it is wonderful when everything old becomes new again.' One participant, a member of a collective, admitted that it took several years for the group to feel that they are supported by the artistic community.
- *Integrating Cultural Diversity*
Increasingly, cultural voices and perspectives are being integrated into new work instead of being marginalized or segregated. Indeed, one participant said that new work may be the only hope for ethnic and aboriginal writers and artists.
- *Proliferation of New Scripts*
The volume of new scripts currently in circulation is considerable and exceeds the ability of producers to review them. This proliferation of new scripts stimulated discussion around the role of Playwrights Theatre Centre (PTC) which is currently reviewing 200-plus scripts.

Pressures on New Work: Limited Time, Space, and Resources

Participants are concerned about such resource-based challenges as inadequate time and funding for workshopping, dramaturgy, and rehearsal as well as fewer venues for production. Within this context, members of the community feel constrained as evidenced by the producer who is less willing to take risks with new productions and the writer who feels compelled to develop simple scripts with few actors and scenes.

- *Pressure to Produce Results in 'Green' Work*
Plays are produced without adequate time and resources for workshopping, dramaturgy and rehearsal. Often results in the production of 'green' work with disappointing short runs that are difficult to remount or to sell to other markets.
- *Fewer Venues to Produce New Works*
A consolidation of producing companies means a lack of mid-size theatres and fewer second stages. Emerging playwrights and collectives have fewer options for developing and producing new work. One participant compared Vancouver's limited venue space to Toronto's more supportive setting.
- *Little Appetite for Risk*
With limited resources, producing companies are becoming more averse to the risks associated with new work. Mainstage companies are even less likely to assume such risk given considerable financial exposure associated with longer runs. This growing inability to

assume risk has seeped into the development of scripts. One participant acknowledged that simple scripts with fewer scenes and actors are easier to sell.

- *Institutional Support for Playwrights: Is PTC the Vancouver 'Tarragon'?*
Participants spoke of the critical role played by the Tarragon in Toronto's theatre community and expressed a desire to have a similar 'playwrights theatre' in Vancouver. The role of developmental institutions stimulated discussion over the contribution of Playwrights Theatre Centre to the Vancouver community. A participant wondered if PTC was at risk of becoming 'ghetto-ized' as it attempts to balance the needs of the theatre community with its mandate as a member-driven organization.
- *Second Productions: Few Funders, Few Buyers*
In addition to the challenges of remounting first runs of 'green' work, there are too few resources available for second productions. Several participants believe that the return on most works would be significantly higher if there was an investment of resources to improve a work for a second run.
- *Whither the Ensemble?*
Participants expressed regret that financial pressures make it difficult to pursue ensemble or interdisciplinary work. Comparisons were made to an earlier era when funding often took the form of employment grants which supported the hiring of an ensemble. Currently, multidisciplinary or multimedia elements rarely appear in new work. The renewed interest in collective creatives is linked to this trend facing playwrights and producers.

Opportunities for Greater Success: New Markets, New Funding

Participants recognized that opportunities for new markets and new funding were reinforcing the innovation and growth occurring in new play development.

- *Canada Council's Canadian Creations Program*
Canada Council's support for new play development through the Canadian Creations program is regarded as having stimulated new work in BC's theatre community. One participant described the program as having an enormous impact particularly for larger companies as the funding helps to mitigate the risk of mounting new work.
- *Vancouver Work Playing on Toronto Stages*
Over the last decade, there has been a shift in the transfer of new work between Toronto and Vancouver. Whereas it used to be that Toronto work frequently played on Vancouver stages, there is now a considerable body of Vancouver work being run in Toronto.
- *Communities Seeking Theatre*
Increasingly, opportunities are available for theatre in communities outside downtown Vancouver. For example, the Gateway Theatre has capitalized on marketing to eager audiences in Richmond. Some participants believe that similar opportunities exist for smaller producing companies or touring companies.

Competing for Resources: Losing Talent to More Lucrative Industries

The progress that is occurring within BC's theatre community is being somewhat dampened by the loss of talent to film and television.

- *Senior Writers*
Senior writers, facing a lack of support and finding few opportunities, are leaving theatre for more lucrative work as screenwriters. One participant, a producer, is concerned that the theatre community is losing a valuable resource because the money is not sufficient to retain many of them.
- *Young Actors*
Young actors, facing insufficient opportunities in theatre, are moving over to the film and television industries. One participant, a producer, talked about her efforts to keep actors interested in theatre by offering them more than one-off acting roles.

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Overall, the discussion in each session was lively and certain comments such as 'there is too much new work being produced' or 'the best time to sell a work is during development' stimulated an opinionated discourse. The process of taking a 'finger on the pulse' of new play development in BC reveals that there may be more than one pulse to take. But more than suggesting disharmony or division, the range of opinions and the spirit of discussion suggests an impressive degree of optimism, collaboration, and pragmatism.

IV. Setting Priorities for New Play Development

Gillian Wood provided participants in each session with an overview of the funding for theatre in general and new play development in particular currently offered by BCAC.

Participants were then asked to recommend priorities for additional funds, should they become available in the future. Almost every aspect of new play development was deemed worthy of receiving new funds. Although consensus was neither sought nor reached, general agreement emerged on many of the recommendations.

In addition to making recommendations regarding potential funding, participants commented on their preferences for the structure and spirit of the grant process. As such, priorities for new funding will be presented separately from recommendations for grant logistics.

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Recommendations for Additional Funds: Support Second Productions, Artist-in-Residence, Dramaturgs, Partnerships...

- Supporting Second Productions

*We need money for redeveloping and remounting new work to support the cultivation of new markets and opportunities for BC playwrights and creators.
Member of a Collective Company*

- Funding Artist-in-Residence Programs

Writer-in-residence programs are fine but there is too much pressure to produce work. Funding should go to artist-in-residence programs which are not tied to production.
Producer

- Encouraging Relationships and Collaboration

Anything that fosters the development of relationships among writers and creators, artists and producers needs to be supported. Bringing the community together must be a priority.
Playwright

Look at the success of current mentorships, pilot projects, and shared subscription series. Why shouldn't new funding be used to help match those who are newer to the craft with mature artists, kind of a master-apprentice relationship?
Playwright

- Supporting Longer Creation and Development

Playwrights need more time for workshopping and rehearsal. It would mean the difference between a work that comes and goes in four runs and a work that gets picked up for a second production.
Playwright

Pressure to produce within one year is dangerous, the best work takes two or three years. New funds to support a longer creation process would be a great investment.
Playwright

- Funding Dramaturgy: Varying Perspectives

Plays need dramaturgs. Funding for dramaturgy is important.
Producer

The environment is dramaturg heavy. Funding should shift from dramaturgy to playwrights.
Playwright

The community needs more in-house dramaturgs and the large companies are most able to do this.
Dramaturg

- Creating Playwrights-in-Residence: Varying Perspectives

Residencies broaden playwrights' understanding of how theatre companies work.
Producer

Playwrights are often abused by companies who expect them to devote their time to reading scripts. Commissions are much better for the artist.
Producer

If I get a commissioning grant from Canada Council, then I am faced with shopping it around until I find a residency for myself.
Playwright

- Resurrecting BCAC's Recommender Program: Varying Perspectives

Recommender program had many good aspects which could be integrated into a new funding program.

Producer

Other perspectives included the view that the Recommender program bestowed too much decision-making authority onto the producing companies.

- Role of Playwrights Theatre Centre: Varying Perspectives

The current environment makes PTC absolutely necessary. It should begin to feed scripts to all theatres in the city and to provide some support to collective creations.

Representative of Playwrights Theatre Centre

There was, at times, an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the role that PTC is playing vis-à-vis the theatre community. One participant questioned the wisdom of having PTC serve amateur playwrights when the professional theatre community could benefit greatly from its script vetting and dramaturgical services. A representative of Playwrights Theatre Centre, who attended both sessions, acknowledged that PTC is member-based and the majority of members are non-professional playwrights. The challenge is how to better serve the professional theatre community without disregarding its members.

- Funding Commissions

New funds should go through producing companies to writers in the form of commissions.

Producer

See Seven has a commissioning process that is open to playwrights and collectives. It needs additional support to continue and it would be a great thing if BCAC could provide funding.

Member of a Collective Company

- Provide Funds for Exploration and Creation that does not Require Production

There must be an investment in development that is liberated from the pressures of production. Often dramatists won't find their voice until the fifth work so the emphasis on finding a jewel in the first or second work is not reasonable.

Representative of Playwrights Theatre Centre

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The recommendations listed above generated significant interest among the participants despite varying opinions being presented. However, there were also recommendations forwarded by participants that, for whatever reason, did not appear to capture the interest of others but are worthy of mention and include:

- Supporting touring, recognizing that not every producing company is suited to touring
- Funding the establishment of a 'playwrights theatre' like Toronto's Tarragon

- Injecting a major investment into one theatre company to allow it to produce an entire season of new plays
- Investing in the playwright's voice, not just the production of the playwright's work

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Recommendation for Funding Process and Criteria: Flexibility, Long-term, Accessible...

Just as participants had strong opinions regarding where possible new funds should be spent, they also made recommendations regarding the design of a new grant program. Overall, the principles that resonated with most participants include accessibility, flexibility, investment, leverage, and distinctiveness.

- *Accessibility*
Funding should be accessible to all worthy members of BC's theatre community including text-based playwrights, collective companies, and producing companies.
- *Flexibility:*
Criteria should reflect an understanding that not all work will conform to rigid timelines or will result in production during the timeframe of the grant.
- *Investment:*
Funding should be regarded as an investment and expectations should not be set for the short-term that compromise the long-term potential of the work. Similarly, funding should be considered for periods longer than one year.
- *Innovation:*
Some funding should be tagged as seed funding to support innovation such as the creation of incubator spaces for collaboration.
- *Leverage:*
Recipients should be able to use funds to match those of other funders.
- *Distinctiveness:*
Proposals should be reviewed by a jury process that is distinct to theatre and not combined with fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

V. Measuring Outcomes of New Funding

BCAC must ensure that its decisions demonstrate public accountability and transparency. Like other programs, any additional programs for new play development need to be evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency.

Participants were asked to consider what criteria BCAC could employ to determine whether any new funds were indeed meeting the needs of the theatre community. This question stimulated much less enthusiasm than that regarding the allocation of funds. Discussion often strayed from the practical to the philosophical with participants musing whether art should be evaluated at all. Similarly, recommendations for measuring success often paralleled recommendations for

funding. For example, funding for commissions will be successful if it stimulates the creation of more commissions.

To be fair, the question is challenging and will require considerably more reflection by BCAC in consultation with key stakeholders. In the meantime, recommendations made by participants in these consultations warrant contemplation. They are presented in the form of questions that BCAC could ask to evaluate success.

- How well is new work being executed?
- Has new work been remounted?
- Are there artists on staff, not just artists hired to do administrative work?
- Over a three-year period, has new work been produced by operating clients of BCAC?
- Is there increased recognition of Vancouver playwrights outside of Vancouver?
- Is there evidence of stronger relationships within the community in the form of mentorships and strategic collaborations?
- Has more creative space been made available?
- Is Vancouver work being produced nationally and internationally?
- Is there a resurgence of multi-disciplinary or ensemble work?
- How culturally diverse are new plays?

VI. Distinct Views of Playwrights/Creators and Dramaturgs/Producers

BCAC structured the February sessions to dedicate one to playwrights and creators and the other to producers and dramaturgs. This format was intended to provide the space and opportunity for members of the theatre community to be open and candid with their colleagues and peers.

Despite the decision to separate the groups for the initial consultations, there emerged an impressive degree of similarity in appraising the progress and the challenges of new play development in British Columbia. To a lesser degree, the groups supported the allocation of funds to similar aspects of new play development.

Differences of opinion regarding dramaturgy, collective creations, Playwrights Theatre Centre, and commission were evident but there were often as many distinct views within the groups as there was between them.

Findings from the March Consultation

VII. Building Upon the First Consultations

The third consultation sought to further clarify the broad recommendations that arose from the first two sessions. The session began with an overview, provided by Jeremy Long, on BCAC's current initiatives including the development of a service plan and a review of program priorities. He acknowledged that the provincial government has \$500,000 additional funds to the BC Arts Council for fiscal year 2005/06.

Both the council's Service Plan and Program Priorities review will inform the discussion regarding the allocation of new resources. These consultations were intended to identify key priorities in the area of new play development. The collective list of priorities will be presented to BCAC's Theatre Advisory Committee in May of 2003.

VIII. Thoughts on the Role of a Development Agency for New Plays

Gillian Wood provided an overview on the interim report from the February consultations. In particular, she noted that the first two sessions stimulated little dialogue surrounding the role of development agencies for new plays such as Playwrights Theatre Centre (PTC). Gillian invited participants to provide comment on the report.

Participants who were unable to attend the first sessions commented positively about the opportunity to bring people from the community together. Several individuals who had attended the sessions echoed these sentiments.

Some participants provided input regarding the role of development agencies such as PTC. The comments reflected a range of perspectives and experiences, a sample of which follows:

I believe in an organization for playwrights that is not connected to production or to producing companies. Having said that, I am not interested in a service agency and I feel that PTC has, at times in its history, been too much of a service organization.

Producer

We shouldn't forget that PTC is its own company, with its own taste and vision. Some playwrights will prosper under this vision, others will not.

Dramaturg

I turned to PTC for support during the early stages of my career. There was often a conflict between their needs and my needs. More often than not, PTC's needs trumped mine.

Playwright

When I was an emerging playwright, PTC was an important resource. It was a great place for my work to be heard for the first time. Yet I think it could be doing more to act as a conduit within the BC theatre community and with national play development agencies.

Playwright

IX. Making Choices: Further Defining the Priorities

The first sessions encouraged participants to articulate the elements of new play development that would benefit from additional support. Not surprisingly, the groups provided a vast and diverse list of recommendations. The third consultation was intended to achieve a general consensus on a more defined list of priorities.

Alison provided participants with the list of recommendations from the February consultations which included:

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Second productions | Playwright-in-residence |
| Artist-in-residence | “Recommender” program |
| Encouraging relationships | Playwrights Theatre Centre |
| Longer creation/development | Commissions |
| Dramaturgy | Other suggestions |
| Exploration/Creation <i>(that doesn't require production)</i> | |

Participants were given a 'ballot' and asked to select their top three priorities from the list. The selections were tabulated and the top choices emerged as follows:

X. It's all About Time, Risk, and Flexibility

An interesting discussion emerged from the ranking process which began with encouraging BCAC to develop a granting program that was broad enough to incorporate multiple elements of new play development. When asked by BCAC how such a broad program could be evaluated by a jury, participants had the following advice:

Evaluation should simply be on the merits of the description of the development.
Dramaturg

I like the idea that juries would have to wrestle with the evaluation; it is a function of the creative process. The merit would depend on how well the project is articulated. BCAC should not set boundaries around what can be considered in any new grant process.
Dramaturg

Applicants could be evaluated on their ideas, the process through which they actualize their ideas, and their desired outcomes
Playwright

An observation that the top three choices deal with time stimulated an important dialogue regarding the essence of what is needed in new play development. One participant, a producer, advised that a new BCAC granting program should:

Building upon this comment, another participant recommended a phased approach that would involve writers, collectives, dramaturgs, and producers through the process of creators to development to production. Funding could be accessed for each phase.

Despite significant support from other participants for the phased approach, some offered caution regarding the composition of the applicant pool. Specifically, one participant recommended creating a separate funding pool for emerging writers while another reiterated a concern that playwrights were being juried in the creative writing program.

XI. Closing Thoughts

The first two consultations proved to be important gatherings for stimulating discussion around new play development in British Columbia. The vibrant contributions of the participants reinforce the reality that BC's theatre community is anything but a monolith. The community's diversity and dynamism are products of the playwrights, collectives, dramaturgs, and producers that are dedicated to developing new work. While there is cause for optimism on the future of new play development, the community currently lacks the resources to ensure ongoing vitality and sustainability.

The third consultation offered a worthwhile exercise in articulating the areas critical to new play development. The process of having participants choose priorities from a broad set of recommendations illuminated the key themes of providing additional time, mitigating risk, and encouraging flexibility. Consensus emerged that any new granting process should be inclusive and that a phased approach to funding for new play development may ensure the program's accessibility to all members of BC's theatre community.

Over the course of the three sessions, it became clear that representatives of BC's theatre community have much to contribute to the development of policy and programs related to new play development. Additionally, it seems that opportunities to bring people together, such as these consultations did, is critical and worthwhile.

This consultation process is part of a broader initiative as BCAC continues to review its programs and to consider appropriate allocation of any new funding. The information gleaned here will provide an important backdrop for further contemplation on the part of BC Arts Council and its stakeholders.