

International Co-production & Touring

Guy Cools

Independent Producer (ex-Vooruit (B))

With contributions by

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General outline of the dossier

Since the 1980s the performing arts have increasingly internationalised. The increased international touring has been accompanied by an active, international co-production policy in which the financial, organisational and artistic responsibilities of new creations and their subsequent touring have been shared by partners in different countries.

In a first generalisation we can speak of two different and distinct models of co-production:

1. In the first model (which is still the most common) one producer, most of the time a company organised around one or more creative artists, is co-produced by several organisations receptive to international productions (e.g. venues, festivals, etc.). In this model the different co-producers try, by joining forces, to facilitate and create the financial and infrastructural conditions for the realisation of a production which is proposed by the producer. It is this model on which this dossier will mainly focus.
2. More and more, a second model of co-production also takes place, in which two or more production structures join forces to realise a common artistic proposal. Often this is done in an interdisciplinary context with the partners looking for or exchanging complementary artistic competences: e.g. the collaboration between a theatre and a dance company or between a dance company and a music ensemble. This second model will only be specifically dealt with in this dossier when it involves fundamentally different approaches from the first model.

The topic of international touring should be a dossier on its own and is here only dealt with in as far as it is part of or the logical result of a previous co-production engagement.

Finally, the expertise on which this dossier is based is first and foremost my own one, running from 1990 till 2002 an active co-production and residence policy in Arts Centre Vooruit (www.vooruit.be) in Gent, Belgium, especially within the domain of contemporary dance. The dance community has probably the oldest and most advanced experience with international co-production and as such is a very useful reference frame, also for other disciplines.

To complement the specificity of my own knowledge and experience, I asked in a second round a number of distinguished international producers both to comment on my proposals and to add complementary insights from their own experience.

Part 1: My own experience

I. Stating the obvious - some preliminary remarks

1. Always give priority to the artistic content

In my contribution “Translating the artists’ needs” to the book *Managing Dance: Current Issues and Future Strategies* (Linda Jasper & Jeanette Siddall, Northcote House, 1999), I already warned about some of the pitfalls and dangers of some of the international funding schemes. That is: if you try to design your artistic project in such a way that it matches the criteria of the international funding and co-production schemes, you might be reversing the priorities and as such seriously compromise it.

Always devise and define first the content of your artistic proposal, independent from how it will be realised and financed; then look for the appropriate funding schemes and possible co-producers. With the internationalisation of the performing arts the landscape has not only expanded but also diversified and you will probably always find a funding scheme or co-production circuit which fits your necessities. And if you don’t, it is the duty of the funding authorities and the supportive organisations to change their policies and to follow the needs of the creative artists, without which they have no reason of existence.

“We are led by the artists we choose to serve.”

John Ashford, The Place, www.theplace.org.uk

2. Don’t forget to develop a strong home base

In the early 1980s, there were several artistic communities worldwide who were, potentially, equally talented. However, the ones who were most successful over a longer period in their artistic development and in their international recognition and touring were those who developed a strong home base and were able to convince their local decision-makers of the importance of their work.

International co-production and touring should always be a complementary source of support. If the company or the artistic project becomes too dependent on it for its realisation or survival, you are in a vulnerable and even unhealthy position. So don’t forget to develop a strong home base with partnerships with local presenters, funding authorities etc. before you launch yourself into the international market. Even for your international projects, your partners at home will often be the main supporters.

And what is true for the organisational side is also true for the artistic content. The most universal artistic statements are often those which are most deeply rooted in their own, local culture.

3. To work internationally is not an obligation but a choice

During the preparation of this dossier the VTI (the Flemish Theatre Institute, www.vti.be) organised a session to discuss the same topic with companies who already have a lot of

experience with international co-production and touring. Most of the individual stories resembled each other in the way the first international projects of each company or artist seemed to have grown organically out of a personal contact between the artist and a foreign partner and their mutual desire to collaborate.

But after that initiatory moment, to work internationally becomes quickly a conscious and strategic choice which asks for a lot of extra investment, both in staff time and finances. To work internationally is not a necessity but a choice which should be carefully taken, since it has many consequences for the development of one's own artistic project and the company.

II. Different forms of co-productions

The term co-production is often used in very different contexts to describe very different practices. Literally it implies a shared responsibility (hence the prefix 'co') on the production level of an artistic project. But the cases in which this 'sharing' really happens are a minority and even then I will, out of my own experience, argue against too much sharing (see below).

In most cases there is only one producer who takes all the responsibilities (artistic, financial, legal, etc), with a number of co-producers supporting or facilitating certain aspects of the production process, with the financial aspect being the primary and most obvious one. As such, a majority of co-productions are basically a form of co-financing or even pre-financing. There is nothing against this reductive use of the term 'co-production' as long as one is aware and straightforward about it.

1. Co- or pre-financing

The main reason for companies to look for co-producers is to secure their production budget. It is very hard to give exact figures of what is a reasonable co-production contribution or budget since it depends so much on the scale of the project, the possibilities of each of the partners, their relationship, the return being asked or given etc. So I asked a number of fellow producers what would normally be the co-production budget they were looking for and to express this in a percentage of the actual artistic costs of the project. And most came up with a figure between 30 and 50% to be both realistic and healthy. It was also agreed by almost everybody that it would be very unhealthy to be dependent on co-production money for the company's or the project's overheads.

In almost all the cases, the co-producers are also the first presenters of the production. As such, part of the co-production money invested is often a form of pre-financing the fees for the actual performances. Again there is no fixed set of rules, but still some general criteria seem to be relevant if the co-production is a form of pre-financing the actual performance fees:

- the co-production budget should always be more or at least equal to the actual fees;

- extra costs related to the performance (travel, accommodation, per diems, etc.) are best kept outside the co-production agreement and should be part of a separate performance contract.

Even this more restrictive definition of co-production as a form of pre-financing performance fees has its value since the co-producer takes the risk of having a 'blind date' with the producer and guarantees both money and performances at a stage when the production still has to be realised. It is especially useful for large scale productions where both the production budget and the performance fees are so substantial that they acquire a sharing of the risk. The performances guaranteed in advance by the co-producers are also often the stepping stone around which the rest of the international tour is being built and organised.

A last and major advantage of this way of international co-financing of a production is that the money invested might also open up and attract extra funding possibilities since many national funding bodies and supra-national organisations (such as the European Community) have specific budgets to support and stimulate international co-operation and exchange. Both the producer and the co-producer can benefit from these schemes and they might also increase the overall production budget since they may offer the (co-)producer a direct support to his or her contribution by, for example, covering part of the residency costs or the costs of presenting the performance afterwards (travel etc.).
EU Culture Programme: www.ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/index_en.html

2. Residencies

Besides cash, the next important thing for a performing arts artist or producer is time and space to actually make the work. Since many artists and companies don't have their own venue or even not a proper rehearsal space, a specific model of co-production has developed in which presenters offer their theatre or rehearsal spaces to companies or artists in residence. In these cases it has also become a common practice to translate the space and time offered into an actual budget of hours, days, weeks or months and to even attach a certain monetary value to this support in kind. Since the infrastructure always comes with equipment and specialised staff, these and other services offered (such as technical, promotional or dramaturgical assistance) might be added.

The residency policy has a lot of advantages but also a couple of dangers that one has to be aware of. Being away from home offers you the advantage of not being disturbed by your daily duties and routine and being able to concentrate fully on the artistic project. But for some artists the 'home' environment is the main source of inspiration for their creative process and in moments of crisis you might long for the comfort of being in familiar surroundings. The exploitation of a venue/space also demands different skills from those required to deal with the human resources of an artistic project. In the residency model, the inviting venue is responsible for the infrastructure and all issues related to its management which allows the artist and his/her company to concentrate both their time and resources on the production and its artistic content.

Qualities the residency place should offer:

- easy accessibility, ideally 24 hours a day;
- the possibility to really inhabit and personalise it, that is to make it one's own, by

- not having to share it with other people and being able to leave one's own 'stuff' there;
- offering a private and protected atmosphere, but preferably with a 'window' to the exterior or as part of a larger artistic or social environment;
- basic technical equipment, such as a sound and video installation, a dressing room, a piano etc.;
- comfortable accompanying living conditions such as a production office, a kitchen, good housing, easily accessible by public transport, etc... .

One particular model of residency which has turned out to be very successful is the residency in a fully equipped theatre space to finalise the work on stage – to make its light design, to finalise the scenery and experiment with sound and any other relevant, technical devices. Often this type of residency is combined with premiering the work abroad away from the stress and tension of the home reception and reviews. The advantages and disadvantages are similar to a regular residency in a studio space:

- the balance between the comfort of the working conditions offered versus the cost of going abroad;
- the fact that being away from your natural environment might both take away or increase stress or external pressure.

Resartis is the worldwide network of artist-residencies and residential art centres. See their website for contact details for centres and residencies worldwide: www.resartis.org

3. Commissioning work

A third possible model of co-production which defines a relationship between, on the one hand, an artist and his company and, on the other hand, an organising body, is of a very different nature. In the commissioning model it is not the artist who takes the initiative but the organiser who might be anything from another artist, to a venue or festival, a public authority, a private sponsor, etc. In this model the patron commissions the artist to realise a project or part of a project within a very specific model of production or presentation: e.g. the successful programme of the Festival d'Avignon in which a dancer is invited to choose a choreographer from whom he/she would like a solo created.

It is clear that in this model the financial and also often the production responsibilities of the patron are much larger. Often the patron takes all responsibilities until the creation within the event or context which is proposed. While the artist or company keeps the artistic rights and manages the project afterwards. This type of co-production might also re-open the debate on the author's rights and returns, especially in more commercial genres such as music (see also V.).

4. Artistic co-productions

Finally there is a model of an interdisciplinary co-production between two or more artists and their respective companies. In this model each partner brings in part of the required artistic competence and human resources.

I personally feel that even in this model it is more sensible that only one partner takes the final responsibility on all levels of the production – artistic, organisational, financial, etc. – and that both the investments (e.g. artistic wages) and return (e.g. a percentage

of the performance fees) of all the partners are well defined and balanced beforehand. But this model doesn't exclude a more collective and shared responsibility and might in fact be the only true co-production model in the full meaning of the word.

III. Keys to successful partnerships

Whichever of the co-production models described above is realised, the co-production relationship implies a degree of engagement from every partner that I always like to refer to it as a 'matrimonial' relationship. And this in opposition with the less engaging love relationship where there is only the engagement to present the work.

In a similar way it is very helpful to think about the relationship between a hosting venue and a visiting company in terms of the host-guest relationship and consider all the written and unwritten rules of hospitality that are implied.

1. Co-production = a form of matrimony

Co-productions of any kind imply such a serious engagement of all the involved partners that in order to be successful one should look before one leaps. It is not a condition, but it helps a lot if the partners already know each other well or, even better, have already collaborated together in a less engaged partnership. For venues or festivals which have a programme both of receiving work and co-producing, the co-production engagement is often the next stage after they have successfully invited or presented the artist or company as part of their receiving programme.

The co-production engagement is a far reaching engagement that often involves serious investment and risk. As in a matrimonial relationship it demands a lot of confidence and trust of the partners in each other and it's best if they also anticipate (even through legal or contractual arrangements) possible future crises or unsuccessful results.

In my opinion the co-production partnership should meet the following criteria:

- it is a privileged partnership which also means that you can only have this partnership with a limited number of partners;
- the different partners don't have to be identical but there should be a certain equivalence in the way they contribute to and support the production; (both these criteria are also important with regard to the symbolical return of the name association of the different partners with the production or artist and with each other - see also V.1)
- often the co-production partnership is a long term engagement which grows over more than one production and this is another reason to take time and seriously invest in the first collaboration;
- besides the obvious more or less successful outcome of the co-production engagement, a key to its success is that both partners take each other seriously

and that they communicate with each other straightforwardly and honestly, especially in moments of crisis (see also IV).

2. The written and unwritten rules of hospitality: the etiquette of international touring

International touring, especially in the performance arts, where both content and the quality of the work coincides with the human resources of the artists and performers involved, is very demanding both for the touring companies and for the hosting venues.

In the 12 years I was responsible for the performing arts programme in the Arts Centre Vooruit, I came to consider the relationship between the receiving venue and the invited company in the simple terms of these between host and guest, i.e. :

- it is the duty of the host to receive the guest in the best possible conditions and make him or her feel welcome and at home;
- as it is the duty of the guest to respect the house rules and traditions of the host.

To express this more precisely:

- in the contract and its accompanying documents (e.g. the technical rider) the invited artist or company can define their requirements and the conditions of how they want to be received (accommodation, travel, per diems, technical requirements, etc.)
- but once these are negotiated and defined, the invited artist or company should be flexible enough to adapt or integrate their work within the conditions offered by the venue; since it is the latter's responsibility to receive well, to present and promote the work, the host venue should also be given the freedom to do this since they know how best to function within their own specific context.

Again, clear and personal communication both before and during the visit is vital to a successful collaboration (see also IV.). And we should remember that both the host who is too indifferent and the guest who is too demanding undermine the unwritten rules of hospitality.

IV. *The importance of communication*

It is my lifelong, professional experience that most problems during touring or any other form of international collaboration or partnership are either a result of bad communication or could be anticipated and avoided by good communication. The keys to successful communication, as any communication specialist will tell you, are related to the three different aspects of the basic communication model:

sender --- message --- receiver

- 1° both sender and receiver have a good and adequate knowledge of each other;
- 2° the content of the message is clearly expressed;

3° the form of the message and chosen communication channel are appropriate.

In terms of successful partnerships in either international co-production or touring in the performing arts, these can be translated into some of the following practical devices:

- If the partners don't know each other well and collaborate for the first time, a pre-tour where either the manager, the technical director or the artist her/himself visits the hosting venues might be a small investment of time and money which saves a lot of time and money later by anticipating possible problems. Information gathered from other companies or official institutions, for example, embassies, might achieve a better knowledge of the foreign partners.
- The internal organisation of every structure is very different – depending on its size, its history, its legal status (e.g. independent versus an institutional organisation), etc. These aspects are by definition different for a venue and a company. So it is crucial to know and understand quickly who is who within an organisation, with regard both to their responsibilities and knowledge. It is also very useful to decentralise specialised discussions (e.g. to have the technical directors of both partners discuss and negotiate the technical aspects of a production). If you do this, always keep in mind the host-guest model and also realise that a particular discussion on one level might also influence other aspects and people, e.g. a technical discussion might have consequences on the financial aspects or on the public accessibility.
- Too often, there has been a very negative attitude from both organisers and visiting artists to keep vague certain aspects of their collaboration, about which one or other of them is uncertain. They will postpone and try to solve it to their advantage during the actual visit, knowing that at that point it is too late for the partners to withdraw from the engagement. I am very much against this practice and I believe that as much as possible should be discussed, negotiated, clarified and confirmed in written form in advance. Only when there is a clear and all encompassing basis of agreement, can both partners afford to have a certain flexibility in its application and realisation and this is also necessary for the performing arts.

The importance of clear and straightforward communication both in informal, personal contacts and in their written, formal confirmation and follow-up are important at all stages of the collaboration. At the stage of presenting a project to a potentially interested co-producer, it is important to know in advance which forms of co-production the partners normally offers and to ask the appropriate concrete and specific questions about possible support. At the stage of negotiating a co-production contract it is important to discuss all relevant aspects, to come to an agreement on each of them and to translate this adequately in a contract (for an example, see Appendix). And finally, also during the actual touring, it remains vital to a successful collaboration to anticipate possible difficulties by adequate communication.

V. <i>A question of return</i>

1. Symbolic capital

Although the basis for most co-production engagements is a financial one, i.e. to secure a production budget by joining forces, the symbolic value of the partnership/association is in the arts as valuable. The French sociologist Bourdieu describes in his sociology of the arts, the visual arts in particular, the importance of the 'symbolic capital' and the strategies applied to obtain and maintain it. His useful and pragmatic theoretical model has been further updated and translated to other arts fields by others such as Hans Abbing from The Netherlands and Rudi Laermans and Pascale Gielen from Belgium. (www.boekman.nl/EN/index.html)

As such, certain co-production partners are more interesting than others, not only for the real and actual support they can offer, but also because of their pioneering role within their own community or landscape. Also from the co-producer's point of view, the symbolic name association between his or her project and the supported artist or production, is often the only real return he asks for or actually gets. As such, it is very important to pay proper attention to giving adequate mention of the support in the production credits, and also during the subsequent tour. And to actively keep the partner informed of the continuation of the project (e.g. by sending press reviews or programme brochures) also after the actual co-production or collaboration has been completed.

2. Real cash return

Since most of the international touring in the performing arts is still loss-making or needs extra support from funding bodies, most co-producers don't ask for a cash return on their investment as is the case, for instance, in more commercial genres such as pop music, musicals or films. Nevertheless, in cases where the co-production is very substantial (as is often the case in types 3 and 4 - commissioned work or artistic co-productions), the question may be asked whether the possibility of cash return, for example, a percentage of performance fees during touring, should be considered. The return from a successful investment might be used to invest in a new project.

3. 'Extra curricular' activities

Often co-producers also like to highlight their co-production engagement by organising extra activities (such as workshops, lectures, community work, etc.). When this is done as part of the touring it is normally no problem and also the company can benefit from it, since it can be very helpful as additional promotion for the work. But when it is asked for in return for a residency, during the actual creation process, one has to be careful that one's creative energy is not too dispersed between the actual production and these 'extra curricular' activities.

VI. Some examples

To demonstrate the possibilities and also the complexities of international co-production models, I would like to finish this first section by describing a couple of co-production

engagements I was actually involved in during the twelve years of directing the co-production and residency policy of Arts Centre Vooruit.

- For a foreign dance company it is 'cheaper' (since they were able to get extra support for the travel and accommodation costs) to finalise their rehearsal and production process on the main stage of Vooruit (which was offered to them with all the equipment and assistance of the technical staff as part of the co-production agreement) than to rent a theatre in their home town. At the end of the residency, a public try-out is organised for both the regular dance audience and interested organisers. The actual performances are organised a year later, as part of a larger tour.
- A Belgian theatre company (bringing in all its actors and artistic staff) realises an artistic co-production with a foreign dance company (bringing in its dancers and also supporting part of the rehearsal process with its infrastructure). Since it is a large scale production, the production budget is secured by a limited number of co-producers in different countries, who are pre-financing a fixed number of presentations. Vooruit is one of the partners, but since the production is too large scale for their own stage, a local partnership is set up with the Opera House. This local partnership is supported additionally by the City Council. An extra performance (invitation only) is added to the public performances, paid for by a private sponsor who has engaged yet another company to organise the sponsorship event around the performance. This means that for this one extra performance, seven different partners are involved, each of whom have their own specific investments, responsibilities and return.
- Three music ensembles in three different European countries decide to join forces, both artistically and financially to realise a site-specific, large scale contemporary opera. Each of the partners looks for extra support with their local funding authorities for different aspects of the production and subsequent touring and together they apply for a European grant in the Culture 2000 program. Since the project is large scale and site-specific, they have to find partners and secure an international tour long in advance, before the actual production process starts.
- Vooruit commissions a small scale solo work paying for the whole artistic and production budget and providing the necessary rehearsal infrastructure. In return, no supplementary fee is paid for the premiere series of performances. After this premiere series, the project and its continued touring are managed by the company and no extra return is asked, except for the name association: 'this project was originally commissioned by'.
- Five years after its creation, there is a foreign interest in a Flemish spoken theatre production which Vooruit co-produced. As part of the follow up of the original co-production engagement, no money is invested, but the company is offered free rehearsal space to prepare a version in the foreign language. As return a public try-out is organised at the end of the residence which also offers the company the possibility to evaluate the adaptations with a live audience.

Part 2: Comments and interviews with different producers

1. **Farooq Chaudry – Akram Khan Company (GB)** www.akramkhancompany.net

I would like to add two comments about the relation between a company and its co-producers:

1. The status that some high profile co-producers have, is often useful to attract other co-producers from lesser known sources. In addition this same principle can be applied to other more established co-producers to join the 'club' so to speak and align themselves with their counterparts.

2. It might also be worth mentioning the difficulties of breaking the 'marriage' between, artist/company and co-producer, e.g. when the artist has outgrown the venue due to greater ambitions in scale or wishing for a change of context for the work. These partnerships are often intensely close and can occasionally be very possessive.

The most successful co-production partnerships have been these with a sense of a long term view, supporting Akram's career rather than co-producing individual projects and allowing for perceived 'failures' in this growth. Perhaps what singles these co-productions out more from the others is that beyond space and money, we have also received intelligent and sensitive advice and feedback that has helped to shape our growth.

In a less successful co production, there was very little communication. We never met the co-producer himself until some days before the premiere and did not receive any significant feedback apart from a sense that the show went well. We felt that the co-production was a device to ensure that the venue had the work first with little care as to how it might look. This was reflected in the limited access to the theatre space we received. We did not receive the funds until very late which created anxiety and wasted a lot of management time which needed to focus on developing the project. Since then we have had little to do with this organisation leaving us feeling that it was more of a one night stand than a marriage.

2. **Guy Coolen – Muziektheater Transparant (B)** www.transparant.be

With Transparant we have a lot of experience with the third type of artistic co-productions, where several artistic partners try to share the artistic content of a production. In order for these co-productions to be successful, you need preferably complementary partners, very clear agreements between all the partners from the very beginning when the project is conceived; and clear and good communication channels all through the production process.

One very good experience was the collaboration with an orchestra. In the conception of the project all decisions, about singers, director, etc. were taken together. But once we

started producing are responsibilities were complementary. They were responsible for the musical quality. We were responsible for the scenic aspects of the project.

A negative experience was one where, in the beginning there was a lot of artistic exchange and discussion. But once the production process started, with one partner as the executive producer, there was very little communication. The original librettist on whom we agreed, left the production and the composer himself wrote a libretto. As one of the main co-producer and initiator of this project, we were never informed of these changes.

3. Dietrich Grosse – Independent producer (E)

www.mondigromax.com

There are three points in the dossier which struck me as extremely relevant for my own practice:

1. For years I was the producer of the Catalan dance company Lanonima Imperial. My experience with Lanonima was that the annual budget of the company would be based on a third part of subvention, a third part of sales and a third part on co-productions (calculated roughly). This was a functioning scheme for years and years. The existence of the company would not have been possible without this international co-production help. Yet I do agree absolutely, the home base is extremely important and very desirable, and on the long term indispensable.

2. The human relationship on as many levels as possible is for me basic. Confidence in an artist comes also out of a good production structure around him.

3. In my experience you need the following qualities: strong nerves combined with a lot of perseverance in the daily work and patience in getting all the institutional elements you need together.

I briefly describe one of the most exiting co-productions in which I was involved with Lanònima: a co-production which was born out of a special situation, the war in Croatia/Bosnia.

When we got a request for help-fax from there, it was clear that only action could be of use, so Juan Carlos Garcia went and gave a free workshop for two weeks in Zagreb for professional dancers. He got interested in the situation and travelled to Ossiek, which had been severely attacked.

Snjezana Abramovic asked me to convince him to make a co-production with her company (several of her dancers had participated in the workshop) - a complete madness, as the country was very insecure, there was almost no money in our own company and almost no money in the Zagrebacka Plesna Ansambl. But Sneki was insistant; she would bring me to the Vice-Minister at that time, a theatre director. When I saw her will and her confidence I talked it through with Juan Carlos to propose a project which should be born out of the situation and which should go in a direction where he never would have gone himself without this concrete proposal. Sneki was completely willing to try to fulfil his intuitions so he agreed to go forward involving our whole company. The result was an overwhelming piece against the war with two famous

Croatian actors, four dancers from Zagrebacka and all the dancers of Lanònima. We had a couple of weeks of preparation in Barcelona only with our dancers, a couple of weeks only with the Croatian artists under the direction of Giovanni and then three weeks all together in Zagreb. The most emotive performance was when the artistic director of the festival in Sarajevo invited the piece to the Bosnian National Theatre and we performed it on the Independence Day of Bosnia. We were all sleeping in houses of families who shared their hospitality with us, them not sleeping in their habitual beds but in the living room of their bomb-damaged houses. At that time Croatia and Bosnia still were heavy post-war enemies. We got a symbolic but encouraging help from the Council of Europe. For me it is one of my happiest realisations as there was a real sense and strong personalities behind the project.

This is an extreme example not to be mentioned as a typical example in any learning book rules, in order to show that at the end common sense combined with strong intuitions can lead you through a lot of difficulties and crazy situations. There must be, apart from a rational and very clear head, a portion of passion, if possible from all involved partners.

4. Walter Heun – Joint Adventures (D) www.jointadventures.net

I like to confine my remarks to the further elucidation of a few aspects which I believe to be important.

1. Sharing and communicating as the basis of networking

International co-productions, and especially production networks that are based on continuity, can emerge when regularly recurrent contacts gradually lead to the development of working relationships. People who were initially strangers gradually become familiar acquaintances when one repeatedly attends performances alongside them, when one shares the experiences of the pleasures (or pains!) of being spectators at the same events, and when one exchanges views and opinions about events which we have witnessed together.

The primary pre-condition for the possibility of a long-term, fertile cooperation is trust in the other person's artistic competence. Most of the networks in existence today developed from shared experiences of this kind and from aesthetic preferences held in common by the members of the network.

The best cooperative projects arose from the honest exchange of views about artistic, social, and political problems, followed afterwards by discussions about production-related issues. In this process, partners from different countries give one another essential tips about ways to potentially improve the working situation for artists. Each of these partners works under cultural policies, financial conditions, and structural situations that differ drastically from those under which the others work.

2. Generate excitement – link domestic and foreign qualities

Trust, knowledge, communication, and relationships that have grown naturally over the course of time are the basic pre-conditions necessary for successful international cooperation. The artistic plans of the invited artist needn't necessarily be in harmony with the artistic and technical possibilities available at the producer's 'home base', but they

must be brought into a fertile and stimulating relationship with the producer's 'base camp'. The qualities of the artist and the co-workers for a particular project, the technical and organisational infrastructure, the geographic location, the climate, the architectural factors, and many other issues that exist at the venue can be essential contributors which may be extremely relevant for an artist within the framework of a co-production.

Anyone who wants to become an important partner for international co-productions should above all have the ability to find out about the local conditions, their qualities and limitations. He or she should also be able to get a feel for mutual points of approach and should be able to call the artist's attention to ways in which the artist's own needs can be combined with the qualities existing on-site to result in an artistically successful project.

3. Defend the artist.

In my opinion, an important point in every co-production is the backing that a producer (or co-producer) gives to an artist, both personally and from the producer's institution. I feel that the terms "host" (for the producer) and "guest" (for the artist) are absolutely accurate with respect to the production process. It seems to me that the producer's role as "host" is of paramount importance, especially in artist-in-residence situations where an artist is obliged to work outside of his/her familiar environment and, in some cases, without support from important partners, which may be artistic partners, interlocutors, production partners, or private partners.

Equally important is the backing that producers give to artists when the production is performed. When a producer discusses the artistic work with the audience and with so-called 'mediators', it's important that the producer is able to find the right words so that an open attitude towards the work and the artist can be generated on-site.

A good artwork always contains aspects with which its viewers are not yet well acquainted. The discussion that art triggers is part of the process! However, if the artwork breaks cultural traditions, runs counter to social consensus, or challenges familiar perceptual habits, this is often accompanied by a lack of understanding. Beyond this, art emerges in a context where diverse agendas predominate. Via the producer, an artist positions his/her work in a system of divergent approaches, tastes, economic interests, and claims to power. These are presented to the artist and to the artwork by journalists, organisers, institutions, financiers, friends and adversaries.

As far as ideas are concerned, a "cultural dialogue" exists between artists and their works, even if they do not communicate with one another directly. The ongoing struggle among ideas maintains the vitality of art, art's discourse, and the discourse about art. At the same time, this dialogue is accompanied by a process of competition among producers, mediators, and institutions. The trends that are currently en vogue, as well as the artistic statements that are no longer being articulated quite as loudly as they were in the past, imply better or worse conditions of production, i.e. potentials for the distribution of an artist's own artistic positions. The vehemence and the dissemination – which are determined by the size of the performance venue, the international distribution, the PR, the marketing, and the producer's work with the press – evoke stronger or weaker responses to the artistic positions expressed in a production.

If the artwork meets with partial or total rejection, then the producer is called upon to play the role of the artist's 'defender'. I regard the producer here as a responsible companion who conveys criticism to the artist whenever the criticism is valid and constructive. If, on

the other hand, the criticism is falsely motivated, if it stems from a lack of understanding or results from vested interests, then the producer ought to take a strong stance: he or she must stand firmly behind the artist and the artwork, and must defend both within the “argumentative battle” that is waged in various contexts whenever a production is presented in public. The producer must defend the artist, but not blindly!

4. International partnership and local potentials – an interaction.

If, when one presents one’s local financing partners with plans for a high-quality project, it is also possible to find concrete paths toward the co-financing of the project or even to find foreign financing partners for it, then the path toward the realisation of the project is significantly shortened. Conversely, the artistic profile which a producer has earned over many years of work, together with the local financial and production possibilities, jointly determine the producer’s chances of being asked to produce projects for internationally renowned artists.

One shouldn’t forget that there are indeed some co-producers whose motivations for co-financing a project are largely determined by their fellow co-production partners and by the international reputations of those partners. This motivation may sound somewhat dubious, but the executive producer can put it to good use on the artist’s behalf – if it is accompanied by a fundamental willingness of the co-producer to serve as a host.

5. Lieven Thyron – Les Ballets C de la B (B)

www.lesballetscdela.be

Within the dance community, co-productions are essential to the survival of the company. Since most of the existing funding schemes are insufficient, the financial co-production contributions are one of the essential pillars of our organisation. The core of possible co-productions is to a large extent, Germany and France

Within the company model, the collaboration and absolute confidence between artists and manager are essential to its success. But, as an arts manager, you also need particular skills:

- daring to take calculated risks
- to jump in the deep water
- guts and communications skills to enter the networking which can be a rather closed circuit
- to be able to give and invest in long term contacts (it takes a lot of kilometres and a big telephone bill, even when you’ve established your own network to maintain it)
- a huge personal involvement

It has been a conscious decision of the company to work with a professional agent. As a manager you represent the company and its artists. You guide their careers, both artistically and materially you try to create the right conditions for their work. The selling of performances is a different role and can best be done by somebody else.

To work for different artists within a collective model has both advantages and disadvantages. To try to sell one artist with another in a package deal is not done. There is also the risk of over-saturation. So the best thing you can do is diversify and try to

establish a circuit for every artist individually, depending on his/her needs and where he/she is in her career.

One really negative example is where a co-producer withdrew his engagement even after the premiere. Although our community still works a lot on the basis of confidence in each other, it is more and more essential to professionalise and to confirm all communications and agreements in written form.

6. Jaap van Baasbank – Julidans (NL)
www.baasbank-baggerman.nl

One of the main questions I still ask myself is how do you convince your own funding bodies of the relevance of co-production investments? What do you get back as a co-producer next to prestige and a preferential contact with the artist?

Maybe we should ask in the future for a cash return (e.g. a small fixed amount on every subsequent performance) on our co-production investments (as certain festivals already do). In that way a successful co-production might create extra possibilities for future co-productions. And part of the investment made is paid back by other organisers who benefit from its success but didn't invest in it.

Sometimes companies demand a co-production engagement as a condition to be able to present the production.

Communication and confidence in each other are essential. It is a fragile balance between being involved not enough or too much. In general I appreciate it when the company keeps me informed about the development of the project. I also enjoy the direct contact with the artist. But also the communication with the manager as go-between between the artist's desires and wishes and the engagements of the co-producers is extremely important.

It takes years and a lot of personal investment to develop a personal network of contacts and it demands an equal amount of time and investment to maintain it.

One negative example we had, was when we continued an artistic project after one of the co-producers withdrew and the remaining budget was too small to realise the project in optimal circumstances.

Appendix

Model of a co-production contract

(This model is not a legal document, but gives an overview of all the issues that should be covered in a co-production contract. A legal version of it should best be drawn up with assistance of lawyer.)

AGREEMENT

<p>BETWEEN A. Producer</p> <p>address: Phone: + mobile: e-mail: represented by hereafter referred to as 'THE COMPANY'</p>	<p>AND B. Co-producer</p> <p>address: Phone: fax: e-mail: represented by hereafter referred to as 'THE CO- PRODUCER'</p>
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THE FOLLOWING IS AGREED

1. GENERAL TERMS

THE COMPANY and THE CO-PRODUCER will co-operate to realise and present "NAME PRODUCTION", a new full evening programme by THE COMPANY. This co-operation will be financial, material, logistical and promotional, as described further on.

THE CO-PRODUCER will present the production on the DATE

In all publications (press, promotional and recordings), local and abroad, about the production, THE CO-PRODUCER will be mentioned as follows:

"PRODUCTION is a co-operation between THE COMPANY and THE CO-PRODUCER"

It is the responsibility of THE COMPANY to include this clause in its contracts with a third party.

For THE CO-PRODUCER this contract will be followed up by X.
Phone; fax ; e-mail

For technical matters please contact Y, the head of the technical staff.
Phone; fax ; e-mail.

2. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

The total support from THE CO-PRODUCER adds up to the equivalent of TOTAL AMOUNT (1+2+3).

This amount can be divided in:

the commission for the work: AMOUNT 1
to be paid before

the fee for the performances: AMOUNT 2
to be paid

Both amounts are to be paid by bank transfer upon receipt of an invoice from THE COMPANY, to account:

help in kind by THE CO-PRODUCER to an amount of AMOUNT 3

This amount represents the value of the services provided maximally by THE CO-PRODUCER and will under no circumstances be converted into cash nor into other than the hereafter described services.

Use studio	Period	Budget
Use theatre space		
+ technical support theatre space		
Catering		
Office and administrative services		
Promotional services		
Total		AMOUNT 3

THE CO-PRODUCER cannot be held responsible for a higher amount than the one mentioned above. The costs, related to the performances (transport, lodgings, per diems, etc.) are part of a separate agreement.

3. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

3.1. rehearsals at THE CO-PRODUCER's

Rehearsals will be held in the STUDIO from DATE till DATE.

THE CO-PRODUCER provides heating and cleaning of the rehearsal spaces.

On the first day of rehearsals THE COMPANY will attend a production meeting in THE CO-PRODUCER. On this occasion all practical settlements will be made/checked concerning access, keys, dressing rooms, lodging, the rehearsal schedule, use of phones/fax, photocopies, production office, etc.

THE CO-PRODUCER provides technical equipment as mentioned in the riders of its halls and studios.

3.2. The opening (première)

THE CO-PRODUCER organizes the première. The company is entitled to 15 free entrance tickets for its artists, guests and the other partners.

3.3. the other performances held at THE CO-PRODUCER's.

The above mentioned performance fee will under no circumstances be re-negotiable and THE CO-PRODUCER is 100% entitled to the income from tickets. The company is entitled to 10 free tickets per performance.

3.4. the tour

THE COMPANY will provide THE CO-PRODUCER with the tour schedule and samples of the publicity material on which his co-production is mentioned.

4. AUTHOR'S RIGHTS

THE COMPANY declares that all legal conditions concerning the author's rights (choreography, music) have been made.

The author's rights for the performances (music and choreography) are (not) included in the fee.

THE CO-PRODUCER has the right to make recordings that can be used as archival material. These recordings will not be used commercially, nor made public, without prior written permission by the artist or by his/her representative.

5. GENERAL CONDITIONS

This agreement is valid in law only when it is returned to and received by THE CO-PRODUCER within a fortnight.

THE COMPANY is responsible for any charges, taxes, contributions, insurance with regard to the employment of the artist(s) and his (their) assistant(s) and with regard to its goods (equipment, instruments,).

THE CO-PRODUCER cannot be held responsible for loss, theft or damage to goods (company or personal) taken onto its premises.

In case of unlawful breaking of the agreement by one of the contracting parties, damages - equal to the amount stated above and augmented with possible costs for production, loss of income, administration or prosecution - will have to be paid.

In the event of illness or major disasters (strike, fire, nuclear disaster, traffic accident, unforeseen technical problems at venue,) the agreement shall be broken without any party having the right to claim damages. If necessary, a medical certificate will be delivered.

In the event of one of the parties being in the material impossibility to fulfil the agreement, the other party will have to be informed by the fastest (and most indisputable) means of communication (e-mail, fax).

In case the production is not realised, all pre-financed amounts will be refund by THE COMPANY within a month.

This agreement is construed in accordance with the X law. Only the courts of X are to determine on a dispute.

THE COMPANY agrees with all the terms of this agreement which apply on top of its own selling conditions.

Made in as many copies as there are parties, all of which declare having received one copy.

Read and confirmed
For THE CO-PRODUCER,

Read and confirmed
for THE COMPANY,

Other information sources

Amsterdam-Maastricht Summer University (AMSU)

<http://www.amsu.edu>

(has run training courses in past years on international co-productions and other related issues for performing arts professionals)

See 2006 course outline: <http://www.amsu.edu/2006/ARTM-2/> and

De Greef, Hugo, 'Some Observations about International Co-Production', 2005,

Amsterdam-Maastricht Summer University, <http://www.amsu.edu/articles/20050830-hugo-de-greef.php>

Artfactories

<http://www.artfactories.net>

ASSITEJ – International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People

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

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

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

The British Council (UK)

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

Canada Council

<http://www.canadacouncil.ca>

Circostrada Network – European circus and street arts

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

Compendium – Cultural policies and trends in Europe

<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/>

Cultural Contact Points (CCPs)

http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/culture2000/contacts/national_pts_en.html

(In each EU country, the CCP is responsible for promoting the European Community Culture Programme and facilitating applications for funding from culture professionals)

CulturesFrance (F)

<http://www.culturesfrance.com>

Dance UK

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

ENCC – European Network of Cultural Centres

<http://www.encc.eu>

ENICPA – European Network of Information Centres for the Performing Arts

<http://www.enicpa.net>

EUnetART – European Association of Art Organisations for Children and Young People

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

EUNIC – European Union National Institutes for Culture

<http://www.eunic-europe.eu>

European Commission – Culture Programme (2007 – 2013)

http://www.ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/index_en.html

European Cultural Foundation

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

Finnish Dance Information Centre (FI)

<http://www.danceinfo.fi>

Report on a Roundtable on European Co-productions in Dance, 2004:

http://www.danceinfo.fi/english/other_publications/ROUNDTABLE_REPORT.pdf

Goethe-Institut (D)

<http://www.goethe.de/>

Hors Les Murs – Centre de ressources des arts de la rue et de la piste (F)

<http://www.horslesmurs.asso.fr/>

IDEE – Initiatives in Dance through European Exchange

<http://www.idee-eu.com/>

IETM – International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts

<http://www.ietm.org>

IN SITU – International Innovative Shows in Urban Territories

<http://www.in-situ.info/>

ITC – Independent Theatre Council (UK)

<http://www.ITC-arts.org/>

(UK membership organisation – run training courses for theatre professionals on co-productions and international touring)

ITI – International Theatre Institute

<http://www.iti-worldwide.org/>

LabforCulture

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

(Online information and knowledge platform dedicated to European cultural cooperation)

National Performance Network – NPN (D)

<http://www.jointadventures.net>

(NPN provides grants for contemporary dance co-productions with partners in Germany)

On-the-Move – web portal for international mobility in the performing arts

<http://www.on-the-move.org>

ONDA – Office national de diffusion artistique (F)

<http://www.onda-international.com/>

Partner Search Database

<http://en.www.mcu.es/cooperacion/MC/PCC/BusqSocios/BusquedaSocios.html>

(This database has been set up by the European Network of Cultural Contact Points, co-funded by the European Commission to assist arts and cultural organisations in European countries to access funding from the European Union's Culture programme)

PEARLE* – European League of Employers' Associations in the Performing Arts sector

<http://www.pearle.ws/>

Theater Instituut Nederland (NL)

<http://www.theaterinstituut.nl>

Visiting Arts (UK)

<http://www.visitingarts.org.uk/>

VTI – Vlaams Theaterinstituut (B)

<http://www.vti.be/>