Case Study
2014 Community Engagement Opportunities

**What:** In 2014 there were four significant community engagement projects that allowed regional emerging and student artists to engage and perform with professional companies. These projects spanned across genres including contemporary dance, circus, opera and contemporary singing.

Project Puccini with Opera Queensland saw 48 local men, women and children perform on the Empire Theatre stage alongside professional opera singers in a professional production.

Circa Zoo student workshops allowed 17 young aspiring acrobats to train with the professional trainers of renowned Brisbane contemporary Circus company C!RCA for two full days. The culmination of the workshops was a curtain raiser performance by the workshop participants prior to Circa Zoo’s production of Brink.

Ten advanced ballet students auditioned and were chosen to perform on stage with Expressions Dance Company in their touring production of Carmen Sweet. The students rehearsed with Company members to learn the sequence of the Matador’s entrance for the October performance in the Armitage Centre.

Ten highly talented contemporary singers auditioned for the producers of Women in Voice and one was selected to perform in the Toowoomba presentation in the Armitage Centre. Accomplished local vocalist Melissa Forbes performed alongside professional artists in this unique opportunity.

**When:**
- Project Puccini, 15 August 2014
- Circa Zoo, 25/26 September 2014
- Carmen Sweet, 10 October 2014
- Women in Voice, 29 October 2014

**Where:** Empire Theatre Toowoomba

**Partners, Contributors and Sponsors:**

Supported by the Regional Arts Development Fund.

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**Links:**
www.empiretheatre.com.au
Outcomes: Over these four projects 145 regional students and artists auditioned for 76 performance opportunities. All of them gained skills and experience from their engagement with the process let alone the projects themselves.

Further to this, four professional employment opportunities were created on these projects for practising artists and support staff in the region.

Each of these projects allowed the local community to be serviced on a deeper level by the visiting companies which allows for a more personal connection to the arts and those who regularly present in the region.

Engagement projects such as these allow a doorway for the community to access the arts through their personal networks. In the best case this will allow the visiting companies to expand their audience base and ultimately commercial effectiveness.

Learnings and reflections: Each of the performances and workshop programs were equally enhanced by the inclusion of local content. Beyond straightforward workshops, the performance outcomes that were a part of each of the projects were both engaging and challenging for the participants involved.

Similarly this type of community engagement has proven to increase ticket sales and ongoing interest in the performing arts as the touring companies involved make a lasting impression on the participants and their extended networks.

While this sort of engagement cannot be relied on solely as a way to increase ticket sales, it is an effective long term audience development strategy and has the added benefit of creating unique performance and training opportunities for regional artists.

This project directly correlates with six objectives in the Empire Theatres Projects Company Business Plan.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim One</th>
<th>To be accessible and engaging to broad sectors of the community.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective 1.1</td>
<td>Create and facilitate programs and projects that are mindful of the diversity and richness of all regional Australians inclusive of all ethnic and cultural origins and demographic and socio-economic circumstances</td>
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<tr>
<th>Aim Two</th>
<th>To be vital to the cultural and social health of the wider Toowoomba and south central Queensland region.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objective 2.2</td>
<td>To provide arts services locally including training and education resources delivery</td>
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<td>Objective 2.3</td>
<td>To address the issues of remoteness and accessibility to the arts in regional Australia</td>
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<th>Aim Three</th>
<th>To empower and enrich the cultural capacity of south central Queensland arts practitioners.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objective 3.1</td>
<td>Increasing engagement in creative projects throughout our community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objective 3.3</td>
<td>To develop and nurture a community of artists and arts workers in and around the Toowoomba region</td>
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<th>Aim Four</th>
<th>To maintain sustainable business practise.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objective 4.1</td>
<td>To develop thriving arts business practices through strong partnerships, commercial income streams and alternative funding programs</td>
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This project also correlates with Community outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.5 in the TRC 2009-2014 Corporate Plan.