

Retreat of Our National Drama: Revised Charts

Statement of Explanation

Revised charts for all company data cited in my Platform Paper have been incorporated into the Currency House website.

The revisions follow complaints from some companies that the category of 'New Australian' was under-counted in original AusStage data, and this skewed the original charts in my Platform Paper and my argument respecting the low level of programming of new Australian drama ('New Australian') in comparison with re-staged productions ('Australian recent').

In conjunction with AusStage, I initiated a review of the data in question and contacted each company for advice. Using information supplied by the companies, changes were made to the data in AusStage, and these changes are reflected in the revised charts.

The revised charts represent a set of 2,344 productions. 2,046 productions (90%) remain as categorised in the original set of 2,254. On advice from the companies, 159 productions were re-coded, and a further 139 productions were added. 49 productions that were previously included have been omitted.

As a result, the number of productions in each category has changed. In particular, the number of 'New Australian' has increased by 39 from 429 to 468, and the number of 'Australian recent' has decreased by 24 from 652 to 628. In the other categories, 'Australian Classic' has increased by 4 from 129 to 132; 'International Classic' has increased by 44 from 552 to 596; and 'International Recent' has increased by 28 from 492 to 520.

It is clear that a number of companies regularly engage in co-producing work. However, where there are a number of partners a decision has to be made which one is primarily responsible for creative authorship in order to avoid double-counting. Where two companies co-produce a new Australian work, one company is credited with 'new Australian' for the premiere season, the other with 'Australian recent' when the production transfers. Where productions are part of a labelled 'independent season' or are obviously the work of independent companies they have been omitted.

Productions were also omitted where the play was less than a full production event (a reading, or presentation of a work in progress); or where the show was clearly and solely a dance piece or a music piece (if a production involved actors, I have judged it a dance-drama or music-drama piece; if not, then I have judged it a dance or music piece).

The Results

1. Belvoir was misrepresented in my original charts, mainly in respect of the years 2010, 2012 and 2013. Corrections to the Belvoir graph were posted prior to the launch of the Platform Paper. The current chart revises down slightly the number of premieres by setting aside the claims of some classic adaptations to be new Australian works.
2. The Malthouse has been somewhat misrepresented in my original graphs, mainly in respect of the year 2012. The issue of interpreting the status of its large number of co-productions is a difficult one, however. Some are probably at least half the property

of the company, so it is possible to think of them as ‘Malthouse premieres’. Where international festivals are involved, however, and/or independent companies with fully-developed house-styles then the Malthouse appears to be operating more as a presenter.

3. The Sydney Theatre Company has required minor revisions in some years.
4. The Melbourne Theatre Company has required minor revisions in some years.
5. In respect of the ‘All Companies’ aggregate chart, 2012 stands out as a better year than originally portrayed (25% vs. 15%) but the chart in essence remains the same. **The argument in the Platform Paper concerning “a sector that stages a modest (and waning) number of Australian drama premieres” (p34) stands, with 2012 as a year against trend.**
6. **In respect of the argument in the Platform Paper of “a sector that stages ... Australian drama premieres... mainly in its smaller theatres” (p34) the revision exercise provided further evidence this is true, extending my analysis of the Sydney Theatre Company’s repertoire across other companies.**
7. The revision exercise also revealed some unequal collaborative ventures. It is possible to claim some of these as new models of authorship. But some are obviously presentation arrangements badged as co-productions. **This provides further evidence that “a major proportion of [the All Companies’] Australian drama segment is made up of non-premieres” (p32).**