



## PUBLISHING FELLOWSHIP REPORT

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study tour allowed me the time and resources to reflect on my own practice as well as that of others in working in similar fields and for this I am immensely grateful. I hope that the take-away messages I am sharing in this report are of interest to my colleagues here in Australia and that they can act as a catalyst for further discussion and even change.

## Multi-platform producers need multi-platform venues

Whilst multi-platform publishers benefit from working in large scale contexts such as cultural festivals and events, there is also merit in small, local contexts. Small-scale creative centres provide an excellent, low-cost option for emerging producers and multi-platform publishers looking to stage new, hybrid and boundary-pushing works and for audiences looking for local, live entertainment.

## The Australian Literary Arts Events Directory

This call for an online calendar incorporating national literary events across Australia would be of tremendous use to overseas visitors, inbound tourists as well as locals. It could be set up by a national arts funding body such as the Australia Council for the Arts with contributions from state-based arts funding bodies and state-based tourism departments and local councils

## Regrants and the Small Press Network

Under this proposal, a pool of funds from a range of organisations such as the Australia Council for the Arts, State-based arts funding bodies, The Copyright Agency Cultural Funds as well as book industry partners such as Thorpe Bowker, Ingram Content Group would be made available for the Small Press Network to administer. SPN members would submit proposals for small grants to support them as publishers with a focus on knowledge-sharing.

## OVERVIEW

The report outlines the ways in which the month-long fellowship enabled me to meet and exchange ideas with others working in the field of multi-platform publishing and to develop and practice my networking skills. As a result of my fellowship experience I offer three recommendations for enhancing the production and promotion of multi-platform publishing in Australia. In my view, Australian multi-platform publishers will benefit from: more multi-purpose venues, an Australian Literary Arts Events Directory and a targeted ‘regrants’ funding program. An important aim of the fellowship was to seek opportunities for showcasing the work of Australian authors in New York and to develop my own skills as a publisher. I outline the development of my networking skills as well as my research into the viability of staging performances of our live show, *Little Fictions* in Queens and of finding screen space in New York short film festivals for finalist films in the Microflix Film Awards.

# SCOPE OF THE PUBLISHING FELLOWSHIP RESEARCH

The research involved in this fellowship ranged from structured face-to-face, phone and email interviews through to after-show chats and meetups in bars and cafes. I spoke with publishers, producers and creatives at their workplaces, in coffee shops and from their homes. In the case of some of the literary organisations I sought out, the workplace was their home or local café. Many of the live shows, events, festivals and exhibitions I attended were much like Spineless Wonders - big on ideas but small in scale. As in Australia, it was organisations working at this level of the literary ecosystem which were finding new voices and experimenting with innovative ways of showcasing them. I was interested in how these organisations, and the people involved with them, coped financially, what they were doing to find and keep audiences and what strategies they had for maintaining the viability of their venture and the resilience of their team. To this end, my report outlines what I have observed and learnt from interviews with three multi-platform entities - a literary journal, a performance poet and a venue operator - whose work focusses on showcasing writers from the New York City borough of Queens. The report also presents a case study of how the producers of the unique, immersive live show, *Say Something Bunny*, have used social media to keep a show with a limit of only fifteen audience members per performance running for over two years. And on the subject of publicity and promotion, I look at the crucial role which volunteer-run literary gig guides such as *Poets & Writers* as well as generic commercial online ticket sellers such as Eventbrite play in enabling locals and visitors to tap into the New York literary arts scene. For a bigger-picture perspective, the report discusses *Werk It*, the major conference for the burgeoning number of women producing podcasts and CLMP, the peak body representing small press and literary journals.

# MY DEVELOPMENT AS A PUBLISHER/PRODUCER

A chief objective of my time in New York was to develop and to practice skills related to my role as a multi-platform publisher. This section outlines the many ways in which I was able to do this.

## Developing Networking Skills

My efforts to seek out and make contact with publishers and the organisations to which they belong, with curators and producers of live events and with film festival organisers began before I left Australia and continued throughout my time in New York. I knew from experience that social and professional networks are, by nature, organic. But it was not until I was placed in a situation which was both new and time-limited that I came to appreciate just how indirect, circuitous and serendipitous networks can be to develop. I learnt to be patient, persist and positive.

I had thought that early planning would help, so my networking began well before I left for New York. As part of the preparation for my fellowship submission I made contact via email with a range of publishers, producers and curators - letting them know the reason for my visit to New York and putting feelers out for who might be willing to talk with me. Once I had been notified about the success of my application, I reconnected with those who had responded, letting them know I would be in town through November. I started to draw up a loose schedule of who I would be meeting up with, to think about which areas of interest I had yet to cover and who else I might need to contact.

But people's plans can change. The director of a small publishing house who like me also produced a podcast was in the midst of a book tour promoting her own recently-released book and would be too busy to meet. The director of a small film festival who had been happy to meet with me to share her experiences of moving from a career in screen acting to short filmmaker and finally to the role of film festival organiser was called at short notice to go to Europe to follow up an offer to screen their films overseas. An emerging publisher known for

his innovative use of media technology and social media to showcase his authors took up a position in a larger company which so pre-occupied him that he didn't get around to answering my emails until I had left and was back in Sydney. He lived nearby to where I was staying in Brooklyn, it turns out and was keen to meet up. We now correspond via email. These were all completely understandable circumstances.

A disappointing roadblock might lead to an unexpected and fruitful sidetrack. The person who was too busy to chat on the phone or even answer an email during one part of the month turned out to be much freer to meet in person and was able to generous with both their time and their focus and thoughts at the end of the month. A fob-off could be a sign that I had just not reached the most appropriate spokesperson in an organisation or that the person I contacted did not, for whatever reason, feel they had the experience or confidence to speak on behalf of their organisation. This latter situation was particularly disappointing when I had deliberately reached out to a female person of colour who had worked in a range of contexts in the publishing landscape to discuss the challenges of diversity and inclusivity only to find that she referred me to a white, male in a higher position than hers. This forced me to reflect on how my approach had been perceived by the woman I contacted. Did she not want to speak with me because my approach came across as tokenistic? Or was it that she felt the organisation was not achieving as well as she would have liked in terms of diversity but she didn't want to come across as disloyal. I will never know, but the experience increased my awareness of the pitfalls of networking done under time pressure and about the importance of taking time to establish rapport and to be sensitive to issues around values, social contexts and cultural background.

I also spent my time in New York observing how others networked. The Werk It conference for women in podcasting, in particular, provided a number of inspiring ideas for putting people in touch. In the lead-up to the conference, the organisers were active on Facebook, inviting those who had registered for the annual conference to a closed online group. During the festival, this was a great way to make contact with others as I outline in the next section. The Facebook group has over 700 members and it continues to be a place for me, as an Australian podcast producer, to find and take part in active discussion on a range of podcasting issues, to discover useful resources and opportunities for women involved in producing podcasts internationally. At the conference itself, a number of pinboards were set up in the main foyer of the conference centre. Conference-goers were encouraged to pin up



post-it-notes naming their favourite podcasts under categories such as documentary, comedy, social commentary, feminism, diverse voices and so on. Producers were actively encouraged to leave brochures and business cards around in the lunch and social areas and many conversations were struck up with podcasters who were handing out promotional material. These were all a great way to find out podcasts apart from those which were featured on the main program.

The previous weekend I took part in an impromptu, innovative networking strategy at the Necessary Films Showcase, an event aimed at featuring emerging film and videomakers. The



start of the afternoon's screenings was postponed by thirty minutes because the producer of the film which was due to be screened first rang in to say he would be late. The organisers turned this delay into a very useful networking opportunity by encouraging those of us in the audience to turn to our neighbours next to us, in front and behind us and ask why they at the showcase. Chatting with the person next to you in these situations is not always easy. People are often

preoccupied with those they have come to the event with or with their mobile phone! The secret to the success of getting strangers to chat was in the work that the event's co-host, Julian Kingston did in moving around the room, introducing himself to each of our impromptu groupings and encouraging us to do the same. Through this very simple activity I was able to chat with many of the local film producers and actors present as well others who were more loosely related to filmmaking. I learnt a good deal about the making of the films which were about to be screened and about the role that the Necessary Films Studio played in their production and promotion. I also made contact with a podcaster looking for short fiction and in

search of narrators. We exchanged business cards and I have been in contact with him since in regards to both.

## Looking For Multi-platform Storytelling in New York

In my research before leaving Australia, it was difficult to find individuals or organisations involved in the kind of cross-disciplinary and multi-platform storytelling which Spineless Wonders specialises in. This is not to say that diverse means of telling stories weren't out there. It is just that I struggled to find others who were doing so on as many platforms as Spineless Wonders and its multidisciplinary literary arts collective, #storybombing.

New York Selected Shorts, for instance, produces live shows in which actors read short stories. These shows are recorded and repackaged as podcasts or relayed across the public radio network. New York Selected Shorts works closely with American publishers who provide them with content, but they are not themselves involved in the publishing industry. Conversely, a number of publishing houses in New York and elsewhere are producing podcasts, but these are largely to spotlight their authors and their new releases.

As Forbes journalist, Andrew Rowe says, '[Publisher-created podcasts] are a format-bending move that highlights the potential podcasts hold for broadening a print book's audience.' And there are some exciting examples of where podcasts have been turned into books and where podcasts such as Grammar Girls' Quick and Dirty Tips run by MacMillan can lead to huge sales of books mentioned on the show. Both audiobooks and podcasts are enjoying increased popularity. For instance, audiobooks, according to Rowe, 'was the publishing industry's single fastest growing format, with more than \$2.1 billion in revenue earned in 2016'. As Rowe noted, 'Podcast listeners and audiobook listeners have an obvious overlap in their preference for audio narratives, which means one audience can feed the other and vice versa.'

Reference: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamrowe1/2018/04/27/how-the-publishing-industry-is-learning-to-love-the-podcast/#7499414c7536>

## Looking for Literary Fiction Podcasts

Given this growing trend for publishers to reach out to audiences using audio and podcast platforms, I had expected to discover a plethora of publisher-led literary podcasts in the United States. For me, the standard had long been set by The New Yorker Fiction Podcast presented by Deborah Treisman. I wanted to know what else was happening in that vein. I was not interested in podcasts which simply functioned as part of the publishing company's marketing department and whose format did not venture beyond interviews with the most recently published authors. Nor was I interested in the book-related podcasts often produced by bookstores, online bookworms and reviewers which offered news and reviews of latest releases. These are often excellent chat shows for books or online bookclubs, but they do not provide a comprehensive fiction-listening experience beyond a short extract, or taster, from a longer work read by the interview subject.

The two podcasts produced by Spineless Wonders (Little Fictions On Air and Coffee Pod|cast) are motivated by the desire to showcase and explore the work of our authors, to collaborate with artists from different disciplines, such as actors and sound designers, and to find new audiences who wish to engage with short Australian literature via audio platforms. I wanted to meet with producers and presenters of similar literary fiction podcasts in order to find out about such things as their funding models, sponsorship arrangements, about remuneration for the production team and how they dealt with author royalties.

Finding fiction podcast producers proved to be more difficult than I imagined. But I did try to arrange a meeting with Brooklyn-based writer and producer, Jaime Green who produced 53 episodes of the literary podcast *Catapult* which featured new writing read aloud by authors and sourced from literary magazines and journals for emerging writers.

"The Catapult makes reading accessible to those who can't make it to New York bookstores several times a week." *Flavorwire*, The 20 Best Cultural Podcasts.

*Catapult* was one of the most exciting literary podcast I had been able to find and follow while in Australia. But unfortunately by the time I reached New York it was having an 'indefinite hiatus'. Jaime was not available to meet face-to-face during my stay but she did very

generously offer to put me in touch with others in her network. Once in New York, my focus turned to attempting to meet up with women literary podcasters at WERK IT!, a three-day women in podcasting conference scheduled for the second week of my stay. I made use of the conference's closed Facebook group to put out a call for those involved in literary arts podcasts to make contact and while at the conference, another podcast producer/presenter, Samantha Rehr (Feminist Popcorn Podcast) and I jointly convened a meet-up. From the eight podcasters who responded, one worked for a major publishing company and produced an author interview podcast, two focused on book chats and reviews, three were focused on film reviews, one on theatre production and one on documentary films. I was not able to find anyone at the conference who was involved in producing literary fiction podcasts. But I did make contact with KC Trommer, a writer who was looking to produce a podcast based on a public transport poetry-reading project called *Queensbound* (see interview below).

# EXPLORE SHOWCASING OPPORTUNITIES

## Introduction

I outline below my research into the viability of staging performances of our live show, Little Fictions in Queens and for finding screening opportunities in New York short film festivals for finalists in the Microflix Film Awards which Spineless Wonders auspices.



## Little Fictions @ QED

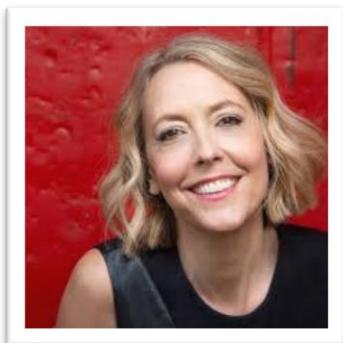
I discovered the Queens-based venue, QED, during my original research for the publishing fellowship proposal. An early challenge was to decide where to base myself - Manhattan or Brooklyn - in order to have the most convenient access to late night venues. I scoured travel books which had maps showing the location of well-known live entertainment venues. I then cross-checked these listing with online gig guides to make sure the venues were a) still operating, and that b) they had events scheduled during November which might be of interest. Located in Astoria, Queens, Q.E.D. not only boasted a full program of events running seven days a week in November, they were the only venue accepting online pitches from new producers (see Addendum 2). I eagerly arranged to meet with the owner and creative director, Kambri Crews.

## About Q.E.D.

Q.E.D. was created by Queens resident Kambri Crews. A long-time producer and promoter of stand-up comedy, Kambri was the Director of Marketing and PR for the comedy club Comix, during which time she also owned and operated the 50-seat venue Ochi's

Lounge. She followed that by becoming the comedy booker for the 92Y Tribeca. Kambri is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling memoir *Burn Down The Ground* (Random House) and a public speaker and storyteller who presents and performs around the USA. By creating Q.E.D., Kambri says she 'hopes to bring the community together to share in learning and laughter'.

Q.E.D. is the only independent, woman-owned and operated venue for the arts in Astoria, Queens in NYC. It's a labor of love, really. As a small community space, we're very proud to pay artists, producers, teachers and creatives for their work and provide a free space for performers of all types at our open mics. At Q.E.D. you'll find stand-up comedy shows with performers ranging from the beginner to the very famous. Live shows also include sketch, improv, poetry, storytelling, readings, solo shows and more performed by talent ranging from the novice to the veteran. We also have arts and crafts workshops, writing classes, board game meet ups, storytelling, movie screenings, watch parties and more. Our affordable classes and shows are as diverse as Queens itself. With 100 or more events each month, there's something for everyone. *From Q.E.D. website*



### Interview with Kambri Crew, Q.E.D, Astoria

During my interview with Kambri she told me three pieces of information about her childhood which I could see were to become significant themes in her adult life. The fact that Kambri was brought up deaf parents in a tin shed in the isolated hills of Montgomery, Texas has led to her life-long awareness of accessibility issues faced by people living with disabilities and the impact of poverty on people's

lives. The third thing she told me about her early years was that she regularly staged a make-shift puppet show at her local bus-stop to entertain her school friends after school. So her role of creative producer and her desire to provide local entertainment have been there from the get-go, culminating in the venue she now runs which she describes as 'after-school for adults'.

Now in its fifth year, Q.E.D. is small but very versatile performance space with bar, bookshop and recording studio.

### Funding Model and Loyalty System

Q.E.D. is run on a commercial basis, with all performers, producers, artists and presenters sharing in proceeds of door and creative workshop ticket sales. As owner and producer of Q.E.D., Kambri pays herself a small stipend. The property was purchased via a bank loan

which is serviced by Kambri partly from private functions event hire fees and partly from her own savings. The venue has hosted small film shoots, baby and bridal showers, birthday parties for all ages, memorials and wedding receptions.

All live shows in New York compete with at-home entertainment options such as movie streaming and on-demand TV for audiences. And for venues offering shows by new, emerging and therefore relatively unknown performers and artists, the task of luring people out of doors and away from well-publicised entertainment with well-known actors is all the more difficult. To help ensure regular attendance and support for the diverse program at Q.E.D., Kambri has devised a VIP members system which offers discounted tickets, a free drink and reserved seating for those who subscribe to a season of shows. This is a relatively low-cost way to encourage locals not only to come along regularly but also to pay in advance for a series of shows. This system has proved to be quite effective, according to Kambri, who says that the VIPs enjoy the welcoming and inclusive vibe created for them at the venue. From Q.E.D.'s point of view, even a small number of pre-paid tickets can alleviate some of the financial risk associated with new and untried shows and allows Q.E.D. to offer opportunities to producers with shows which might otherwise not have been staged.

## **Local and Diverse**

After working as a New York-based marketer and promoter, Kambri decided to move to Astoria to establish a live performance venue which would both serve and reflect the local community. 'Manhattan, even now Brooklyn, have it all', Kambri says. She wanted to utilise her NYC experience and networks to bring a range of acts to Astoria and she is also passionate about discovering and nurturing local talent.

Kambri also works hard to ensure diversity at all levels of Q.E.D. She says her extensive experience in the stand-up comedy world, both as a performer and promoter, has made her acutely aware of the need to provide gender balance on stage. She says that in the months prior to programming a series of shows she will be alert to producers who are suggesting a line-up of 'straight, white dudes'. She is also conscious of including people of colour at all levels of the Q.E.D. operation and she actively seeks out producers and performers from diverse backgrounds.



## Q.E.D – a model for commercially-run or cost-recovery creative centres



Q.E.D. is a small venue in the New York borough of Queens which punches above its weight. The main area at street level is a 1,200 sq. foot space consisting of a shopfront set up as a micro-café with seating for around ten patrons, leading to a small bar against the left hand wall and floor-to-ceiling set of bookshelves on the right-hand side displaying books for sale. At the end of this right-hand side wall is a former cleaner's closet which has been cleverly converted into a control room with a viewing window cut into one side for easy operation of the stage, lighting, projection and sound systems. The remainder of the space consists of a small stage area along the back wall and a large area used variously for audience seating (approx. 80), cabaret-style table settings and for dance classes and art and craft workshops. Downstairs was until recently a large basement used for storing tables and chairs not in use but a section of this has now been converted to a compact recording studio.



Q.E.D. offers the ability to affordably record podcasts or voiceover work from their studio. Located in the building's basement, the studio is equipped to record four people at a time, with the option to patch in sound from a laptop, iPhone, iPad, etc. For those not tech-savvy, Q.E.D. offers the option to have a dedicated technician on hand during recording who will mix and then send a completed track following the recording session.



Due to the versatility of its set-up, the convenience of its location (in the centre of town and close by to transport) and the unique nature of its offerings, the Q.E.D. space is constantly in use. Its small size means that it remains cost-effective to trial new and experimental performances as well as risky performance time-slots. For instance, during November, with night-time temperatures below zero and a snow-storm which lasted for two days, the venue hosted a series of weeknight shows which began at 11pm!

Towards the end of the interview, we discussed the idea of staging our literary event, Little Fictions at Q.E.D. We discovered that there was a very good fit between our stories, the format of our Little Fictions' show and Q.E.D.'s mission. Kambri said that she had found that the key factor in their success of any show was advance promotion but that this was particularly so with overseas productions which had been offered at the venue. We talked about the range of low-cost promotional strategies which we both used to promote our shows - via social media, street press gig guides and public radio interviews. Discussion continues regarding plans to stage a show later in 2019, produced in collaboration with Australian-born, Brooklyn-based, former Little Fictions' regular, Mark Dessaix.

### **Take-away # 1. Multi-platform producers need multi-purpose venues**

Whilst multi-platform publishers benefit from working in large scale contexts such as cultural festivals and events, there is also merit in small, flexible, local contexts. The Q.E.D. venue discussed above serves as a useful model for local councils looking to create a permanent creative space for artists, writers and performers to use and which doubles as a small, low-cost entertainment venue. The Q.E.D. model is particularly relevant for areas of high residential development where councils are looking to create vibrant spaces for community engagement. Like Q.E.D., these premises could be run on a commercial or cost-recovery basis and operated by a creative and performing arts company. The Joynton Avenue Creative Centre in Green Square, Sydney operates in a similar way, but on a slightly larger scale to what I am suggesting, with the not-for-profit creative company, 107 Projects managing the venue for the City of Sydney. As with the Q.E.D. venue in Astoria, smaller scale creative centres provide an excellent, low-cost option for emerging producers and multi-platform publishers looking to stage new, hybrid

and boundary-pushing works and for audiences looking for local, diverse, live entertainment.

## Short Film Festivals

I found New York to be awash with short film festivals ranging from established ones based in New York City itself such as the New York Short Film Festival, the New York Shorts International Film Festival and the Manhattan Short Film Festival through to the Brooklyn-based Splice, the Lower East Side Film Festival and the Queens World Film Festival. There are short film festivals on rooftops, in warehouses and parks. And there are festivals focused on specific geographical areas such as Brooklyn and Queens as well as targeted demographics such as queer, people of colour and festivals for emerging filmmakers. I was fortunate to be in town for two festivals - the New York Short Film Festival which screened in



the Greenwich Village and Imagine, an International Women's Film Festival with a strong short film focus held in Williamsburg. I also attended a showcase session at the Necessary Film Studio based in Long Island City, as discussed above.

My interest in short film festivals was two-fold. Spineless Wonders was at that time in the process of setting up Microflix, a short film award and festival based on the adaptation of the microliterature it curated and published. I was keen to find out if there were any similar literary-based film festivals in operation in New York. I was also interested in establishing contact with festival directors with a view to exploring opportunities for us to

submit finalist films from our Microflix Festival for screening in New York.

One of the early interactions I had in my first week in New York was with actor and filmmaker, Katie Kopatjic and her partner and film producer, Monica Arias from Tres Brujas Productions, a female-led LGBTQ+ production company in New York City and Puerto Rico. We met at Cornelia St Café where Katie was reading from her work in progress at Monologue Madness. I introduced myself to them and before long I learnt that Katie's debut short film, 'The Actor' was to screen at the New York Short Film Festival. I attended the screening the following week and was introduced by them to Cailin Kress, festival co-director. Cailin and I are

currently in email conversation about the possible submission of Microflix films to the New York Short Film Festival.

Later in the month, I was heartened to find one Australian short film programmed in the Imagine Women's Festival and I have initiated contact with the festival organisers regarding the 2019 festival submissions.

# INVESTIGATING MULTI-PLATFORM PUBLISHING IN NEW YORK

During my time in New York, I was able to observe, meet with and learn from a range of practitioners working in the field of multi-platform storytelling. This section profiles some of the literary arts organisations I encountered and the producers and creatives who work in them in. It examines aspects such as their business models and the strategies they use to engage audiences, ensure diversity and maintain personal and team resilience.

## About Newtown Literary Alliance

Named after the working class district of Newtown, this is a nonprofit organisation supporting writers and writing in Queens, New York. Its flagship project is the publication of a semiannual literary journal, *Newtown Literary* which features new work by writers living in or originally from Queens, the largest borough in New York City. Throughout the year, Newtown Literary holds readings, workshops, and other literary events in and around Queens. They regularly run free writing classes for adults, teens, and kids around the borough as well as a biennial writing contest for kids and teens. The Newtown Literary organisation maintains an extensive website with a regular blog. It is active on social media, produces a regular electronic newsletter and produces an occasional podcast showcasing readings and interviews with local authors.

*Newtown Literary* was founded in 2012 by a small group of Queens writers who wanted to create a written record of the literary work that was being done in the borough. Since then, the staff has grown to two dozen people, local volunteers who have committed themselves to creating a journal that showcases excellent poetry and prose from a diverse group of writers either born or living in Queens, New York. [From NLO website]



### Interview with Tim Fredrick, Long Island City

My first face-to-face encounter with Tim was a very fleeting one at a *Newtown Literary* fundraising literary trivia night held at the Raven's Head Public House in Astoria, Queens. I had been e-introduced to him by one of *Newtown Literary's* associate editor and Center For Fiction librarian, Alison Escoto. Such is the roundabout way of research and networking, that I had actually only stumbled upon the Queens-based Newtown Literary Org when I was combing through the biographical notes on the staff of The Center For Fiction, a New York-based literary hub I had followed online for the past decade and which was high on my list of organisations I wanted to visit. As it turned out, the Center For Fiction had outgrown its Manhattan venue and was closed for the remainder of the year while they relocated to Brooklyn. Disappointingly, I was not able to meet up with any of the centre staff during my stay. But luckily, Alison, the librarian at The Center For Fiction, listed *Newtown Literary* in her bio which she described as 'a publication dedicated to featuring writers from her beloved Queens'. The bio also told me that she hailed originally from New Orleans, wrote poetry and had been a bookseller and publisher before training as a librarian. I was keen to make contact with Alison. Her career trajectory suggested she would have an informed perspective on traditional as well as non-traditional publishing and her experience as a poet, her ethnic background and her involvement in a literary organisation dedicated to unearthing and nurturing local authors were all of great interest to me. In the event, Tim Hendrick was far too busy keeping the trivia night on track to have more than a cursory chat with me and a promise to meet up. So I was delighted to find myself spending the evening in Alison Escoto's trivia team along with her photographer sister and a friend who worked by day in a large publishing house and who ran a fan-fiction fantasy blog on the side.

Tim Fredrick is very typical of the people I have met here in Australia and in New York involved in small literary arts organisations. As well as working tirelessly to discover, nurture and showcase writers in the local area of Queens, he holds down a full time job as Co-Director of Education at Youth Communication, an innovative literacy centre for supporting young people. Tim is also an emerging author and in fact, the *Newtown Literary Alliance* grew out of a network of authors he used to workshop with and who kept each other motivated and informed about writing competitions and publication opportunities. Also typical of literary arts producers, Tim struggles to find time to devote to his own writing projects due to the demands of running *Newtown Literary Alliance*. When I met with Tim for this interview, it was the American Thanksgiving holiday period. He was taking a break from a day of writing grant

acquittals for *Newtown Literary Alliance* and his plan was to stay on at his favourite café after our chat and to continue drinking coffee and working on his much-neglected work-in-progress.

Despite being both unpaid and volunteer, Tim's role at *Newtown Literary Alliance* has all the hallmarks of a full-time, professional executive directorship. He oversees around thirty volunteers in editorial, educational, production, design and social media roles and is a member of the Board of Directors. He procures funding, manages and acquits grants and endowments and he oversees a program of writing workshops presented in collaboration with the Queens local library network. He develops partnerships and procures sponsorships from a range of organisations including local bookshops, live venues, local museums to fund Newtown Literary activities including literary prizes, live readings, literary events such as Meet The Author, the Queens Writes Weekend and its journal publication.

## Funding Model

In terms of its funding model, Newtown Literary Alliance is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organisation. The production of its quarterly publication, *The Newtown Literary Journal* was initially its main activity. Volunteer judges and editors cull submissions for the publication and contributors received complimentary copies of the journal in lieu of payment or royalty. Initially, the publication was financed mainly through fund-raising events such as the literary trivia nights and with the inkind support of local businesses such as bookshops and hospitality venues.

A change came about when the steering committee began seeking grants from the local community organisations such as the historical society and local museum as well as the local city council and council for the arts. The successful procurement of grants then led to changes in the activities and direction of the organisation. For instance, grants from the city council obliged *Newtown Literary Alliance* to expand its program by offering a series of writing workshops and author talks throughout the local public library network. This outreach-style program was a good fit with the organisation's mission to unearth and nurture local writers. Libraries, especially those branches in more remote suburbs with less affluent and high immigrant populations offered regular funding even when some of the activities were poorly attended. The steering committee also directed its energies into forming partnerships with local businesses and literary-based organisations in order to find new avenues for showcasing the work of emerging authors through such activities as live events and podcasts.

Soon the organisation was spending as much time engaged in outreach and showcasing activities as it was in its original core business of publishing a journal for local emerging authors. So too, the procuring and acquitting of grants became an all-consuming pre-occupation for those running the organisation. The steering committee reached the conclusion that the effort required to run fundraising events was not really warranted given the

organisation's success at grant and sponsorship procurement. A watershed moment was reached around the time of the trivia night fundraiser which I attended in November, 2018.

## Flat Management and the Role of Leadership

The change in focus was not a top-down one it seemed, but one which was understood across the small organisation. This was clear from one of the first conversations I had when I arrived at the fundraiser. One of the front-of-house staff, also a long-time editor on the journal, told me candidly that this trivia night fundraiser would likely be their last, or at least the last one for the foreseeable, citing with obvious pride, the organisation's track record of winning grants and its concomitant expanded program. When I eventually met with Tim and he outlined the history of this recent and significant set of changes in the organisation's direction, I was reminded of the casual conversation with the staffer earlier in the month. The more I learnt about *Newtown Literary Alliance*, the more it seemed to me that this was a very well-run organisation; one with a flat model of management and led by a person who placed a high value on democratic decision-making. The communication channels were open, people at different levels of responsibility and involvement were up-to-date with the organisation's mission and activities. I know from experience of working in large and medium-sized organisations that qualities such as these are only achieved through time, effort and commitment on the part of all involved.

I asked Tim about his role as director of *Newtown Literary*, and, looking back, how well prepared he had been to take on this role given that it grew out of a much more informal writing group. Tim said that he was not only able to draw on his experience in full-time, paid professional positions when it came to establishing and developing the organisation but that he was also able to attract a strong team of volunteers to take on editorial, production and event management who, like him, held down paid jobs and were happy to be part of a literary not-for-profit.

I was interested also in how he personally kept pace with the changing managerial role as the organisation's brief, and capacity, had expanded over time. And I wondered how he managed issues (both for the team and for himself) of workload, burnout and resilience in a small organisation which ran on passion and volunteer labour. Whilst I run a for-profit company, these were issues I also confronted. As with *Newtown Literary*, people are drawn to work with Spineless Wonders because of what it stands for in the literary landscape; as a way of being part of something unique and ground-breaking. The Spineless Wonders team can often expand beyond the regular paid consultants, authors and artists to include interns and volunteers, partners and collaborators. And this is even more so the case now that Spineless Wonders increasingly hosts a range of ad hoc, innovative and intense, multi-disciplinary collaborations via #storybombing. I was keen to hear Tim's thoughts on the kind of managerial issues I had long been attempting to address and what he might have already put

in place, in terms of professional development, career pathways and succession planning in the context of a small, non-traditional organisation.

It was a big topic but Tim's description of the way his organisation was approaching a new major 2019 project addressed many of these questions. As part of their expanding program, the *Newtown Literary Alliance* steering committee planned to host a writers' conference later this year. Preliminary discussions indicated that the committee wanted to avoid replicating literary events which focused on (a relatively small set of) recently published authors who were being promoted by the larger publishing companies. Tim said that literary festivals such as these were great but that they were largely aimed at readers and that the mission of *Newtown Literary Alliance* was to develop and nurture new writers as well as showcasing established local writers from Queens.

Tim wanted to ensure that the committee had time to carefully consider the nature of this major project which would represent a huge investment of their limited resources. He suggested they apply for two different grants, both from the Committee of Literary Magazines and Presses (or CLMP). The first would be a submission for a relatively small amount from CLMP's Organizational Capacity program which is for grants between \$500 to \$1500. This grant would enable them to run a day of brainstorming activities for the steering committee to assist them in the process of planning the writers' conference. The consensus achieved by this process would enable them to develop a comprehensive project plan which would form the basis of the more substantial grant application to CLMP as well as the submissions to partners and other stakeholder to help fund the actual event. The two-stage plan showed initiative and leadership on Tim's part and demonstrated his commitment to inclusive decision-making. It also clearly demonstrated to me the role that modest, timely and flexible grants can play for the management of small literary organisations.



# INTERACTIVE INSTALLATIONS AND PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

I had difficulty finding literary-based interactive installations similar to those produced by



Spineless Wonders' [#storybombing](#).

This may be because more outdoor installations are in place during warmer months as I did find references to installations in parklands along the waterfront in Brooklyn. I was able to visit public art installations which were text-based, notably the 'Something to Say: Brooklyn Hi-Art! Machine' pictured

here. I also regularly saw poem posters in subway carriages, some of which had been on display since the 1990s. I had missed by a few days the launch of QUEENSBOUND, a series of live readings in railway carriages to and from Queens but I was lucky enough to meet with the project's producer, KC Trommer.



**K.C Trommer, writer, artist, editor and creative director of Queensbound**

I met with KC Trommer on two occasions, initially at the WERK IT Women in Podcasting conference and again over lunch in Manhattan not far from NYC University where she works. I was interested to learn about the funding of this interactive project and what the process was for gaining access to the railway carriages for the performances which were video-recorded.

KC explained that funding for the QUEENSBOUND project came via a New Work grant from the Queens Council on the Arts. Those funds were used to for the design and build of the interactive website and for royalty and performance fees. To curate the content of the QUEENSBOUND project, she approached some of the borough's leading writers to collect and record poems and stories they'd written about their neighborhoods. In terms of the interactive map, the New York City subway map is QUEENSBOUND's organizing principle. KC used the grant to commission designer Kyle Richard to modify the Queens section of the map for the project website. Visitors to [the site](#) can open up the map and click on select subway stations to hear the embedded audio.

In terms of access to the train carriages, she said that New York had a strong history of literary performance on its transit system and that therefore gaining permission to stage the readings was unproblematic. As for the video-recording of the event, permission slips were distributed to passengers prior to each performance and those not wanting to be filmed were simply asked to move out of shot for the duration of the short readings.

For the launch of the project, staging a reading on a train seemed an obvious, if experimental, choice. I wondered what it would do to the poems, the poets, and the listeners to bring poetry into a subway's democratic, open space. It was fitting that the reading was held on the train the participants take every day, and that the poems be read through the neighborhoods in which the works were located.

We didn't use amplification or a megaphone, and to present a dozen readers without taxing the audience's attention, I asked the poets to stand in groups of four near the floor-to-ceiling poles located in the front, middle, and back of every car. Spacing readers this way allowed one poet to pass the baton to the next so we could fill the car with their words. I started off the reading and introduced the first poet, who stood in the middle of the train. After her poem, she introduced the next poet, and we kept that relay going all the way to our final stop. Each poet read only their poem featured on QUEENSBOUND, and most were one to three minutes. While the passengers couldn't hear every poem, they could hear the poets closest to them.

Reactions to the reading were similar to those at any other train performance—a mix of delight and disregard—along with surprise and cheers. When we boarded at Vernon-Jackson, a passenger was sitting in a classic New York subway pose, obscured by his newspaper. At one point, he swept a corner of the paper down to see what was happening, then straightened it out and snapped it back in place. Next he folded it in half, then half again—all to better listen.

*From Lit Hub*



# PROMOTING LITERARY-BASED ARTS IN NEW YORK

## Overview

In this section, I outline the variety of ways both large and small scale literary events in New York promote themselves to prospective audiences. As with most productions across the world, there is a great reliance on the internet to get the word out. Within this online environment there are a range of options used, often in concert. I look at the use of commercial online ticketing as well as a not-for-profit literary gig guide, suggest a national gig guide for the literary arts here in Australia and provide a case study of how the small interactive theatre production, *Say Something Bunny* utilized social media effectively.

## Online Ticketing Platforms

Most events I learnt about, even the ones with free admission used online ticketing platforms. Online sales can save producers the hassle of providing credit card facilities at the event. [For our *Little Fictions* shows, we offer cash and credit card sales. The credit card facility incurs a hefty monthly bank charge, but it is necessary in our increasingly cashless economy to provide this option. We always have on sale books featured in each Little Fictions show and whilst we have found, to our continued surprise, that the audiences for live literary-based shows are not great book purchasers, the convenience of the credit card facility does assist with what small number of sales we do have.] Online bookings for shows which are free to attend can give producers some indication of audience numbers to expect. But this is by no means something to rely on. Non-attendance, or 'no-shows' to free events are particularly subject to last-minute decisions to stay home in bad weather, compete with home-based entertainment or are more easily dismissed in the case of a double-booking in someone's social calendar. But using an online ticketing service can certainly give promoters the best chance of getting audiences to turn up. They send out reminder emails prior to the event and provide patrons with easy options for adding the event to their own online calendar. The temptation to not attend live events which are free is quite high these days. Even ticket-holders to low-cost events can be no-shows when the weather turns bad, or with the thought of a long commute, particularly one with a late night return journey when public transport is less reliable or when the convenience of online entertainment and home-delivered meals

beckons. Even I missed a show I was very motivated to see, at a venue I was interested in finding more about due to a snow storm (see Day Thirteen in the online diary below).

The use of online ticket sellers was widespread amongst large and small, for-profit and not-for-profit literary-based event producers in New York. Whilst these platforms do incur overhead costs, they provide event organisers with wide-reaching, relatively low-cost means of promoting their events. The uniform resource locator, or URL for an event's tickets can be added to the organiser's website and social media platforms. Companies such as Eventbrite not only upload events to the organisation's social media page, for instance on Facebook, but also enable their followers to purchase tickets directly. This means that even the very smallest of content producers can promote and sell tickets online without the need to host a website or onsite credit card facilities and with nothing more than a free Facebook account and access to an internet banking facility. This is good news for creatives looking to produce low budget, experimental storytelling events.

Another advantage of selling tickets using online retailers, particularly with a large international company such as Eventbrite, is that they have their own promotional and search engine optimization strategies. This can do much to extend the reach of small-scale, local events at no cost or effort on the part of the event organisers. For instance, when planning my trip to New York, I signed up for email alerts from a number of online ticket sellers. This meant that in advance of my arrival date, and during my stay, I received email alerts from these companies about upcoming events within the timeframe of my visit and related to the interest areas and geographical parameters which I nominated. It was through these means that I found out about many of the literary-based events I attended.

## **Poets & Writers: A National Literary Gig Guide**

I discovered a number of literary-based events and venues via the Poets & Writers' Literary Events Calendar. It is a simple event listing website but I hasten to say, it is not very appealing to look at and is somewhat clunky to use. The events listed are from all over the country and can be filtered by place, date and event type. During my visit in November, much of the list was taken up with author readings, book launches, panels, workshops and seminars - a reflection of the how these more traditional literary events still dominate, at least at that time of year. A survey of events in the summer season, for instance, would not doubt uncover more of the outdoor performances. Thanks to this comprehensive and up-to-date list,

I was able to browse and then book a number of shows before leaving Australia. By searching the archived listings from the months previous, I was also able to identify venues across the five boroughs of New York which regularly hosted events I would be interested in and through this was also able to discover producers and curators to contact as part of my research.

Founded in 1970, Poets & Writers is America's largest non-profit organisation serving creative writers. Its mission is to foster the professional development of poets and writers, to promote communication throughout the literary community, and to help create an environment in which literature can be appreciated by the widest possible public.

Each year, tens of thousands of poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers benefit from P&W's programs, which include the *Poets & Writers* magazine; financial support for readings and other literary events; and sponsorship of several notable writing prizes and awards.

Their website, [pw.org](http://pw.org), includes the [Directory of Poets & Writers](#), which provides contact information, publication credits, and biographical information for more than 9,300 authors and a [national literary events calendar](#).

## Take-away #2 The Australian Literary Arts Events Directory

The closest thing to the Poets & Writers directory that I know of in Australia is [sydney poetry](#), a social site run by one hard-working volunteer, Adrian Wiggins. It mainly functions as an online calendar available for any of its members to upload their upcoming events. Membership is free, the user interface is straightforward and the front end was simple but easy on the eye. If this sort of directory were to be expanded to incorporate the national, literary scene in Australia, it would be of tremendous use to overseas visitors, inbound tourists as well as locals. It could be set up by a national arts funding body such as the Australia Council for the Arts with contributions from state-based arts funding bodies and state-based tourism departments and local councils to its ongoing maintenance. An Australian literary arts online calendar could operate in a similar way to the [City of Sydney What's On](#). That is, it would be a



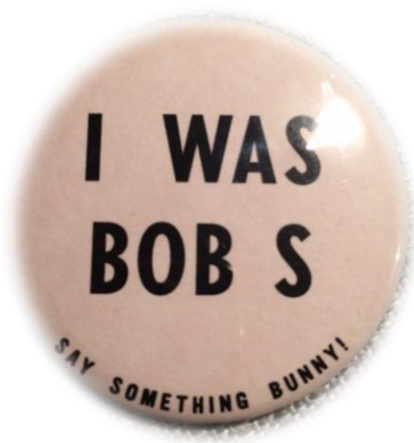
moderated site where any individual or group could upload information and images concerning an upcoming event. Listings would be added via a simple-to-use dashboard with an event template including description, images, event time, date and location, suggested keywords and hashtags for search engine optimization and links to the event organiser's website and online box office. Most states or capital cities already have a general gig guide. It would be optimal if the national literary gig guide could be set up to enable relevant information fields to be imported from these existing platforms to avoid tedious double entry and to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of event information.

### **“ Welcome to Sydney Poetry!**

This is a social site for Sydney poets to get together, knock heads, start groups for general and picayune interests alike, shout-out about opportunities, to thrash out issues and debrief bangles, to share events (festivals, readings, launches), photos and ideas, and generally stay informed.

The objective is to bring together some of the various Sydney poetry tribes, get some discussions going and provide a way for people both old and new to poetry in Sydney to find out what's going on.”

## **Case Study: Say Something Bunny**



*Say Something Bunny* was a very effective interactive theatre experience so it is not surprising that it used creative ways to involve its audience in getting the word out about its performances. As with many events I booked to see, there were a number of emails pre-performance, reminding me of the event date and providing directions to the venue. The latter turned out to be very relevant as the performance space was located in a building in an obscure side street under the defunct windswept and largely empty railway line known as

the High Line. There was no street-level signage for the venue apart from a small decal on the front door. Entry to the building was via intercom and the performance was located at the

top of two flights of a steep, narrow staircase. Detailed directions were a must. I would have been lost without a mobile phone.

Reminder emails about the performance by this point had been the standard ones generated by the online ticketing service the producers used. What was unusual and notable was the use the producers made of email list after the event. In general, the use of email contact lists collected by ticket vendors is controversial. Producers who flood the patrons who attended one of their events with unsolicited emails about other shows, discount offers and so on can risk fairly immediate audience disaffection and a wholesale reach for the Unsubscribe button. Goodbye any goodwill or customer loyalty which may have been a byproduct of an enjoyable live show experience. In the case of *Say Something Bunny*, we were invited in person at the event to sign up (physically using a pen and clipboard) to an email list, even though the producers would have access to our email information. As each performance accommodates a maximum audience of only fifteen, the front of house experience was a very personalised one. The person in the front of house role was also the stage hand and technical support during the performance. At the end of the performance, she was joined at the front desk by the show's creator and only performer, Alison S. M. Kobayashi. We are given a gift of a souvenir badge with the name of the character we had been assigned for the show.

#### **Say Something Bunny, Important Details:**

Doors open 30 minutes prior to the listed performance time.

Seating is on a first come, first serve basis.

Due to the nature of the performance, **latecomers will not be admitted.**

If you are unable to make the performance on this date, please let us know as soon as possible. The exact number of audience members is significant for the performance.

Arrive at 511 West 20th Street New York, NY.

Press "BUNNY" on the intercom, you'll be buzzed in.

A short flight of stairs will take you to the second floor.

If you need them, bring reading glasses.

The performance is 2 hours 10 minutes long, plus a 10 minute intermission.

Accessibility: There are 18 steps leading up to the performance space at 511 West 20th Street, and unfortunately no elevator. We apologize for this and are seeking options to provide better accessibility.

There was no hard or soft sell when it came to joining the email list. By the end of this amazing immersive experience, we felt an allegiance to the show and were motivated to keep



in touch. Despite the great publicity this long-running one-woman show had received, including glowing reviews in *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and *Time Out*, the show had the feel of being 'under the radar'. At only fifteen maximum, the audience numbers were low even for experimental theatre. And it was being staged in a new and little-known performance space far removed from Manhattan's edgier theatre arts' quarters such as East Village. It was



hard to find! It was also a unique, highly entertaining, informative, clever show. And all fifteen of us loved it. We hung around afterwards even though it had been a three-hour show and it was freezing cold on a late Sunday afternoon. Apart from specific

questions and comments about the performance and its origins, the main after-show conversation was about how we could let the world know about it. It seemed an imperative. Here we were, just fifteen of us, treated to an amazing performance - each given a unique identity within the show. It was a high energy, one-woman show and one which by its nature would not last. Creator Alison S. M. Kobayashi researched, wrote and performed the show and her experience of painstakingly reconstructing the lives of a group of people whose partial conversations had been captured on an antique recording device were unique to her. The experience could not be replicated and there would be a limit to how long the show would continue to run. So there was a real sense of urgency - we needed to tell more people about *Say Something Bunny*. We wandered off into the cold November night hoping there would always be fifteen people to fill the room and wondering how long Alison could sustain this physically and emotionally taxing show.

The show stayed with me. I kept the souvenir badge on display in my accommodation and not packed away with the other playbills in my research folder. And when I received an email asking me to help promote *Say Something Bunny* on my social media networks I was elated. The email itself was exemplary. Breezy, not begging and most crucially it provided well-phrased text and multiple tags which I could use in posts. The show's producers had clearly invested time and money on traditional promotion channels. Complementary tickets would have been sent to theatre reviewers. There would no doubt have been launch parties to

attract media attention. But the producers clearly also put great store in work-of-mouth recommendations - relying on those of us who had been part of this interactive performance to help find new audiences via personal endorsements on social media. This approach is obviously working - the show which is regularly sold out is scheduled to be running at least until the end of June, 2019.

# SUPPORTING SMALL PRESS INNOVATION

## About CLMP

Since 1967, CLMP has worked to bring literary publishers together to form a mutually supportive community that is often at the vanguard of progress. CLMP provides technical assistance, facilitates peer-to-peer learning and group action, and builds bridges to connect diverse communities of literary stakeholders. For 50 years, CLMP has been a sustaining lifeline—raising publishers’ organizational capacity, helping them connect their writers to more readers, and serving as a dependable, essential hub for nurturing community support. From

CLMP website



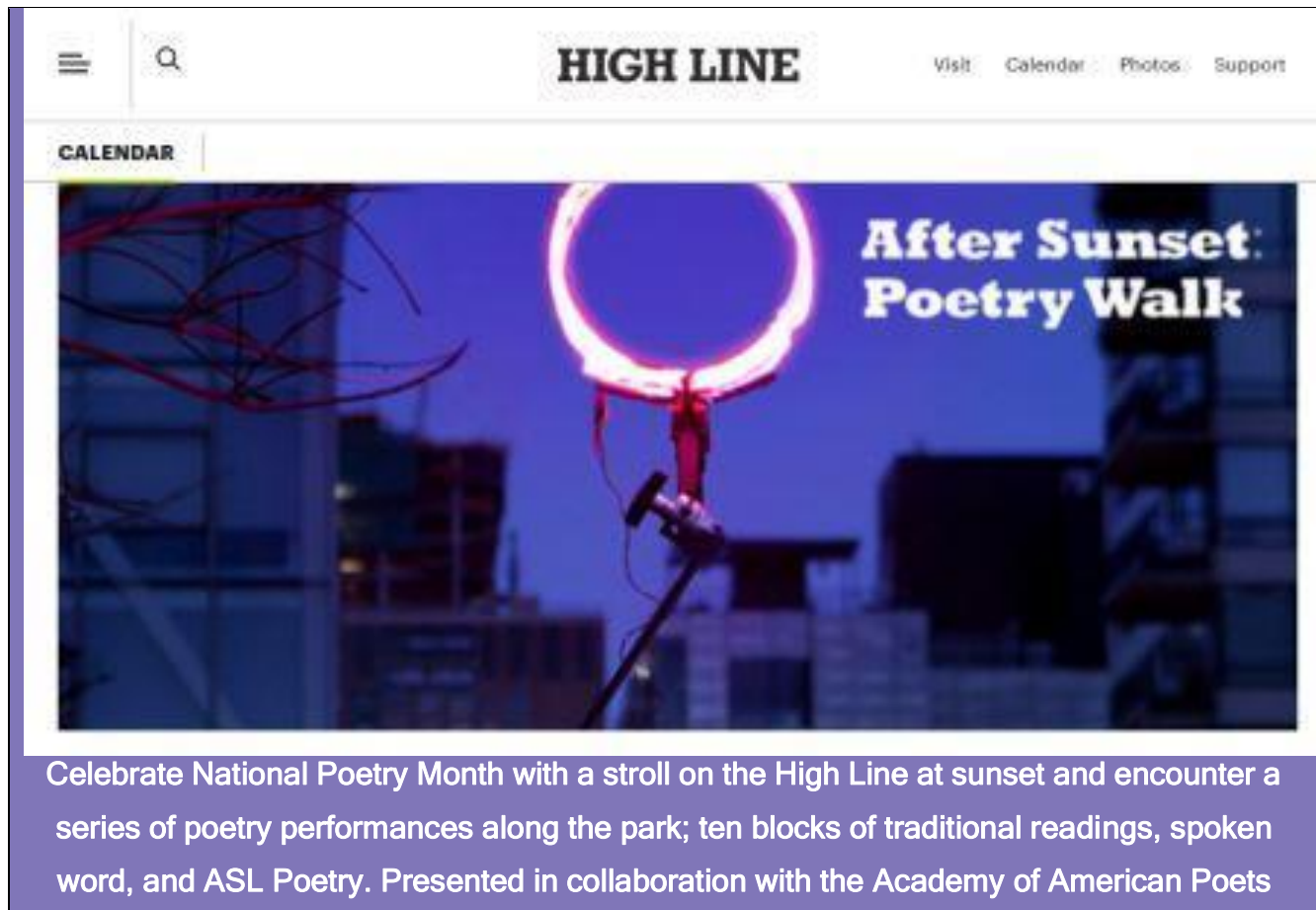
### Interview with Mary Gannon, Executive Director, Community of Literary Magazines and Presses

I was very fortunate to have an extended phone conversation with Mary Gannon on the eve of my departure. We decided this was the most time-efficient interview option, given her busy schedule and the time it would take me to commute for a face-to-face interview. I was delighted to be able to have this chat

with Mary as there had been at least three separate networking conversations in which her name and the organisations she was associated with had been mentioned.

Mary had only recently taken up the role of ED at CLMP and prior to that she had been Content Director with the Academy of American Poets where she oversaw the production of the organization’s award-winning website, Poets.org, and its popular Poem-a-Day series. Poem-a-Day is known the world over and is a popular go-to site for Australian poets, both emerging and established and for poetry lovers. (It is certainly among my Bookmarks.) Mary also served as Editorial Director of Poets & Writers, Inc., America’s largest non-profit organization serving poets and writers of literary prose, where she headed up *Poets & Writers Magazine* and pw.org. (This is the organisation which produces the literary directory discussed above in this report). Mary’s name also came up during my interview with performance poet, KC Trommer who described an exciting initiative which Mary curated

called *After Sunset: Poetry Walk* which took place on the High Line as part of the 2015 National Poetry Month.



Mary's name, as well as that of Montana Agte-Studier, the Director of Membership, had also come up in the interview with Tim Hendrick when Tim was describing the support provided by CLMP for small literary organisations. So I had a raft of follow-up questions to ask Mary during our forty minute interview simply about her career in multi-platform publishing and storytelling. But the focus of the interview was on CLMP, the organisation she now headed up. I had recently become a member of the Small Press Network Board, so I was keen to find out about the services this peak body for small presses currently offered its members and what plans it had for the future.

## How CLMP supports its members



CLMP ensures a vibrant, diverse literary landscape by helping small literary publishers work better.

→ **LEARN MORE**

CLMP offers opportunities to publishers to increase their organisational capacity, receive regrant support, and to participate in sales opportunities such as book fairs. CLMP regularly invites its members to take part in public programming, such as our panel discussions at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference. Members also receive invitations to regularly scheduled technical assistance roundtables, clinics, workshops and networking gatherings. *From CLMP website*

As membership is also open to overseas publishers, I promptly paid the \$100 annual membership fee for Spineless Wonders and was able to view first-hand the various resources which Mary outlined during the interview. Like the Small Press Network, CLMP provides a website presence for its members as well as a range of resources and publishing-related events and activities. I was interested to learn of two innovative initiatives. The first is *Desert*

*Nights, Rising Stars* a writers' conference event run by Arizona State University. Through a partnership arrangement, CLMP is able to offer members a discount exhibitor rate at the conference book fair with the potential exposure to 32,000 visitors. The other is *Press Fest*, which is a showcase of independent literary magazines and presses, organised by CLMP as part of New York City's PEN World Voices Festival.



The third initiative is *Face Out*, a program offered by competitive cull to publishers and their emerging writers to assist in the promotion of specific titles. The outcomes of these grants are then shared with CLMP members via an extensive written report. The most recent available to

members is:

## FACE OUT: Maximizing the Visibility of Emerging Authors, Volume 5

Strategies and lessons learned from FACE OUT, a program for small presses and their emerging authors. This monograph includes notes and tips from technical assistance sessions and publisher case studies.



The Desert Nights, Rising Stars Writers Conference creates a unique and intimate creative writing experience where writers of all backgrounds, genres, and skill levels gather together and connect through the celebration and study of literary craft, culture, and community.

CLMP has become a sponsor of Desert Nights, Rising Stars, an incredible opportunity for our member publishers. The exhibitor book fair will be promoted extensively to the general public as an opportunity to participate and engage with the literary community outside of the conference. Besides the conference's 300+ guests, this fair takes place during ASU's Open Door, on Saturday, February 23, which draws over 32,000 guests to campus.

We've negotiated a discounted rate for the conference's exhibitor fair for CLMP members. The cost is \$200 (versus \$350)s





Press Fest is part of PEN World Voices Festival which is celebrating 15 years of presenting over 1,800 writers and artists from 118 countries speaking 56 languages to over 140,000 audience members. The United States' only international literature festival with a human rights focus, World Voices was founded by Salman Rushdie, Esther Allen, and Michael Roberts in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, with the aim of fostering cultural dialogue between the United States and the world.

Two of the services which CLMP offers to its members that particularly interested me were the Regrant Program which Tim Hendrick had mentioned (see interview above) and event transcripts, a strategy CLMP uses to overcome accessibility issues for members living outside of New York.

## Regrant Program

Mary explained that each year CLMP is provided with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts Literature Program which it can 'regrant' via a submission process to literary magazines and small presses of New York State. These grants were known as the New York State Technical Assistance Program (NYSTAP) 'Through the NYSTAP, CLMP supports New York State's diverse community of publishers through targeted technical services. *New York State Technical Assistance Program aims to strengthen and connect this community while increasing the organizational capacity and fiscal stability of individual publishers.*' CLMP website



The ‘regranted’ funds are used in a number of different ways: from workshops and roundtables on marketing, fundraising, organizational development and other issues facing independent literary publishers; travel grants; and organizational capacity project regrants (up to \$1500). Typical projects funded under the regrants scheme include consultant fees, software purchases, design expenses, author and guest editor fees. I had learnt earlier from Tim Hendrick about the regrant system and it seemed to me that his proposal, to fund the planning process for an upcoming writers’ conference, would fit within these guidelines.

## **Overcoming Accessibility Issues**

Like the New York- based CLMP, the Small Press Network has its main base where it carries out the majority of its activities, in a major city centre; in our case, Melbourne. For many small publishers based outside of these centres, distance can be a real barrier both in terms of costs and travel time, to participation in the organisation’s events and activities. I asked Mary about the strategies CLMP had found effective in overcoming such barriers and for increasing participation. I was particularly interested in the print and on-line transcripts provided of select roundtables and workshops. According to their website, these are made available so ‘publishers nation-wide can benefit from these practical and informative conversations’. I asked Mary about how onerous it was to the organisation to provide these written transcripts, how many publisher accessed them and whether other means of communication, especially digital and streaming, were more readily produced. I also noticed that CLMP had a regular blog which showcased its members (the most recent focussed on twelve presses run by women) as well as video and audio records of past events and webinars. I was keen to find out from Mary which of these strategies she felt were most effective in facilitating members’ participation in CLMP activities.

These questions were also ones that Mary had been considering and they had been included in a member feedback survey she had instituted not long after taking on her role as Executive Director at CLMP. The results of the member survey will be available later in 2019. I eagerly await them.

## **Take-away #3 Regrants and the Small Press Network**

The open-ended nature of the regrant proposal process employed by CLMP would provide a useful model to consider in terms of the support of innovation and

sustainability of small presses in Australia. Under this proposal, a pool of funds from a range of organisations such as the Australia Council for the Arts, State-based arts funding bodies, The Copyright Agency Cultural Funds as well as book industry partners such as Thorpe Bowker, Ingram Content Group could be made available for a Small Press Regrant Program to be administered by the Small Press Network. SPN members could submit proposals for funds up to for instance, \$2000, to support their publishing programs. This initiative would be particularly effective in encouraging and supporting publishers and their multi-platform publishing projects

# IN CONCLUSION

The study tour allowed me the time and resources to reflect on my own practice as well as that of others in working in similar fields and for this I am immensely grateful. I hope that the take-away messages I am sharing in this report are of interest to my colleagues here in Australia and that they can act as a catalyst for further discussion and even change.



## Take-away # 1. Multi-platform producers need multi-platform venues

Whilst multi-platform publishers benefit from working in large scale contexts such as cultural festivals and events, there is also merit in small, local contexts. The Q.E.D. venue discussed above serves as a useful model for local councils looking to create a permanent creative space for artists, writers and performers to use and which doubles as a small, low-cost entertainment venue. This model is particularly relevant for areas of high residential development where councils are looking to work with local businesses to create vibrant spaces for community engagement. Small-scale creative centres provide an excellent, low-cost option for emerging producers and multi-platform publishers looking to stage new, hybrid and boundary-pushing works and for audiences looking for local, live entertainment.

## **Take-away #2 The Australian Literary Arts Events Directory**

This is call for an online calendar available for Australian publishers to upload their upcoming events. Membership should be free, the user interface straightforward and the front end simple but easy on the eye. A directory incorporating the national, literary scene in Australia, would be of tremendous use to overseas visitors, inbound tourists as well as locals. It could be set up by a national arts funding body such as the Australia Council for the Arts with contributions from state-based arts funding bodies and state-based tourism departments and local councils to its ongoing maintenance and to pay for a moderator.

## **Take-away #3 Regrants and the Small Press Network**

The open-ended nature of the regrant proposal process employed by CLMP would provide a useful model to consider in terms of the support of innovation and sustainability of small presses in Australia. Under this proposal, a pool of funds from a range of organisations such as the Australia Council for the Arts, State-based arts funding bodies, The Copyright Agency Cultural Funds as well book industry partners such as Thorpe Bowker, Ingram Content Group could be made available for a Small Press Regrant Program administered by the Small Press Network. SPN members could submit proposals for funds up to for instance, \$2000, to support their publishing programs. This initiative would be particularly effective in encouraging and supporting publishers and their multi-platform publishing projects

## ADDENDUM 1: ONLINE JOURNAL



### Excerpts

During the month-long stay in New York, I posted short daily posts about events and venues as well as some of the incidental storytelling I observed on public transport, streets and public buildings. The daily online journal was followed by people back in Australia as well by some of the new friends I made online and in real life in America. The following extracts are from both Facebook and Instagram.

### Day Two

We enjoyed some gospel, soul & blues at Lunatica - the bassist had played with James Brown and female vocalists were fab. Good seats, huh! Our bus trip to DUMBO was stalled by heavy NY marathon traffic (curse you Jeff Isles) so we carried out field research on the workings of the NY rail system discovering poetry along the way.



## Day Three

...the first of MANY live storytelling events - this one at the very cool Cornelia St Cafe where we note Janeane Garofalo performed comedy in 2012. Be still mah beating... Tonight we saw a monthly, much-loved event called Monologues & Madness produced by Tullis McCall in which (mainly) actors perform 3 minute original pieces. Chatted with an amazing actor and writer, Katie Kopajtic who performed an extract from her WIP Virginia Woolf show.



## Day Four

Returned to Greenwich Village for a very different show vs last night's at Cornelia St Cafe. 'Resistance is Fertile' is a monthly LGBTQI comedy night at Henrietta Hudson's and the line-up was fab. Pictured are Sydnee Washington, Veronica Garza, Chewy May, Yedoye Travis. The show is co-produced by comedians Wanjiko Eke & Stef Dag. Enjoyed a chat after the show with Jiko plus got tips for finding other LGTQI events and some venues in Brooklyn.



## Day Five

Highlight though was to see *To Kill A Mockingbird* at Shubert Theatre off Broadway

## Day Six

[#spinelessinnewyork](#) ends with a wide-ranging catch-up with amazing Australian film-maker, actor, author Stephanie King whose doco *Undermined* set in the Kimberley will hit Oz cinemas in Feb. Cannot wait to see it. Earlier saw a session at the NY Shorts Festival with four great films including the very funny film 'The Actor' by Katie Kopajitic. Lovely to chat again with Katie and her partner Monica afterwards



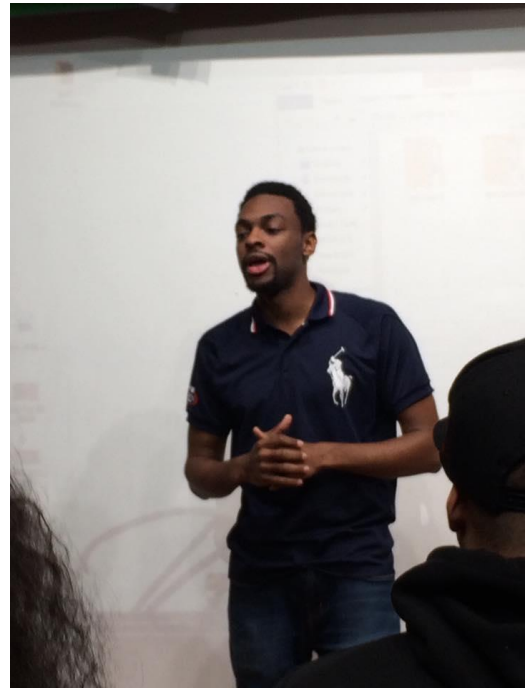
## Day Seven

This evening we were part of the 'Pillows with Features' team at a book trivia fundraiser for the inspirational Newtown Literary. Great night. Long trip home but some food for thought with poetry in motion posters and Free Subway Reads. Commuter reading/publishing opportunities ... [#spinelessinnewyork](#)



## Day Eight

This post is coming to you from an Uber en route from Long Island City where I have been to a fantastic short film showcase/feedback/networking session at the very cool Necessary Films Studio. It is what is says on the packaging. Thanks to a very welcoming actor/writer/director and Co-host Julian Kingston. Saw four new shorts and met actors, directors, producers behind them. From gun control to relationship breakups and crime fiction - as two-minute film to web series. Some great conversations.



## Day Nine

Was spent at Day One of the fantastic women's podcasting festival, Werk It in Brooklyn. Lots of great sessions and podcasty chats inter alia. You'll notice I wore a Little Fictions On Air podcast t-shirt. Then to Symphony Space for a LitProv show. This is a very impressive concept where authors (in this case, Weike Wang and Gary Shteyngart) read an extract from a WIP or published fiction and then actors (Dulce Sloan and Mehran Khaghani) improvise an ending or riff on the theme. Tonight's performance was followed by audience Q&A, which was as variable as these things often are. I love Gary S but tbh comedian Dulce really stole the show.

## Day Eleven

Then off to Imagine This International Women's Film Festival at the Wythe Hotel, Williamsburg. Short films about WWII POW camp, the women's rally against Trump and a robot playmate, among other things. Plus a film shot in reverse entirely on an iPhone. Great stuff - plus filmmaker Q&A and a session run by Seed and Spark about fundraising. I spoke with the talented Tanya Perez, writer and lead in the very funny short film, Veronica. Pics from director Q&A,



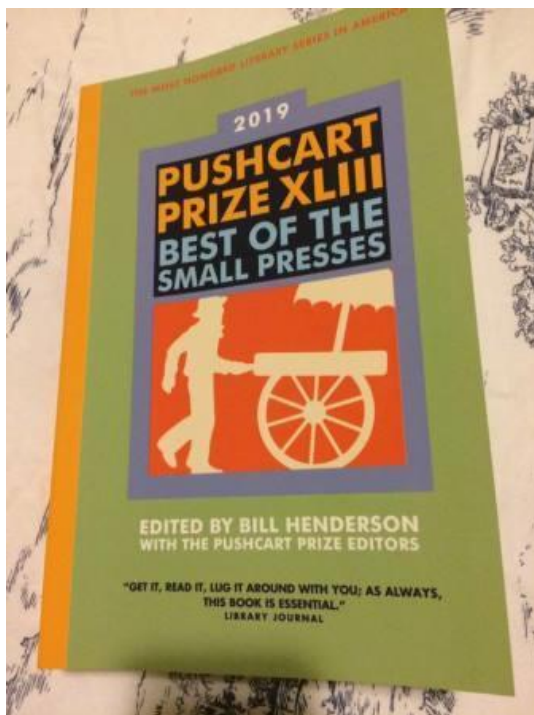
## Day Twelve

The second day at the very inspirational Werk It Women's Podcast Conference. Great sessions on the

future of podcasting (spoiler: it's female), on loving your female voice (let a thousand vocal styles bloom) and a live pitch session. Met up with some wonderful Arts & Entertainment podcasters over lunch and the conference ended with clapping and foot stomping to the resistance choir then after party. Did I mention what a great bunch of people run this conference and how cool the Knockdown Arts Centre is? Feeling totally buoyed after spending two days in the company of 600 women podcast enthusiasts, presenters and producers. Only two Aussies (ie moi and one other) and one Kiwi in attendance.

### Day Thirteen

The plan to go to Pete's Candy Store in Brooklyn to hear readings four women writers was washed out by what was, for me at any rate, dramatic snowfalls.



### Day Fourteen

Has been a corker. It ended with readings at The Strand bookstore from the 2019 Pushcart Prize #43. This anthology is the best of poetry, fiction and non-fiction nominated from the small presses from around the world - an iconic prize and publication. The event was made a little tedious by the organisers either not giving guest readers a set time. But the speech by long-time series editor Bill Henderson and the book itself more than made up for this and I totally enjoyed reading Pam Houston's 'What Has Irony Done For Us Lately' on the subway trip back to Brooklyn. Had a very nice meal at Russ & Daughters and dropped by the Bluestocking Bookshop where I could have filled a suitcase with books but settled for a memoir by

Phoebe Robinson - one half of the 2 Dope Queens.

### Days Fifteen & Sixteen

Day 15 & 16: sometimes you just need to bunker down and get on with some work - even though you are in an exciting big-ass place like New York. So, that's what I've been doing over the weekend. Sending emails to set up meetings over the next fortnight. (Though most of next week people are unavailable due to Thanksgiving. It's only one day, Thursday, but seems that turkey needs lots of basting.) It will be interesting to see how I manage to squeeze meetings with seven or so people into the final week! And I've made a start on my report due to the Cultural Fund. Spineless Wonders also needed my attention these last two days - we

have a publication currently in production, a website that needed some love and two writers festivals in the first part of 2019 which needed input. Plus I have been emailing madly about a few cool projects which i will be able to reveal in the fullness of time. Being here has been inspiring - not just the cool ideas I've been exposed to but also this time away has allowed some creative ideas to percolate. Meanwhile my lovely partner has been out taking care of groceries and laundry. I am a very lucky gal!

## Day Seventeen

The day is spent preparing Little Fictions On Air podcast episodes for broadcast in January. As producer, I curate the content which is drawn from the live shows we have recorded over the past four years. I write notes to assist our presenter Ella Watson-Russell and put together the runsheet for the audio editor, in this case Lachlan Perry. It is unrelated to the fellowship here in New York but essential in order to keep the wheels of a fortnightly show turning. It's great that the wonderful podcast team can work across the globe! But what happened in the afternoon could not have come about without the publishing fellowship - and the portable

audio equipment I bought with me. I recorded audio stories with actor Mark Dessaix, now based in New York. After recording a number of stories from Richard Holt's collection *What You Might Find*, I taped an extended interview with Mark about his acting career, his life and work here and about his time with us at Little Fictions. The stories and interview will go to air on 2RPH early in 2019. We ate, drank and chatted into the night. The three of us brainstormed a new idea, inspired by a show JoAnne and I saw the previous week, which I am hoping to incorporate into Little Fictions show. The creative juices were well-lubricated and flowing fast. Great to spend time with a local artist and such a lovely human being.





## Day Nineteen

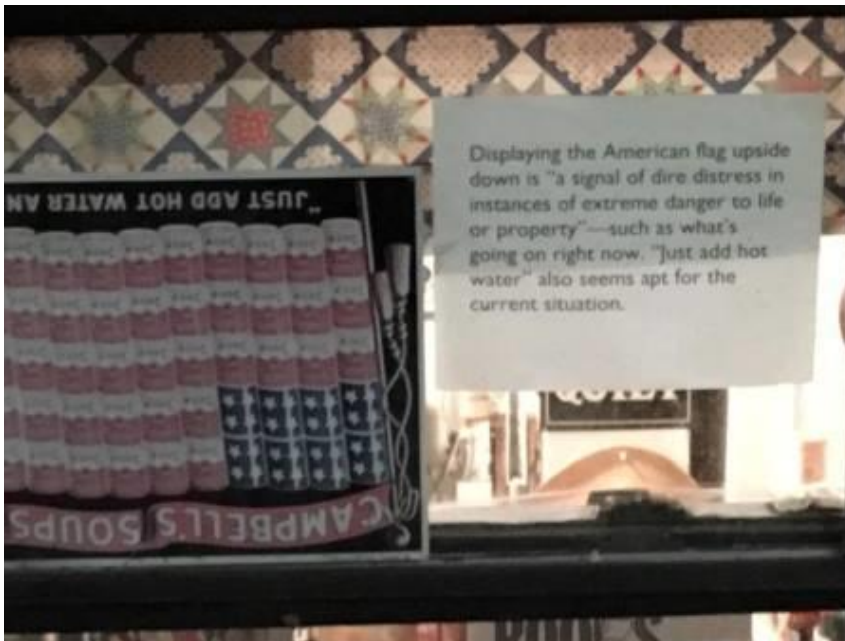
On the way home we had a disappointingly watery martini at a diner. It was a Gibson, apparently. Pickled onions instead of olives. Nah. Then two incidents that challenged the view that people in this city are in too much of a rush. Outside of the diner, a woman slipped and lay on the freezing pavement clutching her knee. We rushed to her assistance alongside 5 or 6 others. At the subway, I reached the platform before realising I had dropped one of my new fur-lined gloves. I retraced my steps, through the turnstile and back up on to the street, with no luck. The guard let me back into through the gates and there was my glove, dirty from being on the ground, but sitting where some kind person had left it, on the top of a trash can.

Waiting for me. I 🍷NY



## Day Twenty-One

The temp sat well under zero so we were glad to find a Japanese restaurant with warming miso and green tea. JoAnne took a bracing photo-journey down to the waterfront while spent some time with the very lovely Tim Fredrick from [Newtown Literary](#). Then we rode the 7 to Time Square where we met producer and actor, Tullis McCall for a drink and a chat at the West Bank Cafe.

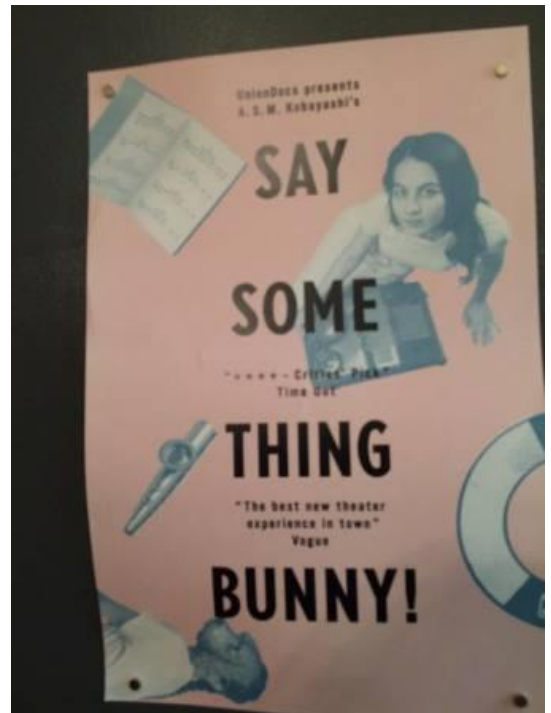


## Day Twenty-Two

We rug up and head into the New York Comedy Club in East Village where the headline act is Janeane Garofolo. Great night. Taking notes on cover charges and drink rules. We dine at a vegan eatery called Plant Food Wine. I have an extremely nice glass of Zinfandel but my head cold interferes with my enjoyment of the subtle cuisine. A nice experience nonetheless. We pass a brave bookshop specializing in cookbooks which takes a swipe at Trump-style America.

### Day Twenty-Three

The highlight of the trip so far in terms of live shows is the immersive, multimedia performance, *Say Something, Bunny*. It's based on a couple of recordings made on a wire recorder by a teenage boy in the 50s. Artist, performer, researcher and scriptwriter Alison Kobayashi was given the tape machine and some very indistinct recordings by a friend who bought them at a deceased estate sale. What followed was around 7 years down a researching and writing rabbit hole and the result is a totally engrossing, very polished and yet still speculative insight into the lives of the people captured in very scratchy audio format. Loved it.



### Day Twenty-Four

I had the good fortune to spend some time chatting with Kambri Crews who runs a fantastic creative arts venue in Astoria called Q.E.D. She showed me round the live performance space, equipped with hi-tech multimedia setup run out of a converted closet plus a podcast studio in the basement with a four microphone set-up in and sound-proof room. QED hosts shows and events which are diverse in format, from stand-up, to board games and swing classes and inclusive in terms of producers, performers and audience. It is a nurturing showcase for emerging producers and is dedicated to a fair payment for all involved.





## Day Twenty-Five

Spent the day lying low in Bed Stuy writing up notes towards the fellowship report and sending out emails about an exciting new direction in our microlit project, *Shuffle*. More on this anon. A stroll through the neighbourhood for some exercise and curiosity. Dinner at a local French restaurant. Tracking down some final live shows to see before we head back to Oz.



## Day Twenty-Six

I find myself on the Upper West Side, very excitedly sitting in the 800 seat theatre where the iconic New York Selected Shorts is performed, chatting with Lead Producer, Drew Richardson. Lots of notes taken for the Fellowship report. JoAnne and I kill some time at a fab nearby tapas bar (red wine, pequillo peppers, lamb cutlets) and return for a performance at Symphony Space - celebrating 25 years of the Riverhead publishing house. A great night of short stories read by actors. Yep, like our very own Little Fictions only on a larger scale and in NY! [#spinelessinnewyork](https://twitter.com/spinelessinnewyork)



## Day Twenty-Seven

Another corker. Lunch at Court Street Grocers, a quintessential NY sandwich bar with the very talented, generous and innovative poet, KC Trommer about her latest project, QUEENSBOUND (poets performing on a train). You can catch it on Soundcloud. Meantime JoAnne scored us \$25 rush tix to see La Boheme at the Metropolitan Opera! We spent the afternoon at a brilliant 70s lesbian photo exhibition at the Leslie Lohman gallery for queer art. Then off to the Met. Spoilt rotten on this trip!



## Day Twenty-Eight

So it's time to wind up the NY literary field trip. I was delighted to speak this morning with Mary Gannon who heads up CLMP, the organisation which supports literary mags and small presses here. It was a particularly relevant connection to make as I have just become a board member of the Small Press Network, the Australian equivalent. Looking forward to becoming more involved in SPN.



### Final days

Saturday night we're going to hear Handel's Messiah performed by a local Brooklyn community choir. Sunday we'll be packing up then going downstairs for a private mescal tasting with our Bed Stuy hosts Yuan and Kevin who run Erstwhile Mescal. And finishing off our final community garden veggie box. Doing peak Brooklyn!

## ADDENDUM 2: PRODUCING AT QED

If you have an idea for a show we'd love to hear from you! We don't book individual performers for each show, rather we book the producers who put the shows together. If you'd like to produce a show, email [QEDAstoria@gmail.com](mailto:QEDAstoria@gmail.com) with your pitch.

### SHOW BASICS

Shows are usually 1 to 1.5 hours long. Producers are required to be on site 30 minutes prior to their scheduled event. We've had storytelling shows, improv, stand-up, sketch, original musicals, solo shows, readings, theatrical productions, Q&A panels, live podcasts, game shows and more.

### WHAT KIND OF SHOWS ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

All kinds! We're honestly open to (pretty much) anything. The more fleshed out your idea is, the better. If we love your pitch, we might want to book it right away, schedule permitting. The more prepared you are, the quicker we can get your show up and running.

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PITCH

In order to be considered, please include the following:

- Short paragraph describing your show.
- Web link(s) to your work / personal website, etc.
- Indicate if this is a one-off show or if you'd like it to be recurring. Keep in mind that our recurring shows are usually monthly.
- How long is the show?
- Day and/or time preferences. Though it helps to be flexible as it depends on our schedule.
- Any tech needs.

### WILL I GET PAID?

We offer a ticket split. You set the price at whatever you think your market will bear. Most shows at Q.E.D. are priced between \$5 - \$10. We can sell up to 50 tickets for the showroom and still keep the curtain closed. Max capacity is 74, including staff and performers.

For shows on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, the first 10 tickets go to Q.E.D. while the remainder of the ticket sales are split 50/50 between the house and the producers. Producers guarantee the first \$50.

For shows occurring Wednesday, the first \$75 in ticket sales goes to Q.E.D. while the remainder of the ticket sales are split 50/50 between the house and the producers. Producers guarantee the first \$75.

For shows Thursday through Saturday, the first \$100 in ticket sales goes to Q.E.D. while the remainder of the ticket sales are split 50/50 between the house and the producers. Producers guarantee the first \$100.

Of course there are sometimes exceptions like for charitable for free events, but this is the baseline especially for new shows/producers.

Producers are allotted five (5) complimentary tickets for their friends and family. If any members of the press want to come to your show they do not count against your comp tickets. Names for the comp list are due by 5PM on the day of the event.