

**Submission  
No 63**

**INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR  
MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

**Organisation:** Sydney Improvised Music Association

**Date Received:** 23 August 2020

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## **SIMA'S SUBMISSION TO 'INTEGRITY, EFFICACY & VALUE FOR MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAM 2020'**

Sydney Improvised Music Association (SIMA) is a small-to-medium non-profit arts organisation based in NSW, with DGR status. It operates on around \$450K per annum. SIMA is the only organisation dedicated to jazz in NSW and is recognised as the leading jazz organisation nationally.

It is widely recognised as critical to the ecology of creative contemporary music in Australia. Earlier this year, SIMA was used as one of two industry case studies presented to the federal government as a best practice small-medium company whose operations would be highly impacted by COVID-19.

Established in 1984 for the purpose of presenting and promoting contemporary Australian jazz, SIMA's program encompasses performance, education, skills development for youth and women, mentoring, commissions of new works, international market development, touring festivals, including a highly acclaimed annual International Women's Jazz Festival, and the production of significant projects of scale. In recent years, SIMA has won two major awards: APRA Art Music Award for Excellence in Education (2017), and Excellence in Creative Programming, Women in Music Awards (2018) for Artistic Director, Zoe Hauptmann.

These activities address specific needs within the contemporary music industry with the intention of developing and maintaining a robust and sustainable sector.

SIMA presents around 100 performances and events each year, employing approximately 350 musicians, creatives and educators annually. It has a staff of 2.4 which includes an Artistic Director, General Manager and Executive Producer, Marketing Coordinator and Publicist, as well as long-term technical, design and arts contractors.

Its annual revenue is derived through a combination of box office and performance fees (35%); Government Grants (40%); and private income sources (25%). For each dollar of government investment, SIMA generates 2.5 dollars.

SIMA has been a consistently funded client of Create NSW with a strong track record of delivery, dating back three decades. Consolidated efforts, which included the development of its philanthropic program saw SIMA achieve multi-year funding status in 2016 through the Independent Arts and Cultural Organisations program. This achievement meant that SIMA was able to secure matched multi-year investment through philanthropic foundations and local government, providing further security for the organisation.

Multi-year funding has been pivotal in making possible strong planning practices and in building essential infrastructure to ensure comprehensive program delivery. It has enabled SIMA to develop strong risk assessment and mitigation, as it established new programs in Western Sydney and regional NSW.

In July 2020, SIMA was informed by Create NSW that it was not successful in its recent multi-year funding application. The feedback session revealed that the application, referred to by

Create NSW representatives as “unfunded excellence”, was recommended for continuing multi-year funding by the Contemporary Music Board, however, was not approved for funding by Create NSW.

Specific feedback notes about the application included the following conclusions:

- Well-presented application with a well-executed Strategic Plan
- Acknowledgment of the organisation’s purpose and value in the sector
- Capacity to achieve its goals and vision with realistic timelines in place
- Wide-ranging annual program
- Key partnerships in place
- Good levels of new work commissioned
- Moving in a positive direction under administration and new Artistic Director
- The real prospects of continued growth

In summary, SIMA was acknowledged as a valuable organisation conducting important and successfully delivered work within an area of Contemporary Music that is not fulfilled by any other organisation. 65% of its budget is gained through earned income. It attracts philanthropic support. SIMA has developed key partnerships to support its work and it has been successful in executing its Strategic Plan. In short, it has returned excellent and highly regarded value to NSW taxpayers in response to the funding it receives from the NSW Government.

SIMA’s understanding has been that Independent Arts and Cultural Organisations Multi-Year Funding was designed for the purpose of supporting organisations such as SIMA, reliably delivering highly appreciated, affordable and accessible arts activities, year after year, at a level of excellence that would not otherwise be available. SIMA’s contribution to contemporary music in NSW, includes support for outstanding Australian performers, but also bringing exceptional overseas musicians, to audiences who otherwise would not have the opportunity to experience such performers.

It is unclear why SIMA was unsuccessful after being recommended by the Contemporary Music Board for funding. It is also unclear why Contemporary Music does not include even one presenter within its funded organisations.

There is further confusion about Create NSW’s position on the funding of service organisations: specifically, why two service organisations remained within Contemporary Music while other service organisations, such as Writing NSW, were removed.

SIMA now faces a precarious future, in an unprecedentedly difficult operating environment brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Losing core multi-year State funding renders the sustainability of SIMA less certain.

#### **IMPACTS:**

SIMA acknowledges that reporting and accountability are essential to grants funding. However, like the rest of the sector, SIMA is already under-resourced, and the return to annual applications for its major grants will have a negative impact on other work.

Multi-Year funding has enabled SIMA to plan ahead. This invaluable capacity has been particularly important in terms of negotiating contracts with outstanding performers, especially those who live and work overseas, as do the musicians whom SIMA contracts for its annual international festival. As a result of the loss of multi-year funding, audiences across Sydney, Western Sydney and regional NSW will be negatively affected.

More generally, SIMA will now need to scale back its operations, including the capacity of its already small team of skilled arts workers to support the 350 musicians who look to SIMA for project and career development, performance opportunities, skills development, new work commissions, touring support and advocacy. Moreover, SIMA's staff will depend on short-term contracts or may face job loss. In turn, this may result in the sector losing some of its dedicated skilled administrators and corporate memory built over three decades.

Educators will lose critical work, with negative impacts also for students related to important skills development and access opportunities. Under a more restricted funding environment it will be much harder to foster future jazz music audiences.

**SEEKING MORE CLARITY FROM THE REVIEW:**

To assist our development and the community of musicians we engage, SIMA hopes, as a result of the review, to better understand the following issues:

- Transparency and availability of applicant data across aggregates including the number of applications, demographics, genres, and location
- Composition of the assessment boards, including how many primary artform practitioners are members and the extent to which they reflect a broad range of artform diversity
- Evaluation of funded activity and annual reports for organisations