Understanding Stage Management in the 21st century in Australia: A Preliminary Survey

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Understanding Stage Management in Australia in the 21st Century - A Preliminary Survey

Submitted in fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts by Research (Performing Arts)

Ping Sum (Teresa) Fok

Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
Edith Cowan University
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Abstract

As a vocation that has been around for at least 150 years, stage management has gone through years of evolution in its scope of practice. From existing as a purely mechanical part of the theatre process to becoming vital co-creators in collaboration with Directors, Designers, and Playwrights, the roles and skills of a Stage Manager has expanded beyond the theatre into the events and entertainment industry that includes large sporting events, rock concerts, and corporate productions.

Academic research into Stage Management is presently in its infancy, with a dearth of published literature. This research contributes a timely and critical reflection of what it is to be a Stage Manager in Australia in the 21st century through presenting the findings of an online survey conducted from March to May 2020 by industry professionals. The survey was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic developed, and therefore the impact of this event is not reflected in the working lives of the participants. However, the research does include a presentation of several approaches to blended learning in Stage Management in response to how the pandemic has affected the teaching of Stage Management during COVID-19.

This research showed that although the industry is dynamic and offers secure and consistent employment, there are areas of possible development in education and the management of work-life balance. The survey revealed that industry professionals on reflection would have liked more industry connections and opportunities for internships at an undergraduate level; whilst for mid-career workers, the development of a professional master's degree would be appropriate to cover areas of business management, new technologies, and intensive courses in a second language to further career progression and to open opportunities for the industry to internationalise within the region.
The survey found that stage managers are predominantly female, between the ages of 20 and 40 who live in Melbourne or Sydney and were educated in the two most prominent conservatoires situated in these cities, namely, the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) at Melbourne University and National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Sydney. Trained Stage Managers, at least up until the COVID-19 pandemic, enjoyed sustainable employment opportunities fulfilling a number of different roles in the industry including as production managers, producers, production co-ordinators and company managers. The research found that workers in the profession tended to work long hours and were paid well for their experience and education, but were inclined to be vulnerable to an imbalance in their work-life that affected their ability to sustain and develop intimate relationships and personal support networks. This resulted in a high degree of mental health issues amongst the survey participants.

Moreover, Stage Managers are transitioning out of the profession when they reach their 40’s due to ‘burn-out’ and the peripatetic nature of the job. Stage Managers at this point looked to stabilise their lives, utilise their transferable skills, and move to jobs in the arts management sectors and associated events and entertainment industry. This research is designed to give educators, industry participants and potential undergraduate candidates an overview of the profession of current Stage Managers in Australia.
Thesis Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or

iii. contain any defamatory material.

Ping Sum (Teresa) Fok

(Student I.D.: 10474687)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Historical Background
Stage management has been a recognized profession for over 350 years in England and Europe and has been around for at least 140 years in Australia. (Van, S. F., & Adelaide Festival Centre 2013)

As mentioned in *Her Majesty's Pleasure: A Centenary Celebration of the Stars* written by Van, S. F., & Adelaide Festival Centre (2013), between the Renaissance and the 16th century, actors and playwrights took it upon themselves to handle finances, general directorial duties and stage management. Between the Renaissance and 17th century, actors and playwrights handled stage management duties and organised the stage crew. Stage management first emerged as a distinct role in the 17th century during Shakespeare's and Molière's time. During Shakespeare’s time the roles of stage management were left to apprentices, young boys learning the trade. There is evidence of a prompter at this time, but it was not until the 18th century in England that the title Stage Manager was used. (Van, S. F., & Adelaide Festival Centre 2013)

Sydney’s first theatre was opened on 16 January 1796. Lieutenant-Governor David Collins, who wrote a journal of his time in early Sydney, recorded his impressions of it. He said, “The originator of the plan of colonization for New South Wales was too conspicuous a character to be overlooked by the narrator of its rise and progress.”

James Cassius Williamson (26 August 1845 – 6 July 1913) was an American actor and later Australia’s foremost theatrical manager, founding J. C. Williamson Ltd. He soon formed his Royal Comic Opera Company. In 1881, Williamson became the lessee of the Sydney Theatre Royal, and the next year he entered into a partnership with Arthur Garner and George Musgrove, expanding to own more theatres such as the Adelaide Theatre Royal in 1886, and bringing famous actors to Australia, such as Sarah
Bernhardt, H. B. Irving and (Dame) Nellie Melba, and became known for spectacular, large-scale productions. In 1920, Thomas Nave was recorded as one of the first Stage Managers in Sir Ross and Keith Smith’s theatre company in Adelaide. (Van, S. F., & Adelaide Festival Centre 2013)

According to Maccoy (2004), “Stage management is the management of live performances across the continuum of the performance-making process. It involves applying management techniques from the initial concept through to production’s development in the rehearsal period, all performance instances and after the show has closed”. Over the last 60 years, Maccoy (2004) states that the core role of the Stage Manager has not changed radically. “It is well documented that Stage Managers existed in the nineteenth century in parallel with the development of the repertoire system and the rise of ‘actor/managers’ such as William Charles Macready” (pp. 11-12). Since then, stage management has grown in complexity with the size of the productions. Stage management may be performed by an individual in small productions, while larger productions typically employ a stage management team consisting of a Stage Manager (SM), or Production Stage Manager (PSM), a Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) and one or more Assistant Stage Managers (ASMs).

1.2 Aims of Study
This research study aims to present a broad overview of what it is to be a Stage Manager in the 21st century in Australia through a survey conducted by the researcher between March and May 2020. This study adds to existing literature on stage management in Australia and provides an archive for further academic research in stage management in relation to skill sets, education, transferable skills, work-life balance and demographics. At the present time, there is limited academic research of this kind concerning these issues and this study aims to provide a preliminary database of evidence from practitioners in the sector. The findings will further contribute to a
deeper understanding and knowledge of how Stage Managers are working currently in the industry in Australia. This study provides a source of information to various aspects of investigation including: a resource for higher education practitioners in this field to better understand the stage management sector; to promote collaboration within the industry; to share best practices; to note differences and alignments; and to better understand employment opportunities for stage management graduates; and especially to highlight how the core skills sets of a Stage Manager could be utilised within other industries (transferable skills) potentially expanding job opportunities for graduates and experienced workers in what is currently a potentially unstable sector in these COVID-19 pandemic times.

1.3 Purpose of the Research
This research study is timely because there is a lack of database information available especially with the industry going through an extraordinary time of change. As mentioned previously, there are limited resources in the fields of data collection surrounding stage management in Australia, and these are focussed in two key repositories including the liveperformance.com.au website, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). These collections focus on theatre, events and the entertainment industry, and have been important to the background of this study. This study is the result of the researcher conducting a preliminary survey of current and ex-Stage Managers who are working in Australia that aims to depict the current state of the industry at a particular point in time covering areas of demographics; education; transferable skills in education and employment; employment risk assessment; mental health; personal insurance and marital status. The findings in this study aim to form a current and critical source of information to be used for further academic research in the theatre, entertainment and events industry and for higher education institutions (HEIs).
1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above aims of this study, the survey investigates the following research question:

Primary Question:

What is the current situation of Stage Managers in Australia?

In exploring this research question, a number of secondary questions were developed to interrogate the topic.

Secondary Questions:

1) What is a Stage Manager?
2) How are Stage Managers currently educated in Australia?
3) What are the skill sets that Stage Managers in Australia possess?
4) What are the transferable skills in stage management that are also relevant to other industries?
5) What is their level of satisfaction with a career in stage management: financially, progression and achievement, job security, work-life balance?
6) What is the current situation regarding mental health for Stage Managers?
7) Do they think that upgrading their existing academic qualifications would result in better job opportunities?
1.5 Significance
The theatre, events and entertainment industry is constantly changing, especially in the current climate, which has exposed vulnerabilities in job security. Through the analysis and reflection of this survey, the intention of the researcher is to contribute significantly to the understanding and knowledge of this sector and to especially investigate how Stage Managers are working in the industry in order to provide data for further academic and industry research. It is also to contribute pertinent information on the versatility (transferable skills) of existing Stage Managers and whether they are able to cross over to other industries. This research study has the potential to bring a significant contribution to knowledge in this field, especially in presenting the database of skill sets, education, and transferable skills of Stage Managers in Australia.

The findings of the study will be of benefit to professional Stage Managers in describing the multifaceted potential of a stage management career and the possibilities that further education in the field might create. The research aims to provide guidance to HEIs in designing better stage management courses and training programmes to suit the demand of skills and knowledge for future stage management graduates. Therefore, it is anticipated that this study will further benefit the broader theatre, events and entertainment sectors, the HEIs and within the wider industry.

1.6 Thesis Structure
Chapter 1 gives a historical perspective of the profession of stage management, the aims, purpose, research questions, and significance of the research. In Chapter 2, the researcher will present a critical and distinct definition of stage management; firstly, through a process of self reference, and secondly by comparing and contrasting stage management with other careers that are commonly grouped together with stage management in the overall industry. Chapter 3 reviews the literature related to stage
management training and industry and provides some background to the development of the survey. Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology, including the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis process. Chapter 5 presents the data from the survey. Chapter 6 shows an analysis of the findings from the survey. In the final Chapter (7), the researcher will present her conclusions in respect to the survey, how the research questions have been answered, and the limitations of the research.
Chapter 2: Stage Management in Context

In this Chapter, the researcher will present a critical and distinct definition of stage management; firstly, through a definition of terms and the commonly known job description of the role, and secondly by comparing, contrasting and discussing the shared roles that stage management has with other careers that are commonly grouped together with stage management within the industry.

2.1 Discussion of Terms
Depending on the size of the company, or the production, the roles of traditional Stage Manager and Production Manager and even Producer can be often blurred in practice. Therefore, for the purposes of the study, the researcher will define the roles of the traditional Stage Manager and also the allied roles of Production Manager and Producer in the theatre industry by way of articulating the separate skill sets required and the specifics of their job scope, expectations and responsibilities.

2.11 The Mapping of Stage Manager
Under the umbrella of Performing Arts, stage management falls into a category under theatre technical arts. Stage management encompasses a variety of activities including the overseeing of the rehearsal process and coordinating communications among various production team members and personnel. Stage management requires a general understanding of all aspects of production and offers organisational support that ensures the overall process of the theatre production runs smoothly and efficiently. The Stage Manager is the main link of the entire system, making things bridge together and ensuring there is a continuous flow of communication. “A more casual and generally accepted definition of the Stage Manager is one who is in charge of everything backstage” (Gruver, 1972, xi).
A theatrical Stage Manager is an individual who has overall responsibility for stage management and the smooth execution of a theatrical production. Stern et al. (2013) who is one of the major and most cited academic researchers on stage management states that “the Stage Manager is responsible for making the entire production run smoothly, on stage and backstage, in pre-rehearsal, rehearsal, performance, and post-performance phases” (p. 1).

Stage management may be performed by an individual in small productions, while larger productions typically employ a stage management team consisting of a Stage Manager (SM), or even a Production Stage Manager (PSM), a Deputy Stage Manager (DSM), and one or more Assistant Stage Managers (ASMs).

2.12 The Mapping of Production Manager

The Production Manager generally is responsible for budgeting, scheduling work, and coordinating the various production departments.

Production management is a sub-division of stagecraft. The production management team consisting of a Production Manager (PM) and any number of assistants is responsible for realizing the visions of the Producer, Designer, Director, Composer or Choreographer within constraints of technical issues. This involves coordinating the operations of various production lines like stage management, lighting, sound (audio), props making, scenic art, costume/wardrobe, media and projection, pyrotechnics, rigging and automation. In addition to management and accounting skills, a PM has to have detailed knowledge of all production disciplines including a thorough understanding of the interaction of the production process. This may involve dealing with matters ranging from staffing, sourcing materials, stakeholders, health and safety to contracts and freight.
The PM is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the production are completed within budget, according to the Designer's and Director's wishes, and in time for the first public performance. He or she oversees the cost effectiveness and planning of the entire production process.

2.13 The Mapping of Producer
A theatrical Producer is a person who oversees all aspects of mounting the entire theatre production. The Producer is responsible for the overall financial and managerial functions of a production or venue, raises or provides financial backing, and hires personnel for creative positions like writer, director, designers, composers, choreographers and performers as Stern et al (2016) claims that “The Producer is the overall manager who has responsibilities for obtaining the personnel and resources to make theatre happen” (p.1). For example: Producers raise finances, book theatres, negotiate and issue contracts, and manage how the budget is spent.

2.14 The Mapping of Theatre (Arts), Performing Arts, Events and Entertainment Industry
Theatre (arts) is a collective term describing a live performance for example drama, dance, opera and music being performed by the live performers to the live audience, usually on a stage.

Performing Arts include music, dance, drama, opera, musical theatre, magic, illusion, mime, spoken word, puppetry and circus arts. These actors, singers, dancers and artists perform their work live to an audience.

Events are planned and organized occasion as follows:

- A speaker session (a guest speaker presentation, panel discussion, etc.)
- Networking sessions.
● Conferences.
● AGMs.
● Seminars.
● Workshops and classes.
● VIP experiences.
● Sponsorships.
● Trade shows, road shows and expos.
● Awards and competitions
● Sports matches.
● Festivals and parties

● Webinars

(https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/media/Documents/Cambridge%20Technicals/Digital-Media-Sample.pdf)

Entertainment industry is a form of activity that holds the attention and interest of an audience or gives pleasure and delight. Examples are as follows:

● Film. The motion picture industry produces and distributes feature films and animation.
● Music videos.
● Media/ Visual Arts.
● Sports.
● Attractions.
● Theme parks.
● Museums.
● Cultural Festival.
● Performance Art.
● Video Games.
● Concerts.
● Night Economy.

(https://www.g2.com/articles/types-event-marketing)
2.2 Common Skills shared by Stage Management and Events Management

Stage management and events management deal with applying management skills, knowledge, methods and strategies in order to manage and organise any kind of production from dance, drama, to opera, and of events from conferences, meetings, to trade shows and concerts. Both management disciplines integrate concepts that form the basis of good planning, logistics, and the coordination of technical aspects, and pay attention to details that give added value to a production/ event.

Both management approaches borrow theories and practical knowledge from similar disciplines such as: innovation management, project management, time management and budget management. Programmes in stage management and events management will equip students with creative thinking and strong leadership skills in order to coordinate teams that come together to accomplish a successful show/ event. They will develop excellent organisational abilities, attention to detail and they will learn how to communicate efficiently and clearly, as they have to maintain constant feedback between all stakeholders.

In terms of training in Australia, the two areas of expertise, stage management and events and entertainment management are delivered in separate programmes. In Australia, events management is commonly associated with specialist areas including hospitality, tourism, marketing, business, sport, and recreation. For example at Edith Cowan University (ECU), the Bachelor of Sport, Recreation and Event Management is largely to do with developing skill sets for supporting sporting events and out of a total of 25 modules there are only four modules related to events management throughout the three-year degree. There are approximately six universities in Australia offering bachelor degrees associated with events management including: Torrens University, La Trobe University, University of Queensland, University of South Australia, University of
the Sunshine Coast and Edith Cowan University (ECU). Whilst in Australia, the traditional stage management undergraduate degrees are only offered by the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) at Melbourne University, National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University (WAAPA@ECU).

Apparently, there is a separation between the two disciplines in the way they are delivered in Australia whilst at the same time the two areas have very similar skill sets. Even at ECU, the two courses are delivered in parallel but not integrated. However, as mentioned earlier, QUT have broadened their stage management curriculum in recent years to be much more than just traditional theatre-based training, covering the stage management role across all genres of performing arts and into events, festivals, and sports-presentation. They also include in their curriculum other roles in the management field (company, events, logistics, production, site management etc.). Evidently, QUT has already responded to the changing industry landscape in Australia.

2.3 Stage Management and Arts Management

The researcher would like to briefly outline the differences between stage management and arts management to training and the different expectations of the job requirements to further make clear her definition of stage management as these two disciplines can often be confused. Although there are some skill sets that are transferable between the two specialisations, including people management, planning and budgeting; however, an Arts Management programme traditionally would provide a student with a foundation in business theory and practice for the arts industry, and is specifically designed to give students the knowledge and skills to work in a diverse range of art forms and organisations; including marketing and public relations, and especially the fine arts sector in the production of exhibitions, gallery management, and the coordination of festivals, theatre companies, venues, dance companies and concerts. As Rosewall
(2014) explains that:

Management of arts and cultural organizations generally includes such functions as marketing, fundraising, budgeting and financial management, board relations, management of staff and volunteers, program planning and evaluation, and education. (p.6)

On the other hand, traditional stage management programmes focus on the skill sets and specialised knowledge essential to coordinating the logistics of primarily performance related events, particularly the intricate knowledge needed to produce and logistically co-ordinate a theatre production and a musical concert. A Stage Manager’s minor knowledge of lighting, staging, props, sets, calling shows, multimedia and the apparatus of the mechanics of a theatre and its backstage technical crew, must be trained to a greater level to enable them to orchestrate highly complex technical productions, and to collaborate intrinsically with the director of a show in all these areas of expertise.

In this Chapter, the researcher first presented the definition of a Stage Manager, Production Manager and Producer in regards to the separate skill sets required and the specifics of their job scope, expectations and responsibilities. To further define stage management, the researcher contrasted stage management with events management and arts management in its form and nature. There are skill sets that are shared between stage, events and arts management which make them transferable between these industries.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Overview
This literature review will reflect on the current research in the field and how this information was used to contextualise the researcher’s online preliminary survey. As stated previously, the extent of published research on stage management is limited and narrow in focus and it was the scarcity of published research critically evaluating careers in stage management in Australia that initially prompted the researcher’s ambition to begin this research study, and to create a preliminary survey in the first place. Not only does there seem to be a dearth of academic writing in the area in general, but a lot of the published literature focuses on teaching and training and not on investigating the realities of being a Stage Manager in the 21st century in Australia. The Australian context is also important to the researcher as much of her career as a Stage Manager was served working in the Australian context. To adequately answer the question: What is a Stage Manager?, it is important to remember that the literature in regards to this profession is only a part of the information that can accurately contextualise this profession. To investigate the realities of being a Stage Manager, the survey is a vital aspect of the research that works in tandem with the literature review and importantly, with the experience of the researcher who worked as a Stage Manager in Australia in the early part of the century.

In view of this, the researcher will begin the literature review by presenting the most cited authors that have formed the cornerstone of texts that have defined stage management within the classroom for decades. Now in it’s 11th edition, Lawrence Stern’s *Stage Management* (2016) and Peter Maccoy’s (10th edition) *Essentials of Stage Management* (2014) have defined the domain, and have been influential in shaping related areas of research. Their perspectives give a fundamental basis for the
understanding of stage management and how it has been taught in recent times. The perspective of these authors combined with the first hand knowledge of the researcher, and her experience formed the origin of questions in the survey around how the participants studied and were trained in stage management.

As discussed earlier, the potential to gain employment in other areas of the industry other than in traditional theatre, prompted the researcher to investigate how Stage Manager’s have been integrated into the events industry. The researcher will present the events industry from the perspective of Robertson et al. (2012), Bladen et al. (2014) and Barron and Leask (2012) who have been the leading writers in the events industry in recent years. Further to investigating and creating more awareness around transferable skills for Stage Managers, Pellegrino’s (2012) *Education for life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st century* and Benicolo and Reeves’s (2014) *Developing Transferable Skills* will be presented and discussed.

In the current pandemic climate, COVID-19 has affected two important areas of the sector. Firstly, it has caused significant disruption to the employment of Stage Managers. According to an ABC article on 26 April 2020, (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-26/theatres-face-longest-haul-back-from-the-coronavirus-shutdown/12185446), *Theatres face long road back amid coronavirus as performing arts industry holds on to hope*, “theatres and concert halls sit dark and empty as their usual inhabitants — the performers, stage crew, staff and audiences — are instead holed up inside their own homes”, said Kim Knight, the General Manager of Western Australia's Regal Theatre in the Perth suburb of Subiaco. Knight was grateful she had been able to retain the Regal’s 19 employees under the Federal Government's JobKeeper package and was hopeful the theatre will be able to reopen for shows postponed until the end of the year.
Like many industries where normal working operations have stalled, further up-skilling and ‘future-proofing’ has been a common topic of discussion. On 2 March 2020, the Australia Council for the Arts launched a new professional development program designed for small to medium arts organisations to transform and reimagine their business models. According to Russel Howcroft, the Chair of the Australian, Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS): “The program will support the creative and cultural industries to address immediate and future challenges and will inspire the sector to apply their creativity, innovation and risk-taking skills to future proofing their businesses.”


Secondly, the training of Stage Managers along with all of the Performing Arts has been disrupted and forced into a situation of revaluation in terms of methodologies and approaches to the delivery of curriculum. As something that has been trialed with some success and limitations, blended learning, or delivering courses face to face (FTF) and online is now something that HEIs have to confront as a necessity and attempt to develop effectively. To further contextualise the research in this area, the researcher will also present *Blended mobile learning in theatre arts classroom in higher education* by Zhou, M et al. (2019) and *Blended learning: uncovering its transformative potential in higher education* by Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004) to further illustrate the practice of blended learning in theatre arts classrooms in higher education.

To give an international perspective, and to hear voices from further afield, the researcher will also examine Anna Farthing (2012) who has written about technical theatre arts training in the United Kingdom (UK) and Laurie Kincman (2010) who has written about undergraduate stage management training in the United States of America (USA). Although their work has not been widely cited and they have not published very
much, nevertheless, the researcher used their research as peripheral reference points as they represent important and relatively current voices in the field. Carly O’Neill’s recent Master’s thesis *Exit Stage Left: Mid Career Transitions of Female Stage Managers in Australia* (2017) is also discussed below.

3.2 Stage Management

The stage management profession is a critical component of the Live Performance Industry that generated almost $2 billion in revenue in 2018 (www.liveperformance.com.au). According to Live Performance Australia 2018, live performance is all instances of performance that occur live in front of an audience in the following categories: ballet and dance, children’s and family performance, circus and physical theatre, classical music, comedy, contemporary music, festivals, musical theatre, opera, special events, and theatre. (www.liveperformance.com.au)

Stage management is recognised as an integral part of the process of creating a piece of live performance. “The management of creativity entails more than just good administration; however, it also requires intuition, sensitivity, adaptability, resolution, intelligence and discipline” (Maccoy, 2004, p. 10). Undoubtedly, a successful Stage Manager has to be a ‘people-person’; collaborating not only with directors, choreographers, set and costume designers, lighting and sound designers, but also all the cast members and the crew. The Stage Manager is the first and vital ‘bridge’ to all departments in theatre as Maccoy (2004, p.11) states that “Stage Management involves the application of management techniques such as communication, time management, group dynamics, interpersonal relations, leadership skills and so on”.

Stage management is a challenging profession when working in a live entertainment environment, for example in theatre, events and entertainment industry. They are responsible for running the rehearsals, the live shows and the post production.
Schneider (1997) claims that:

Everyone relies so heavily on the stage manager - the pressure during technical and dress rehearsal becomes inhuman and the stage manager is very vulnerable. It is an unreasonable job, and I think the role should be re-examined. (p.199)

Their efforts are not always acknowledged and appreciated. As Coleman (2007) asserts that “Stage Managers also experience poor rate of pay, seemingly thankless tasks, and certainly very little glamour and usually very little appreciation” (pp. 43-44).

Most of the Stage Managers started their career young and stayed in the industry for years. They work their way up from Assistant Stage Manager (ASM) to Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) to Stage Manager (SM) or even Production Stage Manager (PSM) or Company Stage Manager (CSM). However, a common occurrence that has happened in stage management is that Stage Managers tend to stay single and childless with high career goals. Due to the work-life balance pressure, and the physical demands of long working hours on productions and touring shows, the researcher has witnessed a number of her ex-colleagues, especially women, decide to leave stage management to become arts administrators, production coordinators, or even change their career. “An increasing number of stage management personnel, on achieving the role of Stage Manager, decide to move on after a few years to a different career either in theatre or associated industries” (Maccoy, 2004, p. 235). McGraw (2015) also addresses that “Think of all of the talented young Stage Managers who burnout and quit their career before they reach 30. They were successful on each individual project, but they were running production sprints instead of a career marathon” (p. 26). Many Stage Managers noted long hours and the limited flexibility in their schedule as the primary challenge to raise a family. According to the survey conducted by the University of Iowa 2010 cites that “the likelihood of leaving stage management within the next five years, 17% indicated that
it was either ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’” (p.5). The survey also mentions that:

The major reasons given for a departure from stage management included the long hours, the challenges of having a family, comparatively low wages for the number of hours worked, finding careers with more stability, general burnout from extended work schedules and high job stress. (p.5)

The career path of a Stage Manager can be a smooth sailing one, but the long working hours and efforts being paid to the job are taking the toll. “Stage management might need to look beyond the profession for ongoing career development and satisfaction” (Maccoy 2004, p.235).

Carly O’Neill (2017) in her recent Master’s thesis from the Faculty of Creative Industries, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) entitled Exit Stage Left: Mid Career Transitions of Female Stage Managers in Australia, has examined Australian female Stage Managers encountering career development challenges that contribute to exiting the industry prematurely. There are some important links between the current study and this research in terms of work-life balance, job satisfaction, risk, and the gender balance within the industry of Stage Managers. O’Neill analyses that:

This study found that a combination of role stress, job stress, precarity, career limitations, lack of social support systems and incumbent lifestyle factors lead to dissatisfaction with the profession and contribute to early workforce exits. It also discovered that career transition experiences for professional Stage Managers are practically and psychologically complex because of the strong internal motivators that drive the initial occupational choice, alongside the psychological connection to, and fusing of identity with, the work itself. (p. 85)

Moreover, there is currently no exact data showing how many Stage Managers have migrated to other associated industries, like the entertainment and events industry where they can be a lucrative source of employment for theatre Stage Managers.
Maccoy (2004) speculates that:

Probably the most recent development in opportunities for theatre Stage Managers has arisen from the events industry. Large scale events such as music festivals and national celebrations require coordination, and event producers are increasingly turning to the theatre industry for expertise in this area. (p. 236)

The preliminary survey reflected Stage Managers often transitioned into the events industry, and although the different working situations are unique and differ to some degree to the workings of a traditional theatre context, the basic training of Stage Managers on the whole, enabled them to successfully transfer to the events industry. In Australia, undergraduate programs are specialised either in traditional Stage Management or Events and Entertainment. With the demand for Stage Managers and their expertise to manage events on the rise, there might well be a case to investigate how some of these skills could be more effectively incorporated into Events and Entertainment programs. However, this investigation falls outside the current focus of the research.

### 3.3 The Events Industry

Events management as a profession is a relatively new area of expertise compared to traditional stage management; however, they do share a number of skill sets that involve the application of the techniques required to organize and coordinate events effectively. As the formal training of stage management has been developed and refined for over 40 years, the training of stage management is more rigorous in terms of establishing fundamental approaches to management at an undergraduate level, but the scale of the event and its nature may not be the same as ‘on stage’ and ‘in theatre’. Therefore, there is a great potential that events management skills could be incorporated into stage management curriculum across the sector to better serve the changing industrial landscape and to provide a clearer pathway between traditional stage management and events management.
As with most relatively new and developing professional fields, there has been some discussion of the most suitable attributes and skills that need to be possessed by the modern-day Events Manager. For example, Robertson et al. (2012) in *Is this for real? Authentic learning for the challenging events environment* provides a description of required graduate outcomes including “the competencies of sustainable development, creativity and innovation, and networking are all seen as vital to graduate outcomes and employability” (p. 225). These newer industry requirements logically present questions about how such skills are acquired and the role of events management education in the professionalisation of future Events Managers.

Bladen et al. (2014) in the book *Educating the 21st Century Event Management Graduate: Pedagogy, Practice, Professionalism, and Professionalization* indicates that the events industry has only recently developed into a fast growing and influential industry, which operates within a very complex and ever-changing business environment. Bladen et al. (2014) elaborates that:

> There is a growing need for skilled graduates for the events industry, questions have arisen from industry specialists about whether or not the present UK university education model designed to prepare graduates for work in the events industry is effective. Event management education educates learners to achieve the various program outcomes associated with the effective practice of these techniques. (p. 6)

Are these program outcomes aligned with the demands of the industry? Bladen et al. (2014) concluded that the challenges of educating future events professionals requires a rethink of events education so as to develop more ‘reflective practice’. In a new and evolving industry, having the ability to reflect and change to different situations and demands is an important soft skill and necessary for the Events Manager to keep up with this evolving industry. The authors also discussed whether event management can yet be classified as a ‘genuine’ profession, how its workers can be effectively
professionalised, and how university or college education programmes can be better designed to meet the demanding needs.

To date, the development of the events industry in the UK is mirrored, to a large degree, elsewhere in the world. As such, there is a global need for specialist training and international standards. Barron and Leask (2017) in *Visitor engagement at museums: Generation y and ‘lates’ events at the National Museum of Scotland* summarized the rate of growth of events management education being most notable in Australia and the UK. Being a distinct area of study, Barron and Leask (2017) also credited the growth of events management education to the needs of an emerging profession for qualified managers and to the popularity of mega-events such as the Olympic Games. Australia had the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 whilst the London Olympic Games were in 2012. Since the turn of the century, these landmark events had a major impact on the cities and the country in which they were held, and also considering the many events that preceded and happened after these events, the idea of large scale events in a major city’s calendar has become the new normal over the past two decades. As with organisations building capacity to host these events comes the recruitment of highly skilled managers and in many cases they have been found amongst the technical and production management workforce. This point echoes with Maccoy’s (2004) concern (see above p.27) about events producers increasingly turning to the theatre industry for expertise in management and coordination.

Both Maccoy (2004) and Barron and Leask (2017) pointed out that with the massive growth of the events industry, there were not enough ‘professionals’ within the events industry to run large-scale projects. Therefore, for those Stage Managers who have been upgrading their skill sets and knowledge in events management, they have had wider and broader job opportunities not only within theatre and performing arts, but also in events and entertainment industry. As will be presented in Chapter 6 Discussion, a lot
of responses to the following questions mirrored the analysis of these authors.

### 3.4 Transferable Skills in Education and Employment

In reviewing the following literature, the researcher is placing stage management education into the broader context of developments in 21st century education and the necessity of teaching transferable skills. In light of the diverse skill sets required by Stage Managers for the theatre, and then, for example, if they want to transition into the entertainment and events industry, the researcher has identified with the support of the following authors that 21st century graduates from stage management programmes will need to be more versatile and display a broader range of transferable skills. Notwithstanding that Stage Managers are on the most part successfully transferring into related industries using their basic skill sets, the researcher argues that being better prepared at an undergraduate level in terms of the application of transferable skills in stage management is crucial to securing and advancing careers. It is very important to understand fully what the demands of the industry are, and critically evaluate the current offerings in higher learning. With this literature review presenting the broader issues around developing transferable skills, the researcher’s survey focussed on perspectives of new graduates and seasoned professionals in stage management in this area of transferable skills.

The teaching of transferable skills in education, particularly in the last decade, has risen in importance, especially as new technologies are transforming many industries with some traditional roles becoming obsolete. As discussed earlier in the context of stage management training and events management, Stage Managers have increasingly been relied on to move between different roles and industries because of the transferability of the skills that they learn in their undergraduate programs. From the survey, it is found out that the participants started learning different transferable skills
which were embedded in the curriculum throughout their study, but they did not know how to apply them properly until they were doing different positions in the industry. As Pellegrino et al. (2012) in *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century* claims that “Business leaders, education organizations and researchers have begun to call for new education policies that target the development of broad, transferable skills and knowledge, often referred to as ‘21st Century Skills.’”(p.16). If today’s schooling and informal learning activities are well planned in the context of the 21st century, students, ideally, would be able to adapt to challenges and increase their employment security.

Eggins (1992) in his seminal and still widely cited work: *Arts Graduates, their Skills and their Employment: Perspectives for Change*, highlighted views on what institutions were doing to meet students’ needs and expressed how industry partnerships could work together to best equip undergraduates and enable them to develop their full potential. Pellegrino et al. (2012) point out some of the 21st century skills that schools should develop and teach are “problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-management” (p. 1). Pellegrino et al. (2012) describe all the essential aspects and skills that enhance deeper learning and higher order thinking. It is important that 21st century skills should also include creativity, innovation, and ethics that contribute to the development of formal or informal learning. However, both authors point out that the ability to transfer knowledge from one context to another is not just encapsulated in the above skills; arguably there is not enough evidence to show conclusive outcomes of how teaching 21st century skills have impacted on graduates’ performance and advancement. Moreover, in Eggins’ descriptions, the wide range of different knowledge types and skills are not always clearly defined or distinguished from the related subjects.
In addition, Eggins (1992) expressed the views of industrialists from a broad spectrum on the employment of arts graduates. He gave the views of students on their expectations of employment, and presented research carried out on arts graduates and their employment, and on transferable skills, drawing on international perspectives. Eggins (1992) states that:

> It is, therefore, more important than ever for career advisers and academic staff to work closely together in the interest of students not simply because the former are in possession of much occupational and employer intelligence but because they constantly witness the transition of students from education to employment. (p. 205)

Furthermore, Eggins (1992) presented findings of significant research on arts graduates and their employment but the main limitation is that it lacks the details of how transferable skills are needed in the field. Being published in the 1990s, Eggins’ research is not current in terms of publishing date. However, the problems that his research addresses reflect contemporary issues in education. The researcher has based her work on the foundational principles of Eggins and the other authors in this review to further build upon the available literature, and to create a current archive of knowledge taken from the field.

The purpose and reflection in the researcher’s survey is timely, and is an attempt to specifically illustrate on a practical level what transferable skills are, and how they have been used by Stage Managers in 2020.

Shackleford’s (2014) *Transferable Skills* is an article that offers information on the skills in the art and craft of stage management in the USA. It presents information on the experiences of former Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) Stage Managers on the portability, connections and surprises related to stage management. Shackleford (2014) claims that:
The art and craft of Stage Management involves a particular set of skills for success. Yet those qualities are not unique to theatre; in fact they are applicable to many careers beyond Stage Management. Although these abilities may seem second nature to good Stage Managers, it’s gratifying to find that they are valued in many other professions. (p. 10)

Shackleford (2014) interviewed four former Stage Managers who have now become a production manager, a senior paralegal, a doctor, and a parenting expert respectively. She concluded that the transferable skills like time management, organizational skills, work ethic, problem solving and decision making learnt from stage management were crucial in becoming successful in their new careers. For example, from the researcher’s survey, the participants had identified numerous transferable skills that mirror the results of Shackleford’s research and that had benefited their career development including scheduling, budgeting, people management, team management, time management, project management, resource management, communication skills, and organisational skills.

3.5 Blended Learning in Performing Arts

In the following section, the researcher discusses several sources concerning approaches to blended learning in general HEIs and specifically how it has been implemented in a stage management context. Although the researcher’s survey was conducted at the beginning of the pandemic, and several questions were directed at blended learning, the consequences of performances and certain modes of teaching becoming impossible had not completely happened. The urgency of the problem was therefore not reflected in the survey. However, since the survey was completed, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically and some might argue irreversibly changed theatre production, the events industry and importantly, modes of teaching and learning in performing arts like music, dance, theatre and technical and production management. Therefore, the researcher has included a discussion of blended
learning in general, and in particular to the delivery of the stage management curriculum.

This section is specifically designed for Australia with detailed description and grounded in the first-hand and this is an important original contribution made by this study.

Blended learning refers to learning design that strategically, systematically and effectively integrates a range of face-to-face, online, mobile, distance, open, social and other technologies that enhances learning across physical and virtual environments, as informed and driven by student needs, and support for desired learning activities and learning outcomes.

(Blended Learning @James Cook University - A guide for staff 2015 p.7)

From the researcher’s earlier investigation, blended learning in performing arts has been developing worldwide for the past 15 years. It has been cited by various authors; including research on the use of technology, especially about mobile devices and blended learning in Dance and Drama teaching but is still in an early stage (Li, Zhou, & Teo, 2017); in Dance and Drama classes, however, the use of mobile technology in teaching is limited (Robinson, 2015; D'Cruz & Dennis 2020); Dance and Drama teaching methods, nonetheless, are still quite traditional and conservative (Calvert, Wilke, Ryman, & Fox, 2005).

There is evidence that blended learning in stage management has been utilised in the USA for more than 15 years. Queensland University of Technology (QUT) has been conducting blended learning in stage management over the past few years according to Carly O'Neil, the Study Area Coordinator (Technical Production) and Lecturer in Stage Management - BFA (Technical Production). However, the current situation demands an unprecedented emphasis on a blended learning approach, and the near future will be inherently experimental with no real precedents to refer to. Due to the long tradition of stage management being taught Face-To-Face (FTF) with production practice and
workshops in place, it seems to the researcher that blended learning for the delivery of stage management curriculum will be challenging.

Moskal's et al. (2013) initial blended learning strategy centred around a group of questions that are seen as crucial to the development of blended learning programs that include some key points of critical reflection including:

1. Why should the institution engage in blended learning? What are our goals, and what outcomes do we expect to achieve, both initially and longer term?
2. What student benefits do we seek-improved success, increased persistence, shortened time-to-degree, etc?
3. What courses or programs will we offer in a blended format, and why?
4. How will we engage and support our faculty in order to make them successful?
5. How will we roll out blended learning throughout the institution? Where do we begin?
6. What levels of investments are we prepared to make and what returns do we expect? (p.16)

As various cities and schools transition from hard-lockdown initiatives (‘Circuit-Breaker’ in Singapore) to curb the spread of the virus and into allowing people more freedoms to access services and education (with restrictions), the challenge for HEIs over the coming months and years is to maintain safety measures whilst being critically discerning about what curriculum is actually delivered online and what is face-to-face (FTF). The researcher finds the above questions to be useful signposts in the planning of the implementation of blended learning. One of the most important aspects of these points is that all departments within an institution need to be aligned and respond to the same set of directives, as opposed to individual programs creating SOPs for their specific needs. Without an overall collective vision for the implementation of blended
learning, there is the danger of the delivery of programs becoming inconsistent. For example, the central organisation that oversees quality in the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) reacted very quickly in March 2020 in publishing its initial guidance on maintaining quality and standards in the crisis, through a series of thematic guidance and supporting resources. QAA is now beginning to look beyond the immediate crisis and to develop guidance with the sector and support providers in planning for 2020-2021. In their most recent published paper: *Questions to Inform a Toolkit for Enhancing Quality in a Digital Environment* (2020) suggests that:

Higher education providers are diverse in size and curriculum offer, as well as approaches and institutional experience of digital methods of teaching and learning. Therefore, some of the considerations may be more applicable to some providers than others, and some of them may not be applicable at all. (p.1)

Moving forward from the mentality of emergency reaction, HEIs will need to develop a more considered approach to sustain high standards of curriculum delivery in this new mode of practice. According to *Blended mobile learning in theatre arts classrooms in higher education* by Zhou, M. et al (2018):

The face-to-face and online collaborative learning activities provided in a blended learning environment strengthens the opportunities wherein mobile learners can readily communicate multi-modally with peers, teachers and other experts, and exchange information. (p.309)

However, how effective is blended learning in theatre arts teaching by analysing the views of students and instructors in university theatre arts classes? Zhou, et al had conducted a study in mobile learning in a blended environment (MLBE) in 2017. A total of 146 freshmen who were studying ‘Introduction to Dance Studies’ and ‘Introduction to Drama Studies’ from a public comprehensive university in Macau, China were involved in an online poll and 18 students were randomly selected for a semi-structured interview. Over 90% of the participants in the survey indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that blended learning enhanced their learning experiences.
Zhou, et al quoted “interviews collected consistent statements tapping on the main features of blended learning: convenience, flexibility, and efficiency, while expressing their feelings of discontent about traditional lecture-based teaching as ‘boring, disengaged, outdated, and lack of freedom to explore the subject area” (p.312). The researcher argues that Zhou’s survey outcome would be more useful if the data collected were to compare with another separate study including their year three or four students, so that the readers could understand more how the traditional learning method and blended learning were integrating with each other.

According to Garrison et al. (2004) in *Blended learning: uncovering its transformative potential in higher education*, “leaders of higher education are challenged to position their institutions to meet the connectivity demands of prospective students and meet growing expectations and demands for higher quality learning experiences and outcomes” (p.95). This is no more critical than in the delivery of traditional programs in the performing arts where the studio, theatre, hands on experience is crucial to teaching the fundamental skills through practice. As institutions carefully navigate this delicate balance there will inevitably be trial, error and successes along the way. Garrison et al. (2004) cites that “It is not clear as to how much, or how little, online learning is inherent to blended learning” but according to *Blended Learning @JCU - A guide for staff* (2015), it claims that in blended learning, the relationship between the course type and percentage of content delivered online as 30% online to 70% FTF. Courses use web-based technology to facilitate what is necessary for a FTF course. Blended learning should be an effective integration of FTF and internet technology: “No two blended learning designs are identical. This introduced the great complexity of blended learning”. (Garrison et al. 2004, p.97) In view of the above, HEIs therefore, need to have overarching strategies for the implementation of blended learning whilst having the flexibility to enable each particular program room to adapt these strategies for the particular needs of their students and the skill sets.
that need to be taught.

Although in a general sense and for certain theoretical subjects “...blended learning has the potential to be more effective and efficient when compared to a traditional classroom model. The evidence is that students achieve as well, or better, on exams and are satisfied with the approach” (Garrison et al. 2004, p.100); blended learning as a methodology to deliver practice / studio based modules has yet to be proven to be effective. The researcher agrees that “blended learning has enormous versatility and potential but concomitantly creates daunting challenges on the front end of the design process” (Garrison et al. 2004, p.100). However, the researcher finds that the authors are emphasizing methodology, framework and strategy in implementing blended learning but when this is applied to the teaching stage management, there is limited evidence at this stage about the students' learning outcomes and satisfaction rate in blended learning. Graham et al. (2013) conclude that:

Little was found in this study regarding how institutions are working to increase student capacities to succeed in blended and online environments. Much of the adaptation and implementation work has focused on directly helping and supporting faculty rather than students. Future research might also pursue what challenges students are facing with BL [Blended Learning] and what successful institutions are doing to help students to choose and succeed with blended options. (p. 11)

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, HEIs had to respond very quickly within weeks to delivering these new teaching methods to students. To the researcher’s observation in Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong, in March 2020, universities, colleges and schools campuses were forced to close and social-distancing was introduced. There were no longer face-to-face (FTF) tutorials and lessons and students were staying home for online learning for weeks and months. The researcher particularly observed the HEIs that she has had contact with for her present study including Western Australian Academy of the Arts (WAAPA), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), LASALLE
College of the Arts (LASALLE) and Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA), all went to online teaching through different internet platforms. As a ‘quick fix’ to an immediate and dangerous situation, the process and circumstances were understandably hurried and less than ideal. COVID-19 has forced institutions into adopting blended learning through necessity and in the coming years will need to understand how to implement this strategy with more consideration. In *Blended Learning: A dangerous idea?* written by Moskal et al. (2013) explain that:

> Implementation of a successful blended learning program requires alignment of institutional, faculty, and student goals. Reliable and robust infrastructure must be in place to support students and faculty. Continuous evaluation can effectively track the impact of blended learning on students, faculty, and the institutions.

(p.15)

As HEIs progress through these uncertain times, it is crucial that they remain agile and strategically reactive to student learning. It is important that students remain at the centre of the process, and that within an open and constant feedback loop, more practical and constructive answers to these problems can be arrived at in the future.

### 3.6 Mapping Technical Theatre Arts Training

In the following sections, the researcher discusses two relevant articles in *Mapping Technical Theatre Arts Training* by Anna Farthing and *Stocking the Kit: Undergraduate Stage Management Training in the United States of America* by Laurie Kincman. These sources explore Technical Theatre Arts training and education; teaching transferable skills; their relationship with industry; career opportunities, and the challenges that HEIs encounter. The researcher used these papers, written in the UK and the USA respectively, that although are written based on education systems and industries in different countries, do reflect closely the current situation of students, graduates and the industry in Australia. As discussed earlier, given the scarcity of research in Australia in these areas, and in particular the preparation Stage Managers receive in terms of
them being able to branch out into different, but related industries; for example the event industry, these articles became valuable reference points to what was a key focus area for the researcher in her preliminary survey.

*Mapping Technical Theatre Arts Training* is a research paper proposed to higher education researchers (UK) in 2012 by Anna Farthing and her colleagues from the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD). Farthing (2012) claims that:

The project was inspired by an internal review of Technical Theatre Arts (TTA) that was being led by Neil Fraser, Director of Technical Training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA)...The intention of the TTA review was to provide a comprehensive appraisal of the contents, context and delivery of all technical training programmes, in order to ensure that they continued to fulfill [RADA’S] mission statement. (p. 6)

*Mapping Technical Theatre Arts Training* investigates the provision of training in higher education, for those seeking careers in technical theatre within the performing arts. These areas include stage management, design, lighting, sound, props, costume, scenic construction and scenic art. The review adopted a multi-faceted methodology, which included a presentation by, and discussion with, heads of departments, industry visits, and student/graduate feedback. Farthing (2012) elaborates that:

The various roles that make up Technical Theatre Arts demand skills and aptitudes that include sciences and arts, alongside creativity, artistic interpretation, design, engineering, technology, maths, logistics, construction, and an array of communication and people skills. (p. 14)

The paper identified the need to develop a new degree for students to further advance in TTA in response to developing employment opportunities. Within the report, Farthing (2012) quoted from the online resource *Raising the Profile: Backstage Careers* (Gunter and Snart 2010), a report that:

documents the development of a new foundation degree, including building new networks of employers, work placement hosts and progression routes for those wanting to ‘top up’ and move into higher education within what they called Technical Theatre/ Production Arts. The employment areas identified included
Theatre, live music, conferences, outdoor events, fashion shows and dance events. (Farthing, p. 17)

The intention of Farthing’s research is to stimulate debate and support emerging communities of practice, and the higher education Academy when addressing issues and concerns regarding education and training in Technical Theatre Arts. Farthing (2012) also recognizes that the traditional technical theatre courses are teaching many transferable skills that graduates are already using:

Most graduates from higher education [theatre] courses will work either partly or entirely outside the theatre industry, in concerts, corporate events, entertainment events, festivals, etc. (p. 6)

In view of Technical Theatre Arts skills, Farthing has pointed out that there is room to improve the curriculum to adapt to the fast-changing industry. Farthing (2012, p. 9) further explains that “recent research indicates that Technical Theatre Arts and associated production management skills are core to the growth of the creative and cultural economy”. According to Farthing (2012), there was a forecast shortage of 6000 offstage/ backstage workers in 2017 that needs to be addressed. Demonstrating that the industry is probably outgrowing the number of graduates and also changing in such a way that alumni are not as industry ready as they could be in terms of being able to transfer their college training to meet the changing demands of the industry.

Farthing (2012) pointed out (not unlike undergraduate Stage Management programmes in higher education institutions in Australia) that these programmes and their relationship with industry in the UK have received little attention in terms of revision whilst the industry has been changing quickly:

However, to date, academic enquiry in Drama, Dance and Music has focussed primarily on the interests of those following the pathways as performers, teachers or researchers in these disciplines. Technical Theatre Arts has been a somewhat neglected area. (p. 10)
Moreover, there seems to be a lack of information provided by higher education institutions (HEIs) about the TTA courses they offer, Farthing (2012) claims that:

Students and employers are left having to refer closely to the curriculum information provided by each higher education institution to understand what might be the scope and level of technical theatre learning in any given course. . . It was very difficult to compile a list of courses in the first instance, and it is increasingly difficult to keep information up to date as course providers do not respond to annual requests to update information or check data entries online. (pp. 18-19)

In addition, it has been hard to obtain up-to-date information about skill sets on Technical Theatre Arts training. Farthing (2012) indicates that:

There is generic information on the skills that will be gained by studying for a Drama degree, and how those generic skills such as teamwork, communication and problem solving can be transferred to general employment, but no specific information on Technical Theatre Arts. . . Many of the organizations report that it is increasingly difficult to maintain up to date data on opportunities for learning about technical theatre arts in formal and informal education. (pp. 18-19)

From the research, Farthing (2012) pointed out that the younger generation would like to get into Theatre Technical Arts to broaden their skills and knowledge, but there is a lack of information and conscious ‘joining-the-dots’ about the possibilities of this future career path. As Farthing (2012) notes that:

Young people who may be interested in carpentry, electrical work or engineering, and who therefore could be interested in Technical Theatre Arts, are unlikely to be introduced to the careers available from developing these skills to a higher level. (p. 24)

It is very important that one has acquired the right skill sets in order to get the relevant employment but what are they? What are the skill sets that stage management students and working Stage Managers lack? Farthing (2012) mentions that:

The creative and cultural sector is growing, and there is a shortage of trained people to fill Technical Theatre Arts roles, so there is employment available for applicants with the right skills. However, although employers claim applicants lack skills, it is difficult to get accurate information on exactly what skills
employers require. With the sector pattern of short-term contracts and freelance working, skills need to change from project to project. (p. 25-26)

Although specific skill sets would be needed depending on the demands of certain specialised roles, employability, in terms of students having a thorough grounding in the practical skills of theatre arts would presumably be a core objective of the teaching.

If we are not equipping [students] to work, then we are not honouring their degree. [The focus group participants] discussed whether the industry was looking for graduates from an ‘academic’ background or from a ‘skills’ based background in order to try and identify ‘What is the perfect training?’ (Farthing, 2012, p. 26)

Farthing (2012) is making the point that not unlike other industries, employers are looking for potential employees to not only have skills specific to theatre arts jobs they must also have ‘soft’ skills in their training but what are they? Farthing (2012) states that:

It was generally agreed that ‘soft’ skills such as being a good team member, a good communicator, able to listen, and being able to learn new techniques and approaches quickly while on the job were all important skills, but difficult to describe in terms of ‘learning outcomes’ as part of formal curriculum design. (p. 26)

Farthing’s (2012) analysis of education practices and the relationship to industry in the UK is relevant to the researcher’s inquiry and influenced the outcome of the design of the survey; in that it posed important questions about the connection between industry and HIEs. This is especially true of the researcher’s desire to understand this connection in the context of Australia. Her preliminary research focussed on the curriculum of for example QUT and how this intersected with the theatre industry but also, importantly the role of training programs that prepared students for the events and entertainment industry. In Australia, training for Stage Management and training for Events and Entertainment Industry has been separated as two distinct specialisations. This is particularly true of the programs at WAAPA, and in the more
traditional conservatories of VCA and NIDA where only traditional Stage Management is being offered. QUT seems to be leading the way in attempting to blend the two practices and therefore reflecting more closely the broader demands of the industry also known as Work Informed/Influenced Learning or WIL.

3.7 Stocking the Kit: Undergraduate Stage Management Training in the United States of America

Kincman’s article presents an analysis on stage management training programmes that offer a variety of methods that attempt to combine core basic theatre courses with mentoring and practical experience to develop specific skills for Stage Managers in the USA. The article is based on a survey that was conducted through a web-based questionnaire in public and private schools. Kincman (2010) also conducted a survey of stage management training programmes in USA colleges and universities concluding in 2009. 108 colleges and universities from each of the fifty states were involved, of whom 64 percent of participants provided detailed information about their curriculum and extra-curricular programmes. The surveys were about how different stage management programmes were compared to one another in terms of the basic skills and courses they included. Kincman (2010) elaborates that:

> Surprisingly there were more similarities than differences. Both in terms of required courses and elective options, nearly all Stage Management programmes appear to agree that in order to coordinate a theatre production and communication with all of the artists and technicians involved, a broad curricular path is the best preparation. (p. 16)

The contribution of theater courses in the development of good critical thinking and communication skills of young Stage Managers is also discussed. As Kincman (2010) mentions that:

> The complex set of skills required to perform the duties of a Stage Manager would certainly seem to require specialized training. And as the entertainment industry evolves and technologies change, more skills and experience will be
Kincman (2010) queries about whether the conservatory-style training of a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) programme is a better way to produce successful Stage Managers or the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme’s general approach provides a better foundation. Kincman (2010) expresses that “That struggle led me to wonder how my approach to training Stage Managers compared to the paths taken by my colleagues around the country” (p. 13). She then concludes that:

BFA students will take more theatre courses, likely including more targeted classroom sessions on Stage Management specifics. BA students, even with an emphasis in Stage Management, will have a more broad-based degree, receiving more of their specific Stage Management training in production situations. (p. 20)

It all depends whether a college or university is offering a BFA or BA. In Australia, most of the Stage Management courses are BFA while events management courses are BA. Kincman (2010) states that:

The schools listed the following among the methods for a young Stage Manager to receive training with a focus on stage managing:

- In a design and technology programme with a focus on stage managing
- In courses and workshops on stage managing
- In one class and then on to the show!
- Solely through the practicum requirements of their theatre degree (p. 13)

Kincman (2010, p. 15) points out that “Many programmes admit that their student pool of Stage Managers is not large enough. Therefore, theatre departments need to devote some recruitment efforts to finding Stage Managers, or at least those with the interests and preliminary background”. She argues the exposure of the courses to junior college leavers is limited, thus not all incoming junior college students understand fully about the valid degree path, let alone the future career path. This echoes the same point given by Farthing (2012) as shown above. Kincman (2010) quoted Cynthia Kocher from the University of Miami that:
In addition to the general education, BFA Stage Management majors specifically are required to take Business analytics, Interpersonal Communication, Public Speaking and Organizational Behaviour- all offered in the Communication and Business schools. There is also a list of several other business, psychology, and communication classes that they are encouraged to take as electives. (p.17)

According to Kincman (2010), nearly 74 percent of the Stage Management students who responded indicated that they needed to acquire practical experience in order to graduate. “Of the programmes that do require practical experience, all of them reported that students must work as both a Stage Manager and ASM (Assistant Stage Manager) during their college careers” (Kincman, 2010, p. 18). To the researcher’s observation, not many performing arts higher education institutions (HEIs) in Australia currently offer internships and secondment to students. This might be due to the length of the course or the credit structure of the course. However, apart from participating in the in-house productions and concerts, students do need real experiences from the outside world before graduating. This is potentially an area of enquiry for future research into Stage Management programs in HEIs in Australia.

3.8 Mental Health

Due to the scarcity of preliminary surveys in Stage Management in the area of mental health, and because the issue arose as an important finding from the preliminary survey, the researcher has drawn a contextual reference with a survey of actors published in Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) (https://www.meaa.org/news/the-australian-actors-wellbeing-study) issued in December 2015. In the article *Actors’ well being under the microscope* there is anecdotal evidence of stress, anxiety, depression, bullying, and alcohol and drug use among performers. There were 782 members who responded to the survey compiled by Dr Mark Seton, Associate Professor Ian Maxwell and Dr Marianna Szabo from the University of Sydney. The key findings are as follows:
• More than 20% of respondents report that even with additional work their total gross income is well below the poverty line.

• 41% report earning less than $10,000 a year from acting in 2011-12.

• 62% report that work-related stress had an impact on their wellbeing.

• Only 14% of trained actors reported having received any training in financial management.

• A quarter of actors reported having experienced debilitating performance anxiety. A similar proportion reported having experienced bullying or harassment in the workplace.

• 39% experienced difficulties in relaxing or letting go after performing an “emotionally and physically demanding” role.

• Australian actors reported significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than did Australian adults in general.

• 43% of males and 36% of females report using alcohol at levels that place them at moderate risk of harm or above. 287 respondents reported “using alcohol in response to problems related to their work as a performer”.

These figures draw a grim picture of the vocation of acting, and whilst Stage Managers are commonly sharing their workplace and collaborating closely with actors. From the survey, Stage Managers enjoy more consistent employment, and the industry is regulated more. However, Stage Managers are working in another higher stress level of theatre backstage in coordination and organization of the entire production.

3.9 Summary

In this literature review, the researcher has provided an overview of stage management skills and knowledge; the events industry; blended learning; transferable skills in relation to education and employment; stage management and career development and mental
health. The researcher found gaps in some of the related areas and other unknown factors to be yet investigated. Moreover, the researcher has presented an in-depth discussion about Farthing's article *Mapping Technical Theatre Arts Training* in the UK and Kincman's ‘*Stocking the kit: Undergraduate Stage Management Training*’ in the USA. Aspects of this research include how the curriculum of technical theatre and Stage Management programmes needed to adapt to developments in the industry in the UK and the USA. In addition, the researcher pointed out how the communication of the programmes also needed to be more transparent in terms of attracting more students who wanted to explore the many transferable skills offered by these programmes.

In reviewing the research questions below, only Question 2, 4 and 5 were answered by the literature review. Therefore, in order to establish the grounds for the researcher’s own research, a preliminary survey was conducted.

1) What is the current situation of Stage Managers in Australia?
2) What is a Stage Manager?
3) How are Stage Managers currently educated in Australia?
4) What are the skill sets that Stage Managers in Australia possess?
5) What are the transferable skills in stage management that are also relevant to other industries?
6) What is their level of satisfaction with a career in stage management: financially, progression and achievement, job security, work-life balance?
7) What is the current situation regarding mental health for Stage Managers?
8) Do they think that upgrading their existing academic qualifications would result in better job opportunities?

As stated previously, at this time, and especially in the global context, there are limited academic resources in terms of research in this area (curriculum development and preliminary surveys) especially in Australia. Therefore, this thesis needs to rely heavily on gathering data and information through the survey, which the researcher conducted
between March to May 2020 to provide a new database for further academic research. The researcher realizes that developing these particular research skills is a vital aspect to making the study successful. The researcher is hoping that by using these methodologies the research can contribute to an awareness about the transferable skills within stage management to enhance employability; revision of current undergraduate stage management programmes; to the fast-changing and multi-faceted theatre, events and entertainment industry; and provide valuable information for the education and industry sectors, especially during periods of pandemic.
Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This research study employed a qualitative approach that involved the conduct of an online survey that was a web-based questionnaire using Google Forms. The survey aimed to collect demographic; educational background; transferable skills; views on employability, especially during economic downturns like the current COVID-19 pandemic; general mental health; personal insurance and marital status for Stage Managers in Australia who are currently involved in the industry. The survey's aim is to provide a new and up-to-date archive of information and literature for references in the theatre, event and entertainment industry and for the higher education institutions (HEIs). The survey was conducted with 33 Stage Managers from across all states in Australia (except the Northern Territory) between 30 March 2020 and 5 May 2020.

The methods used were first based on the qualitative research methodologies taken from: An Introduction to Qualitative Research by Uwe Flick (2009). The researcher then took references from Doing Qualitative Research by David Silverman (2010), Small-Scale Social Survey Methods and Developing a Questionnaire by Bill Gillham (2007/2008) and Designing & Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide by Rea and Parker (2005). Finally, the researcher focused on The Good Research Guide for small-scale social research projects by Martyn Denscombe (2007). As Flick (2009) further explains that:

The essential features of qualitative research are the correct choice of appropriate methods and theories; the recognition and analysis of different perspectives; the researchers’ reflections on their research as part of the progress of knowledge production; and the variety of approaches and methods. (p.14)
4.2 Research Methodology: Research Questions in the Research Process

This research study follows the qualitative research methodology outlined by Flick (2009, p. 99) and is illustrated by Table 4.1 below to create ‘Research Questions in the Research Process’. This methodology enabled the researcher to create and answer research questions logically and to establish an appropriate strategy.

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<tr>
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<th>Research Questions in the Research Process</th>
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Table 4.1: Qualitative Research Methodology as outlined by Flick (2009, p. 99)
4.3 Methods

4.31 Survey

In March 2020, the researcher began giving a pilot test to 12 colleagues (from various industries and no Stage Managers) to get their feedback and to develop the questions, flow and focus on the survey. The researcher made some minor adjustments to the survey and then distributed the finalized survey through the ‘Stage Management Network Australia’ Facebook page and personal industry contacts. Out of the 50 questions, 42 were closed-ended questions and eight were open-ended questions. As Rea and Parker (2005) elaborate that:

Most questions in a questionnaire have closed-ended response choices or categories. Such questions provide a fixed list of alternative responses and ask the respondent to select one or more of them as indicative of the best possible answer. In contrast, open-ended questions have no preexisting response categories and permit the respondent a great deal of latitude in responding to them. (p.42)

This mixed method was the most appropriate for this study because through close-ended questions, the researcher was able to collect data from the demographics, education and wages etc. On the other hand, for open-ended questions, the researcher was able to collect attitudes and opinions of the respondents towards their skill sets, education and knowledge.

The questions specifically covered the areas of demographics including age, gender and residential status; education, including undergraduate education; types of curriculum including various subject areas; and the effectiveness of this training in their working life; job security, especially during economic downturns like the current COVID-19 pandemic; and a general overview of the mental health of Stage Managers in Australia.
4.32 Sampling

The design of the survey was based on what is referred to as a nonprobability sampling, as Rea and Parker (2005) state that: “In nonprobability sampling, the selection process is not formal; knowledge of the population is limited, and hence the probability of selecting any given unit of the population cannot be determined” (p.157). Because of the scope of this research study, the lack of previous research in this area, and the small size of the industry, nonprobability sampling was an effective method. As Gillham (2008) asserts that: “It has to be said that these methods are more likely to be used in small-scale surveys: the main reason being their greater practicality, not least that often they are the only methods possible” (p.18).

According to www.joboutlook.gov.au, the number of people working as Stage Managers (as their main job) stayed about the same over the past four to nine years- from 290 in 2011 to 350 in 2016. This is a very small industry with Stage Managers working throughout Australia with a concentration of work in New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria (VIC) where the major theatres and events are situated. However, it is unfortunate that there is no current Stage Manager employment data shown from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The latest issue under Performing Arts and Music of Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview was last updated in 2014. In view of the currency of the data available, this survey is timely and necessary in terms of collecting relevant data for the study.

Within nonprobability sampling, there are sub categories including convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling. The researcher
chose to utilise snowball sampling because it would generate the momentum required to reach the target numbers as Gillham (2008) notes that:

The term almost explains itself: you pick up the numbers in your sample as you go along. The researcher knows what category of individuals they are after but no list, as such, exists. It is a way of identifying hard-to-find members of a distinctly defined group. (p.21)

The survey generated 20 responses in the first week and snowballed to a total of 33 responses with a steady response rate over the ensuing weeks. The respondents all fit into the criteria of being a Stage Manager or have worked as a Stage Manager in Australia who are between 18 and 60+ years of age.

Due to the Privacy and Confidentiality Acts, it is nearly impossible to get a list (sampling frame) from the union or directly from the respondents. However, by using snowball sampling, the researcher had a greater possibility of reaching the target group, as Gillham (2008) states that:

A list (sample frame) may not exist as such and, even if it does, access to it may be difficult or prohibited. If a list is unobtainable then some variant of snowball sampling is the main option, provided that you are fairly clear about your research purpose and the kind of people you are looking for. (p.26)

A list (sample frame) was able to be created with 33 respondents after the snowball sampling was finished.

In determining whether the qualitative sample size was large enough to obtain enough data to sufficiently describe the phenomenon and address the research questions, the researcher decided to set the target sample size as 30 participants. The procedure can be explained as follows: Firstly, it is based on the last data published by www.joboutlook.gov.au that the number of people working as Stage Managers (in their main job) stayed about the same from 290 in 2011 to 350 in 2016. The researcher then analysed this steady growth trend of Stage Managers over the years by calculating the
percentage of growth to be approximately 4% increase each year. Therefore, it is estimated there might be 427 Stage Managers around in 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, according to Jacob Cohen, the equations for qualitative sample size calculation are as follows:

\[
\text{Sample Size} = \frac{\text{Distribution of 50\%}}{\left(\frac{\text{Margin of Error} \%}{\text{Confidence Level Score}}\right)^2}
\]

\[
\text{True Sample Size} = \frac{\text{Sample Size} \times \text{Population}}{\text{Sample Size} + \text{Population} - 1}
\]

With the confidence level of 95% and margin of error of 5%, the true sample size is calculated as 119. As this is a 50-question survey with a mixed method of questions (eight open-ended and 42 closed-ended questions), this 119 true sample size is far too big for this small-scale research study and not realistic. In order to strike the balance between the sample size and the 50-question survey and to consider the complexity of analysing data procedures and time, the researcher examined only 25% of the figure and set the target at 30 participants with the same confidence level of 95% and margin of error of 5%. This approach was further confirmed by Denscombe (2017) “Whatever the theoretical issues, the simple fact is that surveys and sampling are frequently used in small-scale research involving between 30 and 250 cases” (p.28). The researcher found this number an appropriate sample size for the validity and accuracy of the results. In Some Practical Guidelines for Effective Sample-Size Determination written by Russell V. Lenth (2001), the author explains that:

> Statistical study must be of adequate size, relative to the goals of the study. It must be “big enough” that an effect of such magnitude as to be of scientific significance will also be statistically significant. It is just as important, however, that the study will not be “too big,” where an effect of little scientific importance is nevertheless statistically detectable. (p.20)

In practice, snowball sampling proved to be effective in reaching the target sample of participants with the survey generating 33 responses over a five-week period.
4.33 Recruitment

Participants were recruited through the ‘Stage Management Network Australia’ Facebook page and personal industry contacts in Australia. The respondents all fit into the criteria of being a Stage Manager or have worked as a Stage Manager in Australia who are between 18 and 60+ years of age. In the first stage, the researcher made 20 approaches to potential participants who fit into the prescribed study participant demographics. They agreed to complete the survey within the first two weeks of the research timeframe. They were approached through email and were given the project brief on the project aims, processes and information. Once they agreed verbally to take part, they were then provided with the relevant formal paperwork, including the Information Letter (Appendix B) and Consent Form (Appendix C) as approved by the Edith Cowan University (ECU) Ethics Committee. Once the written consent was confirmed, the online survey was made open for participation. The remainder of the 13 participants who were being snowballed during the following three weeks were taken through the same procedure.

4.34 Survey Process

After the survey was closed and raw data were collected, the five stages of the process of qualitative data analysis were employed according to Denscombe (2007):

- Preparation of the data;
- Familiarity with the data;
- Interpreting the data (developing codes, categories and concepts);
- Verifying the data;
- Representing the data. (p.288)

Firstly, the researcher prepared the data by converting the answers of the 42 close-ended questions into pie charts and bar charts for easy understanding whilst the eight open-ended questions were converted into verbatim point forms (See Appendix
A). Secondly, the data were read thoroughly so the researcher could familiarise themselves with the information. Thirdly, the data were interpreted into codes, themes, categories and concepts for organisation. Fourthly, the data were verified and analysed. Finally, the data were presented in the findings.

4.35 Ethical Considerations
The ECU Ethics Committee approved the research study in January 2020. In regards to the sensitive nature of the survey, a major ethical consideration was the assurance of confidentiality. In view of this, contact details of participants were stored separately to data to ensure that participant confidentiality was protected. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, ECU Ethics Committee carried out a further checklist approval in June 2020 and the study was reviewed and assessed against the ECU COVID-19 Safety Plan. The study was deemed safe and appropriate in regards to the new recommendations. The study was resumed in July 2020 when an approval was granted to proceed with the study.

4.36 The Development of Survey Questions
The literature review was used to inform the development of the survey questions in which they were developed directly in relation to existing theories explored in the literature review. The survey questions were designed with a mixture of closed-ended and open-ended questions around the aspects of demographic; educational background; transferable skills; views on employability, especially during economic downturns like the current COVID-19 pandemic; general mental health; personal insurance and marital status for Stage Managers in Australia.

A pilot test of the survey was given to 12 colleagues (from various industries in Singapore and were not Stage Managers), to get their feedback and to further develop the questions, flow and focus on the survey. These 12 colleagues were not counted into
the final 33 participants who were all Stage Managers in Australia. The researcher then modified and refined the questions to more details and distributed the final version of the survey to the online system for data collection.

4.4 Data Analysis
The researcher had to move back and forth between stages during the process of data analysis, particularly in relation to coding, interpreting and verifying the data. After becoming familiar with the data, the researcher entered the more formal state of interpretation. It involved four tasks as Denscombe (2007) presents:

- Code the data
- Categorize these codes
- Identify themes and relationships among the codes and categories
- Develop concepts and arrive at the same generalized statements. (p.292)

The researcher categorized her questions (codes) in the survey, thus enhancing the process of identifying the themes much easier. She identified six themes from the data as demographics; education; transferable skills in education and employment; employment risk assessment; mental health and personal insurance and marital status. Key concepts were developed accordingly and the statements were reached. Due to the 42 closed-ended questions being designed, there were a vast amount of pie charts and bar charts being illustrated to present the data in a clear and logical way. On the other hand, the eight open-ended questions have provided the most elaborated information and knowledge added to the study.

4.5 Summary
In this chapter, the researcher has discussed the research methodology used to conduct qualitative research in the form of an online preliminary survey. The study aims to collect demographic; educational background; transferable skills; views on
employability; especially during economic downturns like the current COVID-19 pandemic; general mental health; personal insurance and marital status for Stage Managers in Australia. It is to provide new databases and literature for references in the theatre, event and entertainment industry and for the higher education institutions (HEIs). This survey was conducted with 33 Stage Managers from across Australia (except the Northern Territory) between 30 March 2020 and 5 May 2020.

The research methods used were based on various qualitative research methodologies taken from Flick (2009), Silverman (2010), Gillham (2007/2008), Rea & Parker (2005) and Denscombe (2007). The development of the survey questions was developed directly in relation to existing theories explored in the literature review.

The researcher gave a pilot test to 12 colleagues for refinement before the survey was distributed online. The sampling size was then carefully calculated and determined afterwards and the snowball sampling was employed as the method for collecting the data. Participants who were a Stage Manager or have worked as a Stage Manager in Australia between 18 and 60+ years of age were recruited through ‘Stage Management Network Australia’ Facebook page and personal industry contacts. Project brief on the project aims, processes and information were sent to the participants prior to the survey and then the Information Letter (Appendix B) and Consent Form (Appendix C) were sent to them for written confirmation.

This research study was approved by the ECU Ethics Committee in January 2020. A further ECU COVID-19 Safety Plan was introduced in June 2020. The study was resumed in July 2020 after the review, assessment and approval.
Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Overview
This chapter presents findings from the researcher’s online preliminary survey, which was conducted with 33 Stage Managers from across Australia (all states except the Northern Territory) between 30 March 2020 and 5 May 2020. This survey collected multiple areas of data from Stage Managers in Australia including demographics; educational background; work experience; transferable skills in education and employment; employability and risk assessment; work-life balance: specifically in areas of them having the opportunity to have relationships and a family.

The survey consisted of 50 questions in total, with 42 closed-ended questions and eight open-ended questions. The survey has created a database about Stage Managers and theatre production workers for the reference of the theatre, event and entertainment industry, and potentially for higher education institutions (HEIs). The following results of the survey have been organised and discussed in six categories as outlined above.

5.2 Demographics
This section presents the demographic elements of the survey including gender, age, residential status, profession, work experience and where people live.

Out of 33 participants, 90% of them were under the age of 50 and 66% were under the age of 40 with 24% between the age of 40 and 50 and 10% above the age of 50. Most of them were female (76%) and only 24% were male, highlighting that most of the participants were predominantly young female Stage Managers. Of the women working in the industry, 55% were aged between 18 and 40 years old, 30% were aged between
26 and 40 years old and 15% were aged between 40 and 50 years old. These data were shown in Figure 5.1 below.

![Figure 5.1: Age group](image)

In terms of how long the participants had worked in the workplace, nearly a quarter (24%) of them had worked for 3-5 years, 18% had worked for 6-10 years, 15% had worked for 11-15 years, 12% had worked for 16-20 years, 12% had worked for 21-25 years, 6% had worked for 26-30 years, 3% had worked for 31-35 years and the remaining 3% had worked for 36-40 years. The data identified that more than 40% of the respondents had between 3 and 10 years of work experience and 36% of them had more than 15 years of work experience.
In relation to the participants’ job titles or current employed positions, 20% of them were Stage Managers, 9% were Deputy Stage Managers, 12% were Assistant Stage Managers, 6% were Production Stage Managers, 6% were Production Coordinators, 6% were Academia, 6% were Production Managers, 6% were theatre technicians and 3% each were Company Stage Managers and Producers. These data were shown in Figure 5.3 below.
Although the participants had a particular job, their work was spread across six different areas. The majority of the respondents (97%) worked in Theatre and Performing Arts in addition to different levels of involvement in events (67%), festivals (36%), academia (36%), entertainment (24%) and concerts (21%). Nearly half of the respondents (49%) worked full-time, 36% were contract based, 12% were casuals and 3% were part-time. A total of 61% of the respondents were not working during the COVID-19 pandemic (as of May 2020).
Figure 5.4: Area of work

In Australia, 40% of the respondents were living in New South Wales (NSW), 33% were living in Victoria (VIC), 12% were living in South Australia (SA), 6% were living in Western Australia (WA), 6% were living in Queensland (QLD) and 3% were living in Tasmania (TAS).

For their residential status, 97% of the respondents were Australian and the remaining 3% were Australian Permanent Residents. Amongst all of the participants, 46% of them were born in NSW, 21% were born in VIC, 6% were born in SA, 6% were born in WA, 6% were born in QLD, 3% were born in TAS and 12% were born overseas.

5.3 Education

From the survey, 76% of the respondents were educated and trained as Stage Managers in specialized programmes in Australia whilst 15% of them had received some form of training in stage management but as a minor part of a more general
theatre program. 63% of them graduated before 2015 and 15% of them graduated after 2015. The details are that 12% of the respondents graduated before 1995, 9% graduated between 1995 and 2000, 15% graduated between 2001 and 2005, 6% graduated between 2006 and 2010, 21% graduated between 2011 and 2015 and 15% graduated between 2016 and 2020. There was a bloom of stage management graduates from 2011 to 2015 with a steady flow of workforce engagement into the industry for the past 25 years. These data were shown in Figure 5.5 below.

![Figure 5.5: Graduation year](image)

Regarding the participant graduating institutions, 24% of them graduated from National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), 15% graduated from Victoria College of the Arts, Melbourne University (VCA), 6% graduated from Western Australian Academy of the Arts, Edith Cowan University (WAAPA), 3% graduated from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and 37% graduated from various institutions including small percentages from a range of schools that offer more generalised programmes. It comprised of 9% from Charles Sturt University (CSU), 6% from University of Wollongong (UW), 6% from Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (DDIAE)
now USQ, 6% from Ballarat Academy of Performing Arts (BAPA) now Arts Academy at Federation University, 3% from Technical And Further Education New South Wales (TAFE NSW), 3% from Actors College of Theatre and Television (Sydney) and 3% from Excelsia College (Sydney). Of the 9% of the respondents who graduated before 1995 who went to UW and USQ, they were all over 46 years old. For those 9% of the respondents who went to CSU, they were all between 26 and 30 years old. For another 9% of respondents from NIDA and VCA, they graduated as early as 1995 when the remainder of the 30% graduated after 1995. The data of graduates (9%) from WAAPA and QUT were not significant as there were much fewer participants from WA and QLD. These data were shown in Figure 5.6 below.

![Chart showing education institution](image)

Figure 5.6: Education institution

The top 10 subjects (in order of importance) that the respondents found to be useful during their Stage Management training were: Stage Management, Lighting, Sound, Production Management, Props, Staging, Costume and Wardrobe, Set Construction, Company Management and Rigging. The reasons why the above selected subjects were useful for the respondents' career were summarised as follows:
The respondents expressed that it is important to understand all management areas for different levels of production departments' basic knowledge. The respondents said, "It is great to have an understanding of what is involved in those areas, not only for knowledge but appreciation of specialists in those fields", "A broad and diverse set of subject areas is required to appreciate every facet of theatre, as is demanded by a career in Stage Management" and "To be a good SM you should have at least a basic understanding of all other departments, this ensures you are more open minded particularly when scheduling for technical rehearsals etc". It is vital to have an understanding of all departments and is crucial to have a strong foundation in order to be successful. To become a good Stage Manager, it is helpful to learn about all facets of production and get a taste of everything. Stage management occupies a central role with all departments so an understanding of everything helps a great deal in coordinating everyone.

In addition, it is important to have the knowledge of every aspect in order to help with problem solving, prioritisation and time management for each department. To be able to communicate well with other departments, one has to be able to understand what their job entails and give one a critical understanding of all aspects of the job and other roles. Also, learning about all technical aspects of production in their undergraduate courses (not solely stage management) meant as soon as graduates began working, they already had a basic understanding of the requirements of different departments and an appreciation of the jobs of other people. It was emphasised to have a broad array of skill sets which add to the main specialisation of stage management. It enables one to be multi-skilled in all aspects of live theatre crafts.

The other subjects or electives that the respondents thought could have enhanced their careers were summarised as follows:
• A majority of the respondents were positive about the quality of their education and courses. However, the older generation of the graduates pointed out that there was no real training to help them on how to go about seeking work and getting experience during their time of study; suggesting the need for more opportunities to interact with industry including internships. Also, there was a lack of productions, events and tour management modules that would enable them to better prepare for their future career pathways. Moreover, communication and upskill modules were all conducted through peer mentoring instead of courses.

• The respondents expressed that more technical skills, for example, basic audio/lighting skills, general industry knowledge, and the roles of producers and company management are needed to understand how theatre companies work. They would also like to have more training on staging, rigging, props, set construction and automation that would help them in preparing for touring commercial musicals. Since the first season of The Phantom of the Opera, (https://www.thephantomoftheopera.com/facts-figures/), there have been 130 cast, crew and orchestra members directly involved in each performance. Musical Theatre has become one of the biggest employers of Stage Managers, especially if they have been trained in the complexities of these productions including lighting, props, wardrobe and automation. The respondents requested to acquire costume management knowledge because it would help them assist performers effectively. Moreover, they suggested that hands-on training such as earning an Elevating Work Platform (EWP) ticket or a White Card¹ would be ideal as part of the curriculum.

¹ Also known as a General Construction Induction Card, is a mandatory work card required in Australia to work on a construction site
It is interesting to learn that the respondents wanted to attend ‘People & Culture’ classes. They expressed that it is not only about how to learn people management, cultural study and how to work within a company, but also how to appropriately and effectively be involved in its management. The respondents thought that it is vital for Stage Managers to learn more music and language classes when the Deputy Stage Manager/ Calling Stage Manager are able to read music better for cue calling; and to learn another language skill to suit the internationalised industry; again and especially for touring in Musical Theatre and shows overseas. They thought knowing another language (especially French or Mandarin) would have made some of their jobs much easier.

There is a significant part of the stage management job that communicates with people. Stage Managers can end up dealing with different situations that they are not trained for when they work so closely with people. It is suggested by the participants that Stage Managers should also receive training in mental health and conflict resolution. Others would like to learn more about the business of theatre, how the way that money (finance) is exchanged and contracts are drawn up. There was also a demand for knowledge of accounting, personal tax and grant applications.

There were 18% of the respondents that expressed having the opportunity to do a second major or a double degree would have improved their career choices, and 30% thought that it may be an option. The preferred subject areas of the respondents if a second major or double degree were possible (apart from Stage Management or Technical Production) were summarised as follows:

Half of the participants claimed that studying Arts Management/ Arts Administration will further benefit their career path in the arts where stage management progression often ends up in producing and company management. Things like knowing more about applying for grants and theatre legislation is
necessary. Nearly another half of the participants supported the idea of learning events management, and producing, because it is invaluable in offering a foundation for understanding contract, payroll, casting, marketing, publicity, franchise modelling and fundraising.

- According to the respondents, they believed human resources, for assisting with the professional and personal interactions that Stage Managers need to have on a daily and ongoing basis, are helpful for business and legal perspectives, and people relations.

- There were 21% of the respondents who would like to pursue postgraduate studies in the future, whilst 27% said maybe and 15% said they already had. The reasons why they would like to pursue postgraduate studies were summarised as follows:

- The respondents considering pursuing postgraduate studies would like to progress in their career to have greater responsibilities and a higher income. It might lead to a career change as well. They want to acquire new skill sets and broaden their career opportunities and potentially do something else when not stage managing. Other than that, the respondents wanted to keep their mind active, to go further in securing work, to transition into a different field and were curious about the world. One particular respondent expressed that “it would be good to have a Masters in Stage Management to help students figure out different systems or solutions to enhance the industry”. This is an important finding in the context of the research, and one that suggests further research into the development of a professional masters programme would be beneficial for not only industry practitioners; but could also provide a platform for a postgraduate research culture into an industry that heretofore has been almost exclusively practice based. A graduate award would be encouraging for Stage Managers to become researchers that could add valuable knowledge to their vocation.
For four of the respondents who have already had a postgraduate degree, they studied in the following disciplines:

- Masters in Business (Arts/Cultural Management) to move into producing or company management and to work in a more administrative capacity for an arts organisation or theatre company.
- PhD in Theatre Studies to teach drama and technical production.
- Masters of Applied Theatre.
- Masters in Project Management (thesis was on which Project Management tools used in other industries can apply to Arts Management).

The respondents thought that the effective methods of teaching stage management were through (from the highest order): Productions, internships, face-to-face lectures, workshops and tutorials. Online learning is the least favorite and only 21% of the respondents thought that it could be effective. This figure provides a crucial opinion as per pre-COVID-19 as online stage management learning was uncommon in Australia but since the hit of COVID-19 pandemic, HEIs have had to embrace and adapt online, blended and remote learning methods. These data were shown in Figure 5.7 below.

![Figure 5.7: Methods of teaching stage management](image)

Looking back on your training, what methods of teaching do you think would be effective to learn stage management?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>7 (21.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face lectures</td>
<td>23 (69.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>25 (75.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productions</td>
<td>31 (93.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>22 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships</td>
<td>30 (90.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations of production challenges</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.7: Methods of teaching stage management
5.4 Transferable Skills in Education and Employment

From the survey, the respondents had expressed numerous transferable skills they have applied to other management roles and industries from their stage management training. These transferable skills include scheduling, budgeting, people management, team management, time management, project management, resource management, communication skills and organisational skills. Since stage management is basically middle management working on time pressure, their computer skills, creative collaboration and technical thinking and being decisive on the spot thinking are very important. Also, Stage Managers’ attention to detail, calmness under pressure, leadership skills, liaising with people, ‘thinking on your feet’, working to hard deadlines, adaptability, group facilitation, stress management and negotiation are the keys to their success.

On the management side, it is evidenced from the findings of the survey that Stage Managers are able to schedule, plan and communicate to a large group of people effectively. With their skills in project management, budgeting, human resources, customer service (dealing with members of the company), reliability, multi-tasking, well-managed, problem solving, conflict resolution and analytical skills, these skills can be transferred to almost every other industry.

Furthermore, Stage Managers have the ability to work under stress, be very punctual and be innovative. They were equipped with good administration skills and computer skills for particular technical and operation programmes. They work well in a team environment, able to work with various departments to a common goal and problem solving. They can identify problems in advance and have solutions ready while dealing with stressful situations.
In conclusion, stage management skills are very transferable into production, events and arts management once you have the experience. These skills can also be transferred to any other management roles or to branch out into creative roles and other industries. The participants had emphasized in the survey that without leaning the transferable skills, they would not be able to leap to a higher management position or transit to another associated theatre, event or entertainment industry.

5.5 Employability Risk Assessment
Apart from stage management, the respondents have been employed in other areas like Production Management, Lighting, Events Management, Props, Company Management, Sound, Staging and Tour Management. The data identified that they were able to multitask and to adapt to other departments within the industry. It shows that their employability rate is high.

Of the 33 participants, 42% of the respondents worked in medium size companies (50-149 people), 21% worked in small companies (10-49 people), 15% worked in medium-large companies (150-249 people), 12% worked in micro companies (1-9 people) and 9% worked in large companies (250+ people). These data were shown in Figure 5.8 below.
In regards to their employability as a Stage Manager in Australia, 42% of them expressed their situations as ‘Very good’, 37% said ‘Good’, 6% said ‘Normal’, 12% said ‘Average’ and 3% said ‘Low’. The data reflected that the respondents were very satisfied and happy in working in their positions and being optimistic about the industry.

Out of 40% of the respondents had relocated to another state(s) for better job opportunities and 70% of them had worked overseas. These data showed that job employability in Australia was very promising and striving for Stage Managers who did not mind working interstates or overseas for better job opportunities.

In light of unforeseen circumstances like the present COVID-19 pandemic, or any other economic downturn in the arts and creative industries, the other skill sets or knowledge the respondents thought would be useful to acquire from their HEIs in order to have a more secure career were summarised in the following paragraphs.

One particular participant mentioned “Stage Managers need help to find other industry related jobs, to re-learn how to apply for jobs and to go through job interview processes in formatted organisations because most of the working Stage Managers have not had a job interview for years!” This shows that Stage Managers in general are having very steady and secured jobs and they do not necessarily have to change their line of work for a long time. The respondents claimed finance and business management skills and credentials are useful for them to qualify to work in other sectors. Another interesting suggestion was acquiring skill sets that would allow them to fit into council positions, home care positions and working with disability people. A minority of male respondents voiced out about having more qualifications such as a White Card, forklift licence and
construction adjacent skills.

It is suggested that fundraising or event management skills would enable them to work in a larger commercial group. It is also important to increase the awareness of other industries in which stage management skills can be adopted and transferred to. Being able to adapt those skills to other careers and industries and having that growth mindset is vital. Others wanted to know a more detailed framework to understand and promote skills transfer. Understanding money management, information about contracts and negotiating, personal tax, administration skills, arts administration and research skills are the other recommendations.

5.6 Work-Life Balance

On average, 39% of the respondents worked between 8 and 10 hours a day, 24% worked between 6 and 8 hours a day, 21% worked between 10 and 12 hours a day, 12% worked between 12 and 14 hours a day and 3% worked between 4 and 6 hours a day. These data were shown in Figure 5.9 below. In addition, 46% of the respondents worked 6 days a week, 24% worked 5.5 days a week, 21% worked 5 days a week, 3% worked 7 days a week, 3% worked 4 days a week and 3% worked under 3 days a week. These data were shown in Figure 5.10 below.
The average monthly wages before benefits and allowances of the respondents were 3% for $8000-9000, 15% for $7000-8000, 15% for $5000-6000, 12% for $6000-7000, 9% each for $4500-5000 and $4000-4500, 6% each for $3500-4000, $3000-3500, $1000-1200 and under $1000, and 3% each for $2500-3000, $1800-2000 and $1200-1500. These data were shown in Figure 5.11 below.
Regarding working overtime, 70% of the respondents did so every week but only 30% of them were paid extra.

Regarding work pressure, 46% of the respondents thought they were working under medium pressure (level 4-6), 30% were under medium-high pressure (level 6-8), 18% were under medium-low pressure (level 2-4) and 3% each were under high pressure (level 8-10) and low pressure (level 0-2). Their stress levels reflected the relation with their work position and working hours.

Considering mental health issues, 36% of the respondents were suffering from mental health problems that stem from over-work or work-related stress and 9% thought they might have it. Of whom, 24% of the sufferers were receiving treatment or counseling while 9% had received treatment or counseling in the past. It is not surprising to learn that 80% of the respondents were working under medium to high level pressure. This is actually what Stage Managers’ work is about. Thus, the figure showing half of the
respondents suffering from mental illness is a true reflection. Nearly 30% of the sufferers were seeking treatment or counseling shows that the matters could be serious.

5.7 Private Insurance and Marital Status

Three-quarters (76%) of the respondents had a work cover or insurance policy by their current employer. In addition, 72% of the respondents had private health insurance but only 18% of them had private life insurance. Only 76% of respondents had a work cover or insurance policy by the current employer but not 100%. Reflecting what can be described as a typical ‘gig economy’, this is most probably due to the nature of working as a part-timer or casual employee. These data indicate that these 72% of respondents were buying their own private health insurance as an extra (double) security. In June 2019, 11.2 million Australians (44% of the population) had some form of private patient hospital cover, and 13.6 million (53%) had some form of general treatment cover (APRA 2019).

Finally, the marital status is being examined. Nearly half (42%) of the respondents were single, 24% were married, 27% were in a relationship and 6% were divorced. Of those who were married or in a relationship, 52% of their spouses or partners were working. Of whom, 27% were working full-time, 9% were contract based and 6% each were part-time or casual. For 57% who were married, in a relationship or divorced, 9% of them had three children, 15% had two children and 6% had one child. There were 113,815 registered marriages in Australia in 2019, a decrease of 5,373 (4.5%) compared to 2018 (119,188). Statistics reveal that up to 33% of all Australian marriages are expected to end in divorce, and countless more relationships fall by the wayside. (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2019).
5.8 Summary

This online survey was conducted between 30 March 2020 and 5 May 2020 following the qualitative research methodology under Flick (2008) ‘Research Questions in the Research Process’. The snowball sampling worked very well in this survey by identifying and targeting the small sample size group. Most of the respondents were very experienced Stage Managers in theatre and performing arts with different levels of involvement in events, entertainment and education sectors and were between 18 and 60+ years old.

The researcher was fortunate to have 33 respondents from all major States in Australia participating in this survey. Although the researcher did not receive a significant number of respondents from QLD, WA, SA and TAS, and therefore the data reflected mostly participants from NSW and VIC who lived and worked there mirroring the population density of these states and capital cities. This resulted in NIDA and VCA gaining the most popularity amongst all other HEIs.

The data identified that these Stage Managers were experienced and had created a very strong and evenly distributed stage management workforce in the industry. These figures illustrated that Stage Managers being employed in different levels of job responsibilities not only worked in theatre and performing arts, but also worked across in events, entertainment and education sectors. The data reviewed that the respondents were working in different sizes of organisations across the industry. It could be an independent theatre company, a touring show, a musical theatre, concerts, festivals or even a theme park. The employment rate was 100% before COVID-19 pandemic which was a very encouraging figure; however as of May 2020, when the survey was conducted, 61% of the respondents were not working.

Overall, there seem to be no obvious gaps in the skill sets of Stage Managers in Australia. All of the respondents were doing well in the industry. They seem to have
good positions and career prospects. Although they worked longer hours (48-60 hours), they were earning decent salaries. They were very satisfied with their job and sounded very optimistic about their career. They were highly educated and had positive responses about the standard of their education. They had identified very useful and valuable transferable skills that they could apply to their job and other industries from their stage management training.

There was a lack of support from the respondents who would have considered a second major or a double degree. However, a significant number of people are expressing interest in pursuing postgraduate degrees. Not surprisingly, as a traditionally hands-on experientially taught vocation, online learning is the least preferred method for stage management training in the 21st century. Unfortunately, due to the current outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, alternative teaching and learning modes like blended, remote and online methods will have to be introduced, embraced and adapted by educators for the continuity of education for a long while.

Combining the data of the length of work experience, it illustrates that the longer and higher the participants work in their position, the wages stay relatively high in the industry. It also reflects that those who are in long-term (permanent) and contract positions earn more than the part-timers and the casuals. Regarding working overtime, the data indicated that more than half of the respondents were hard workers and high earners. These data also reflected that these respondents were having very steady jobs or a good contract in protecting their salary.

From the survey, 76% of respondents had a work cover or insurance policy by the current employer, and therefore the rest of them might be sole-traders. Theatre, events and entertainment working environment is a relatively hazardous workplace compared to a normal office space. Stage Managers are working in the dark during
the rehearsals and performances and there is heavy scenery, lighting and sound equipment hanging on the grid or truss in the theatre, concert halls and tents above their heads, not to mention the set elements on stage and all the cables lying around. With strong Occupational Health and Safety measures being in place for the industry for many years.

Nearly half of the respondents are single and only one-third of the respondents have children. Stage Managers overall are highly independent and high earners. Moreover, being highly focused on their careers and dedicating a lot of their time to be successful; the data also reflected that without the burden of raising a family, there is less financial, physical and mental pressure in this regard, resulting in Stage Managers having a lot more freedom in their lifestyles and the accumulation of assets. However, nearly half the respondents suffered from mental health issues that stem from over-work or work-related stress but only 24% of them were seeking medical assistance while 9% had done so. The stress levels were in relation to their work position and working hours.

This online preliminary survey provides the researcher with new and updated data and information on managing the career and work-life balance of Stage Managers in Australia. It is hoped that this study will further contribute to the theatre, events and entertainment industry and for the HEIs. Particularly at an undergraduate level where programs could consider the possibility of integrating more opportunities to interact with industry including internships; further developing audio/lighting skills, costume management knowledge, cue calling for musical theatre and more knowledge in regards to mental health and conflict resolution. The opportunity for developing postgraduate studies has also been touched on and will be developed in the next chapters where respondents suggested modules in arts management/ arts administration, events management, and producing, and language and culture studies.
In conclusion, 30% of the respondents would like to participate in another survey or interview (20 minutes) for further discussion in the future, whilst 40% of them said they may get involved.
Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Overall Demographics

The majority (73%) of the Stage Managers were living in NSW and VIC, 12% were living in SA and the remainder 15% were living in WA, QLD and TAS. The data indicated that the majority of the participants were working in NSW and VIC where major live theatre, events and entertainment are happening. The reasons why bigger cities like Sydney and Melbourne are more attractive to theatre practitioners are because there are more commercial sectors for arts, theatre, entertainment and events, and there are more opportunities to get employment. Moreover, most of the major producers are based in Sydney and Melbourne and they do not usually relocate workers from other states in order to save their budgets on allowances and accommodation. These cities have the most theatre companies, bigger venues and events, and they have the longest running seasons for shows and productions by a substantial amount, for example shows like *The Phantom of the Opera* played for two-and-a-half years at the Princess Theatre in Melbourne and *The Lion King* played for 20 months at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney.

Moreover, through the education, training, and culture of the industry, job opportunities are highly localised and focussed intensively in Melbourne and Sydney. The racial demographics of the workforce showed that the industry is made up of almost exclusively Anglo-white Australians (97%). The remaining 3% were Australian Permanent Residence. The majority of the participants could only speak English, evidenced by the respondents wishing they had been taught a second language at school (Mandarin and French being the two most popular), so as to benefit their career in working in other non-English speaking countries. From a perspective of being able to work further afield into the region (Asia), Stage Managers particularly from Hong Kong and Singapore are traditionally bilingual and would have an advantage of working in the large Mandarin speaking markets of China, Hong Kong (Cantonese) and Taiwan as
well as Australia over their Australian counterparts that might be limited to working only in Australia and to some extent Singapore. The researcher herself is fluent in three languages: English, Mandarin and Cantonese and throughout her career received opportunities to work all over the world including China, Taiwan, the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australia not only because of her professionalism, but also in many instances because of her ability to speak three languages.

6.11 Comparative Reflections on Gender in Stage Management in Australia

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2012), the stage management profession in Australia is occupied by a majority of women under the age of 40. From the perspective of the entire live performing arts industry, the Australian census data indicate that this industry is being serviced by a disproportionately young female workforce (ABS 2011). From the researcher’s survey, 76% of the participants were female and of whom 55% were under the age of 40. Carly O’Neill (2017) from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) acknowledged this point in her Master of Arts (MA) thesis titled Exit Stage Left: Mid career transitions of female Stage Managers in Australia. O’Neill (2017) states that:

According to the ABS report Employment in Culture 2011, in the 2011 census, 287 individuals identified their occupation as ‘Stage Manager’ (ABS 2012). Of these, 147 worked in a live performing arts environment as distinct from Film, Television and Broadcast, and 156 of those 287 were female. The majority of stage managers were between 25 and 29 years old (35.8%). With over 70% of the profession aged under 40, and are more likely than other cultural workers in Australia to be young and female. (p.5)

A recent study by the USA Actor’s Equity found that out of the 11,632 stage management opportunities from 2013 to 2015, 65.9% of them hired females as opposed
to 34.1% males. The data describing the age and gender discrepancy were not surprising to the researcher as it reflects previous data gathered in regards to the profession and her own experience in the industry.

Published in 2005, Rachel Fensham and Denise Varney’s important book, *The Doll's Revolution: Australian Theatre and Cultural Imagination*, argues that the 1990s was a period in which women entered the theatrical mainstream and radically changed not just theatre but the way in which we think about Australian culture and identity:

Women playwrights, directors and actors have entered the mainstream. Their work has contributed to, if not radically transformed, the production of local and export quality Australian theatre and culture. At their most innovative, these women artists have revolutionised the stage of the last fifteen years with celebrated and award winning productions. (Fensham & Varney, 2005, p. 329)

Although Fensham & Varney (2005) discussed the influx of women into the industry in the 1990s as a whole, similarly women taking up roles in technical and theatre production work can be also surmised. From the current literature and the data, a Stage Manager in Australia in 2020 is most likely to be a woman between the ages of 20 and 40 with an undergraduate degree in Stage Management from either NIDA or VCA. The majority of them are working in either Sydney or Melbourne and they earn on average between $5000 and $8000 per month and work on average about 48 to 60 hours per week. They not only work in traditional theatre settings but also work in the events and entertainment industries in a variety of management and organisational roles. About half of them are married or in a relationship and have at least one child. We know that they are also exiting the industry and often seek a mid career change after the age of 40 due to several factors outlined by O’Neil (2017). O’Neil (2017), as mentioned in the literature review, pointed out that “a combination of role stress, job stress, precarity, career limitations, lack of social support systems and incumbent lifestyle factors lead to dissatisfaction with the profession and contribute to early workforce exits” (p. 85).
From the survey, 24% of the overall respondents were men and were currently active in the industry as Stage Managers. Amongst this group, 62% were between the ages of 18 and 40, whilst 25% were between the ages of 40 and 50 and 13% over the ages of 50. The data showed that 13% of the men held or were pursuing postgraduate qualifications as compared to 32% of the women, illustrating a significant percentage of women going onto further study. Of the men, 37% held a qualification below degree level, whilst 24% of women surveyed held qualifications below degree level pointing toward women in the workforce generally holding higher qualifications overall. In addition, the women that were surveyed had an average of 14 years experience compared to the men having an average of 11 years experience in the industry per person. From the survey, men were working about eight hours more than women on average per week, calculated as 60 hours compared to 52 hours. This reflects to some extent that on average men were making $4906 per month where the women averaged $4644 with a difference of $262. However, the men in the survey worked on average 15% more hours per week than the women, with the men earning on average 6% more than the women.

According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) that takes its data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2020), “Australia’s national gender pay gap is 14.0%. The current gender pay gap in the Arts and Recreation Services category is 20.1%.” Comparing the national and industry specific data, the results of the survey pointed toward Stage Managers having an equitable and in many cases a favourable wage system for women in that on average they are getting paid more than men. This difference can be aligned with significant factors including that women are more highly educated, and also have on average 27% more experience in the workplace compared to their male counterparts.
6.2 Education and Training

From the survey, 76% of the respondents were educated and trained as Stage Managers in Australia whilst 15% of them had received some form of training in Stage Management, but as a minor part of more general theatre programmes. 63% of them graduated before 2015 (as early as 1995) and 15% of them graduated after 2015 with a steady flow of graduates and workforce engagement into the industry for the past 25 years.

Regarding the participant’s graduating institutions, 24% of them graduated from National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), 15% graduated from Victoria College of the Arts, Melbourne University (VCA), 6% graduated from Western Australian Academy of the Arts, Edith Cowan University (WAAPA), 3% graduated from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and 37% graduated from various institutions including small percentages from a range of schools that offer more generalised programmes. The data indicated that NIDA and VCA are the two dominant HEIs in performing arts in Australia partly because the majority of the participants were living in NSW and VIC and is consistent with the concentration of the population demographics of Australia and the opportunities for work inherent in the major cities. Undoubtedly NIDA and VCA have established reputations in running technical theatre arts courses. It was also encouraging to find out that aspiring technical theatre practitioners were offered exposure to Stage Management through a number of regional universities and colleges that were teaching Stage Management as a minor subject; and that overall, there were no significant differences between graduates from the smaller programmes and the major conservatories in terms of employment opportunities and career progression.

Observing respondents and their training in higher education, 15% of the respondents already had a postgraduate degree in Business (Arts/Cultural Management), Theatre Studies, Applied Theatre and Project Management respectively; and 21% of them
would consider pursuing one because they would like to progress in their career to have greater responsibilities and higher income. They were looking to upskill their knowledge, to go further in securing work, and to make the transit into a different field or industry more easily. The data pointed toward further education enabling them to have better job security and progress into producing and management roles in the industry. In fact, these 15% of postgraduates were the best examples: 75% were over 41 years old and had progressed to higher management or organizational roles in their career due to their added experience and education.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the creation of a Masters programme in technical theatre or specifically in Stage Management to directly respond to areas where professional Stage Managers could develop their skills in areas of finance and business management to better prepare them for higher levels of responsibility in larger commercial companies; the use of technology in the industry both in productions (automation) and also in education in the fields of online learning; and further courses in better understanding mental health issues for themselves and to expand into the aged care and special needs sector; and importantly the opportunity to do intensive courses in a second language and cultural studies, would be timely. These areas of training would enable practitioners to be exposed to higher levels of management, more technically sophisticated productions, particularly in musical theatre; and through a better understanding of language and culture to broader opportunities in the region and contribute to internationalising the vocation of Stage Management in Australia.

6.21 Blended Learning in Education
Since 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 as a pandemic, most schools and universities around the world have been closed for a few weeks or months and have been adapting online, remote and blended learning. Many
schools and universities have begun this year in a hybrid situation, with students attending a physical school part time and spending the remaining hours in remote asynchronous instruction. Some countries began the year entirely online, with students spending part of their time in live classes while working on their own during other parts of the day.

With schools and universities all over the world redesigning their teaching and learning because of COVID-19, blended learning is becoming a new normal. Blended learning has been around for a while and is the combination of traditional face-to-face instruction with aspects of online instruction all while students are in the classroom with the teacher. Blended learning strives to provide students the best of both face-to-face and online learning experiences. Blended classrooms include face-to-face instruction techniques such as direct instruction or lecture, group discussions, and small-group work while also using technology to provide in-class online learning that students can do at home provided they have access to necessary technology.

As a result of COVID-19, education faces great challenges. Schools are having to adapt to new ways of working. Along with these challenges there may be positive opportunities to change the way we support learning going forward in the recovery period. It is interesting to reflect on the survey that online learning was the least favoured of the teaching methods for stage management where 21% of the respondents thought that it could be effective. As stated in Chapter 5, at the time of the survey, online stage management learning was uncommon in Australia but since the hit of COVID-19 pandemic, HEIs have had to embrace and adapt online, blended and remote learning methods.
According to close colleagues at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. Online learning was introduced in March 2020 where the entire campus was closed and all classes were conducted online until May 2020. Since the new academic year started at the beginning of September 2020 (delayed from the usual starting month of August), LASALLE employed blended learning with 30% of the subjects being delivered online in regards to contextual and theoretical subjects. When delivering the hands-on practical modules for example within productions, 70% were delivered face-to-face with smaller teams of five to eight students in accordance with social distancing measures. Since all the in-house productions are currently without audiences, and have largely been transformed into working spaces more like film sets, the nature of learning, and the traditional theatre environment has been transformed.

6.3 Industry Overview
Nearly half of the respondents (49%) worked full-time, 36% were contract based, 12% were casuals and 3% were part-time. The data showed that Stage Managers had consistent opportunities to work fulfilling multiple roles across the industry. This could be reflected in the different types of companies that they worked for. Of the 33 participants, nearly half (42%) of the respondents worked in medium size companies (50-149 people), 21% worked in small companies (10-49 people), 15% worked in medium-large companies (150-249 people), 12% worked in micro companies (1-9 people) and 9% worked in large companies (250+ people). The data indicated that the majority (63%) of the respondents were working in small to medium size companies (10-149 people) like small professional companies to normal commercial companies. For instance, it could be a local theatre, dance and opera company to a commercial touring musical company where a stage management team of three to four members are employed. For the minority (37%) of the respondents, they were most likely working for state theatre companies like Australian Ballet and Opera Australia, arts centres, festivals, events and theme parks.
6.31 The Stage Management Team in the Contemporary Australian Context

In the following section, the researcher will revisit the three significant and related job areas of the thesis including Assistant Stage Manager, Deputy Stage Manager and Stage Manager that were defined from the literature; that will now be presented in view of the data collected from the online survey, to create a more definitive understanding within the Australian contemporary context; especially in terms of education, work experience, the size of the organisations that they work for, and remuneration. This information specifically speaks to, and seeks to deepen the understanding of, the primary research question: What is the current situation of Stage Managers in Australia?

Assistant Stage Manager
In Australia, Assistant Stage Managers were ranked by the Live Performance Award 2010 at Level 5 meaning that their minimum weekly pay rate is $889.4 based on a 38 hour week. From the survey, there were four respondents who described their position as Assistant Stage Managers with three of them being female and one male with all of them in the age range of 18 to 30 years old. Their education background varied with two of them being trained in the major conservatories of NIDA and VCA and the others from independent smaller programs from Charles Sturt University (CSU) and Excelsia College, Sydney. Their average work experience was 6 years. Their average weekly work load in terms of hours was 46 hours and their mean average pay per month was $4875. Of the respondents, three of them worked in medium sized companies (50-149ppl) and one of them worked in a medium large company (150-249 ppl).
Deputy Stage Manager
Deputy Stage Managers were ranked by the Live Performance Award 2010 at Level 6 meaning that their minimum weekly pay rate is $916.6 based on a 38 hour week. From the survey, there were three respondents who described their position as Deputy Stage Managers with two of them being female and one male with all of them in the age range of 26 to 40 years old. Their education background varied with two of them being trained in the major conservatoires of NIDA and VCA and one from the independent smaller program formerly known as the Ballarat Academy of Performing Arts (BAPA) and now known as the Arts Academy at Federation University. Their average work experience was 10.5 years. Their average weekly work load in terms of hours was 48.5 hours and their mean average pay per month was $5,625. Of the respondents, all three of them worked in medium sized companies (50-149ppl).

Stage Manager
Stage Managers were ranked by the Live Performance Award 2010 at Level 10 meaning that their minimum weekly pay rate is $1008.9 based on a 38 hour week. From the survey, there were two respondents who described their position as Stage Managers with the two of them being female with all of them in the age range of 31 to 40 years old. Their education background showed that both Stage Managers were trained at NIDA. Their average work experience was 13 years. Their average weekly work load in terms of hours was 69 hours and their pay per month was $7,500. Of the respondents, both of them worked in medium sized companies (50-149ppl).

In all three positions, women were in the majority of workers, and again the major conservatories of NIDA and VCA were also where most of them were trained. As indicated by the job titles, there is a clear progression of experience, age demographic, and level of pay commensurate to the expected responsibilities of each role. Stage Managers by far worked longer hours and were paid at a much higher rate than the
other levels. As described previously, Stage Managers are more crucial to the operations of a production in that they are required to be present to oversee each stage of the production process from bump in, to rehearsals, and then during performances. Assistant Stage Managers and Deputy Stage Managers whilst important, support the Stage Manager fulfilling different roles within this team as described in Chapter 2. In comparison to the other positions, Stage Managers are clearly well paid and seen as important mid level executives in a company's structure.

6.4 Work-Life Balance and Remuneration
The amount of hours of work for full-time employees (theatre/ events) were 38 hours per week according to the Live Performance Award 2010. There are no maximum hours but overtime penalties do apply. There is no show contract that is over 38 hours a week, however, most of the respondents were working 48-60 hours a week. To the researcher’s understanding and experience, even though the weekly wages are based on 38 hours, there are actually more working hours involved. The weekly salaries include all the overtime up to a certain point before the actual overtime penalties apply. For example, a $1600 contract might be $1000 for the 38 hour standard week and then including $600 of overtime. When Stage Managers hand their timesheet in and calculate the time-and-a-half and double time hours; if they do less than $600 worth of overtime, they would still get the weekly $1600; but if the calculation is more than included, they start earning extra overtime. Regarding working overtime, 70% of the respondents said they did so every week but only 30% of them were paid extra. The researcher suspects that some workers are not understanding their contracts thoroughly or how their weekly rate is worked out. For instance, a lot of companies do an average over a few weeks, so one week a Stage Manager might work more than the included hours, the next week they could work less, so it usually averages out over a two week period.
On average, nearly 63% of the respondents worked between 6 and 10 hours a day, 21% worked between 10 and 12 hours a day, and 12% worked between 12 and 14 hours a day. In addition, 46% of the respondents worked 6 days a week, 24% worked 5.5 days a week, and 21% worked 5 days a week. The data indicated that Stage Managers worked long hours in the industry. It is to do with the nature of the arts, theatre, events and entertainment business. The majority of the respondents have to work the entire shift when the productions are running throughout the day, for example, they have to be at work earlier for preparation, testing and maintenance. They have to be present for rehearsals and the show time during the day and night. For those who were working a 6 day week (46%), they were most likely working in a theatre that produces an eight-show-a-week schedule.

The average monthly wages before benefits and allowances of the respondents were 3% for $8000-$9000, 15% for $7000-$8000, 15% for $5000-$6000, 12% for $6000-$7000, 9% each for $4500-$5000 and $4000-$4500, and the remainder of 37% for $1000-$4000. The data showed that 42% of the respondents earned between $5000 to $8000 a month. It indicated that Stage Managers were earning a decent salary in regards to their long working hours and their positions. If you were to compare their working hours/ conditions to other jobs in the industry, it would be comparable in terms of hours and pay rates that have been standardised across the show/event industry under the Live Performance Award 2010.

6.41 Mental Health
Responding to questions about work pressure, 46% of the respondents thought they were working under medium pressure (level 4-6), 30% were working under medium-high pressure (level 6-8), 18% were working under medium-low pressure (level 2-4) and 3% each were working under high pressure (level 8-10) and low pressure (level 0-2). Considering mental health issues, 36% of the respondents were
suffering from mental health problems that stem from over-work or work-related stress and 9% thought they might have it. Of whom, 24% of the sufferers were receiving treatment or counseling while 9% had received treatment or counseling in the past. It is not surprising to learn that 33% of the respondents were working under medium-high to high level pressure.

From the data and from the researcher’s experience, this information is quite an accurate picture of the realities of working conditions of Stage Managers. The figure showing 36% of the respondents suffering from mental illness is not surprising. Nearly 30% of the sufferers were seeking treatment or counseling demonstrating that the issue is serious and suggests that more research could be done to support workers in this industry.

6.42 Personal Lives of Stage Managers
Stage Managers and workers in this industry lived independently and were more likely not to be in long term relationships. Nearly half (42%) of the respondents were single, 24% were married, 27% were in a relationship and 6% were divorcees. As of 57% who were married, in a relationship or divorced, 9% of them had 3 children, 15% had 2 children and 6% had 1 child. It is observed throughout the researcher’s career in stage management, her ex-colleagues were self-reliant and committed to building their careers. These Stage Managers had well paid jobs and very comfortable life-styles. It was difficult for them to find time for dating as they mostly worked 6 days a week and 8 to 10 hours a day, a very different working day than the nine-to-five workforce.

6.43 Insurance
Three-quarters (76%) of the respondents had a worker’s insurance policy by their current employer. In addition, 72% of the respondents had private health insurance and 18% of them had private life insurance. The data showed that 24% of respondents (believed to be sole-traders) had no work cover or insurance policy. A sole trader has to have insurance and public liability under the law, the researcher speculates some do not to avoid paying the high premium. The data also indicated that 72% of respondents were buying their own private health insurance on top of their Medicare coverage offered by the Australian Government. This indicates that more workers were taking advantage of the Australian Government’s Private Health Insurance [tax] Rebate Scheme. “The rebate can be claimed for premiums paid for a private health insurance policy that provides private patient hospital cover, general cover (commonly known as extras), or combined hospital and general cover.”

6.44 Job Satisfaction and Employability

Notwithstanding the above data, overall, job satisfaction and longevity was relatively high amongst the respondents in the survey showing that 42% of the respondents had 3 to 10 years of work experience, 27% of them had 11 to 20 years of work experience and the remainder of 31% of them had over 20 years of work experience. These Stage Managers in Australia are very experienced in their line of work and have created a steady stage management workforce throughout the industry. The data showed that stage management as a job provided a consistent form of employment over the career span of all of the respondents. In regards to their employability as a Stage Manager in Australia, 80% of them expressed their situations as ‘Very good’ and ‘Good’. It reflected that the respondents were very satisfied and happy in working in their positions and being optimistic about the industry.

It seems that Stage Managers are able to maintain their employment within a fluid
system where they can move vertically within the structure of a company or horizontally in the industry, doing similar jobs in other companies and projects. The data showed that 41% of the participants were working at different levels in stage management (Stage Manager/ Deputy Stage Manager/ Assistant Stage Manager), 18% of them were in production and technical management, and 6% of them were company stage managers, producers and academics. It was found that Stage Managers being employed in different levels of job responsibilities not only worked in theatre and performing arts, but also worked across events, entertainment and education sectors. The employment rate was 100% before COVID-19 pandemic which was a very encouraging figure and reflected a robust industry and economy. Moreover, the flexibility of the skill sets of Stage Managers enabled them to not only stay employed but also provided variety in their job scope, perhaps another factor supporting their employability.

Although the participants had a particular job as mentioned above, their work was spread across six different areas. The majority of the respondents (97%) worked in theatre and performing arts in addition to different levels of involvement in events (67%), festivals (36%), academia (36%), entertainment (24%) and concerts (21%). Stage Managers can and do fulfil a number of diverse roles in the industry. Their training enables them to do a variety of different jobs, therefore they are able to stay employed consistently over a long period of time.

6.45 Flexible Employment Options - Transferable Skills
Apart from stage management, the respondents had been employed in other areas like Production Management, Lighting, Events Management, Props, Company Management, Sound, Staging and Tour Management. The data showed that they were able to multi-task and to adapt to other departments within the industry using their transferable skills. This flexibility with their skills and the ability to adapt to different environments showed 40% of the respondents had relocated to other state(s) for better
job opportunities, and 70% of them had worked overseas. The data indicated that the employability outcome in Australia was stable and improving for Stage Managers especially if they did not mind working interstate or overseas.

In light of unforeseen circumstances like the present COVID-19 pandemic, or any other economic downturn in the arts and creative industries, there were various opinions from the respondents who thought other skill sets or knowledge would be useful to acquire from their HEIs in order to have a more secure career. From the data, Stage Managers in general, are having very steady and secure jobs and they do not necessarily have to change their line of work for a long time. Therefore, when Stage Managers have to find other industry related jobs, they need help applying for new jobs that might be outside their present role in the industry. They have to re-learn how to apply for jobs and to go through formal job interview processes in established organisations because most of the working Stage Managers have not had a proper job interview for a number of years.

6.5 Summary
From the literature and the data, Stage Managers are experienced, independent, highly trained, and mostly women who enjoy a favourable remuneration compared to their male counterparts in other sectors of the arts and entertainment industries. They work long hours in a consistent but peripatetic industry. As central people within the mechanics of the organisation, who arguably shoulder a disproportionate amount of responsibility, they are prone to be overworked, and over time, susceptible to career burn-out. Often they are without a social support system outside their work environment making it more difficult for them to maintain intimate personal relationships. No wonder then, that their own mental health is often under pressure and in question. Further research into the working conditions and psychological demands of this role in the industry, and the toll that it is taking on workers would be a welcome addition to the literature. In addition, through analyzing the responses from
the participants in the survey suggests: that although overall undergraduate programs are performing quite well in preparing people for the industry, the creation of a professional postgraduate program that offered further training in the areas of business management; technology, both industry related and educational; and language and cultural studies would be timely. These programs could contribute to creating more employment opportunities, consolidating valuable industry experience, providing more international opportunities, and supporting new researchers in the field.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

*Understanding Stage Management in Australia in the 21st Century - An Preliminary Survey* contributes to an area of research that has historically had a dearth of known resources. This has been accomplished by presenting a contextual background to the definition of the role of Stage Managers through a literature review, and presenting the findings of a survey of current Stage Managers in Australia. This research study aims to provide a preliminary database of evidence from current practitioners in the sector on which further research can be conducted. These areas include the relationship between education and industry, and especially practices in blended learning in the teaching of technical theatre. The potential for further research could include issues surrounding gender imbalance, work-life balance, and mental health issues in the careers of Stage Managers. Applications of the transferable skills of Stage Managers into other sectors of the events and entertainment industry and other industries can also be discussed further. Moreover, the survey revealed an opportunity for the development of a postgraduate program that could respond to the need to further upskill practitioners and importantly support and give a context for the development of these areas of research in an otherwise underdeveloped area of the profession.

This thesis has answered the primary research question: What is the current situation of Stage Managers in Australia?; by presenting a history of Stage Management in Chapter 1 and defining the role of Stage Managers in themselves and in comparison to other related industry professionals, as described in Chapter 2; by delivering a thorough research methodology in Chapter 3 guided by Flick (2009), Silverman (2010), Gillham (2007/2008), Rea & Parker (2005) and Denscombe (2007); by offering a comprehensive literature review of the subject in Chapter 4, and subsequently developing the survey questions from the literature; and by giving an in depth description and analysis of the data from an preliminary survey conducted between the
30 March and 5 May 2020 in Chapters 5 and 6.

The survey data and commentary in Chapters 5 and 6 answered the secondary research questions covering the areas of demographics including: gender and location; education and training including: institutions, programs and connections to industry; an overview of the industry including: the structures of different jobs, a current and updated analysis (in view of the literature) of the roles of Assistant, Deputy and Stage Manager positions, work-life balance and mental health, sustainability, a discussion of transferable skills in education and employment, and an overview of the current working conditions for Stage Managers in the industry.

The survey was created before the very earliest stages of the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic on 11 March 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). At the time, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was unknown, and there was no provision in the survey to investigate the effects of COVID-19 upon stage management and the industry. Therefore, the data collected were not adequate to cover the immense changes and challenges that have been made on stage management employment and education. However, even though the COVID-19 situation is unprecedented, and the rupture to all aspects of life has been significant, the survey provides a contribution to the literature and a valuable 'snap-shot' of the industry in pre-COVID-19 times.

The aims of this thesis were to paint a clearer picture of stage management in contemporary Australia, and to contribute to the foundation of an underdeveloped area of research. In reaching out to current Stage Managers and workers in the field, this research study captured a community of practitioners in motion, going about their daily lives, and working in what is a multifaceted, exciting and developing industry. The world awaits to be reopened after the pandemic, and new and challenging problems are ahead of this industry like all others. Stage Managers, however, have proven to be
resilient and resourceful, and in many ways, could be better placed than any to be successful in navigating these uncertain times.
References

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4 QAA is the independent body that checks on standards and quality in UK higher education. It conducts quality assessment reviews, develops reference points and guidance for providers, and conducts or commissions research on relevant issues.


Appendices

Appendix A - Raw Data

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Figure 1: Training

Have you trained as a Stage Manager in Australia?
33 responses

- Yes: 75.8%
- No: 9.1%
- Currently studying: 7.3%
- I did a communications degree in theatre (and learnt some SM skills), b...
- General design course. SM was included as one lesson in Australia.
- Did one year of Bachelor of technical production.
- Trained for half a semester at VCA the...

Figure 2: Gender

What is your gender?
33 responses

- Female: 24.2%
- Male: 75.8%
- Other
Figure 3: Age group

Figure 4: Residence status
Figure 5: Birth place

Figure 6: Highest qualification
Did you have to relocate for your education in Stage Management or Technical Production?
33 responses

Figure 7: Relocation for education

Where did you get your qualification?
33 responses

Figure 8: Education institution
Figure 9: Graduation year

Figure 10: Useful subjects
Question 1: Why do you think the above selected subjects were useful for your career?

29 responses (verbatim)

- All Management areas are important to understand that level and different production department's basic knowledge is great to have an understanding of what is involved in those areas, not only for knowledge but appreciation of specialists in those fields.
- A broad and diverse set of subject areas is required to appreciate every facet of theatre, as is demanded by a career in Stage Management.
- To be a good SM you should have at least a basic understanding of all other departments, this ensures you are more open minded particularly when scheduling for tech rehearsals etc.
- It was helpful to learn about all facets of production and get a taste of everything. Stage Management deals with all departments so an understanding of everything helps.
- They are frequently used in my work as a Stage Manager.
- Multi skilled in all aspects of live theatre crafts.
- They have given a broad array of skill sets which add to my main specialisation of Stage Management.
- Gave me a vast understanding of all aspects of the job and other roles.
- I have gotten a lot of work crewing, which in turn has provided me with contacts and opportunities to further Stage Management. It is also great to have an understanding of every subject in order to help with problem solving, prioritisation and time management for each department.
- Having a broad knowledge of everything is important.
- Practical skills that translate well to the industry.
- Having an understanding of all departments is crucial in having a strong foundation in order to be successful.
- Because as a Stage Manager you need to have a little knowledge about everything in case a) you need to step in or talk someone through in a smaller production, or b) so that you can talk intelligently with the different departments and not have them bamboozle you when they are trying to cover up a mistake. (Honesty & transparency is always the best policy so it can be fixed and we can all move on).
- Gave me more knowledge about other areas of the theatre tech world, that way I can appreciate and understand the other people I work with.
- Structured subjects that were easier to understand the scope of.
- I already had a strong understanding of the other subjects.
- I think that, as a Stage Manager, it’s important to have knowledge in all areas of the backstage world. To be able to communicate well with other departments, you have to be able to understand what their job entails.
- Having a broad understanding of how other departments work is important to Stage Management.
- It is useful to have a broad understanding of all aspects of the production values of a theatrical performance.
- They taught me skills I could directly use, as well as learning about other roles with a similar skill set.
- Learned on the job and these were the main skills/expected knowledge.
- Even those subjects which I wasn't so interested in are useful to understand what each member of the team does and needs.
- I'm very technical and hands on, especially working in independent theatre. Knowing how to rig and focus a light and change a bubble, as well as manage and create complex qlabs has been invaluable.
- Cause I've Used them in most jobs.
- I learnt about all technical aspects of production not solely Stage Management which meant as soon as I began working I already had a basic understanding of the requirements of the different departments and an appreciation of the jobs of the people with whom I would be working.

- Practical for the role.

- Because I think you need an understanding of all departments you work alongside to be able to do your job well. I don't recall specifically learning about Tour Management, Producing, Arts and Event Management during my time at uni.

- As a Stage Manager you have to be aware and understand how everything works.

- I have used everything I learnt at different stages of my career. As a Stage Manager it is really vital to have enough of an understanding of all the elements to be able to talk to crew & creatives about their respective field. You don't need to be able to quote speaker model numbers, but you need to know enough to stay in the conversation.
What were the subjects you found to be not very useful during your stage management training?

33 responses

- Staging: 2 (6.1%)
- Rigging: 2 (6.1%)
- Lighting: 1 (3%)
- Sound: 1 (3%)
- Visual and Media: 1 (3%)
- Stage Management: 1 (3%)
- Production Management: 1 (3%)
- Costume & Wardrobe: 3 (9.1%)
- Props: 1 (3%)
- Scenic Art: 4 (12.1%)
- Set Construction: 0 (0%)
- Company Management: 2 (6.1%)
- Tour Management: 1 (3%)
- Producers: 4 (12.1%)
- Arts Management: 3 (9.1%)
- Events Management: 2 (6.1%)
- None: 19 (57.6%)
- N/a: 1 (3%)
- NA: 1 (3%)
- -: 1 (3%)

All my subjects were useful, they didn’t...

Figure 11: Not useful subjects
22 (verbatim)

- They would have been but I lacked the skill to find an understanding in them.
- See above - the more information you acquire about all of these elements, the better equipped you are to work in a collaborative environment.
- I trained in theatre production and was lucky enough to not only learn but put in practice most tech departments in theatre and music theatre. They were ALL useful in some way.
- When initially training, it is too early in career for these subjects. They are very desirable once you have experience.
- I think everything is valid in the study of Stage Management.
- At this point in my career, I don't deal with large companies or big sums of money. I have never worked in events or arts management and do not particularly plan on doing so anytime soon.
- Not particularly useful for the direction of the career I wanted but could be useful for others.
- The more knowledge you have about how different people/departments think and work the better.
- All the subjects I studied were useful.
- As someone with theatre experience, I found the subjects not overly specific, but that might have changed if I had completed the degree.
- You can't really teach that. It's a test of personality.
- It didn't fit with what I was learning.
- As above, it is useful to have a general knowledge of all departments and requirements involved in creating work.
- We didn't get any.
- My uni at the time didn't offer much cross training. I would have loved to have learnt about as many of these areas as possible. We need to understand the other departments in order to manage them.

- All subjects above are useful - many of them were not offered. CAD or some kind of computer drawing skills set.

- A lot about the design process, not so much about what I had to do as an SM - which is usually paperwork, tech jobs and rehearsals. I already had basic sewing and making skills, so it was just going over things I already knew.

- The subjects listed aren’t subjects that were covered - it was a theatre technical course.

- I found all of the subjects I did useful.

- Producers and arts management wouldn’t be very useful immediately for newly trained SMs.

- I found all the subjects useful.

- I think all aspects of theatre or things that could come up in theatre are vital to being a Stage Manager.

Question 3: Other subjects or electives that the respondents thought could have enhanced their careers are:

27 responses (verbatim)

- Basic performance training - I did this in my first year (and performers did some basic production training) and found it very good to have an understanding of the performers job as well including the importance of warmup in the actual performance space etc....

- The business of theatre - the way that money is exchanged and contracts drawn up. I also studied theatre history and some performance subjects, which have really helped me too.
- When I studied it was very heavily directed to plays vs musical theatre. There was also no real training and help on how to go about seeking work and getting experience.
- More training on staging, rigging and construction would help in preparing for life on a touring commercial musical.
- Vision training.
- Costume Management or Accounting.
- I think I received a very well rounded education.
- Finances, both personal and when dealing with money handed to you by a company.
- More technical skills (basic audio/LX etc.), more general industry knowledge aka. the roles of producers, company management and lessons about how theatre companies work etc.
- People & Culture. There is always more to learn about people and culture and how to work within a company but also how to appropriately and effectively be involved in its management.
- Music & language classes - music to be able to read music for cue calling, and languages because the industry is so international now, another language (esp. French or Mandarin) would have really made some of my jobs easier.
- Costume/wardrobe would have been nice. That way I could better fix costumes and maintain them.
- More opportunities to specialise in the first year.
- Grant applications.
- Work as a Mechanist. They do stuff like operating the fly deck and moving heavy set pieces and cleaning the stage.
- More film & tv lessons. More access to props/construction/wardrobe skills.
- NIDA provided an overall production course so you were trained in all subjects.
- Literature (because it did) Biology (same) Directing (now I'm doing it it ties all the strands together in a way I wish I'd had as an SM).
- Perhaps a general people management class. It's something that is difficult if you don't have the natural instincts for it.
- Production, Events and Tour management - to give an idea of the career pathways that were available once studies were done.
- Event management or hands-on training such as earning an EWP ticket or white card as part of the curriculum.
- Personal tax.
- Mental health training, conflict resolution - this is a huge part of the job and it would be good for Stage Managers to be trained for it. You can end up dealing with situations you are not trained for when you work so closely with people.
- Communication methods, how to upskill (in my day it was all peer mentoring) for today's SMs.
- CAD and drawing programs - but they weren't around then!
- Automation.
- Not enough of the courses currently teach score reading and I think it's vital for SMs.
Figure 12: Second major or double degree

Question 4: The preferred subject areas of the respondents if a second major or double degree were possible (apart from Stage Management or Technical Production) are:

27 responses (verbatim)

- I do have a second major in Literature. A requirement for my undergraduate degree. This has allowed me an extra boost to apply for a non related post grad degree.
- Perhaps Human Resources, for assisting with the professional and personal interactions that Stage Managers need to have on a daily and ongoing basis.
- Arts management. While this wasn’t an option, after working in the industry I think it would be beneficial as Stage Management progression is often producing/ company management.
- Media Arts and Production.
- Costume Management/Design.
- Arts administration. Just because so many of us end up in management in the arts.
- Possibly Directing, as I have a choreographic background but I'm also particularly petty and am not happy with the way arts institutions teach directing students and how in turn, those directing students treat members of Stage Management and technical production.
- Event management. Different world.
- Arts Management/Producing.
- Producing. Having a foundation understanding about contracting, payroll, casting, marketing, publicity, franchise modelling, fundraising would be invaluable.
- Music or a language. I am Currently doing a certificate HR at the moment which is helpful for a business perspective, legal perspective and people relations.
- Something in management. May make it easier to progress up the food chain or change roles.
- Drama, music or dance theory. Theory and history are important.
- Arts Administration - know more about grants and legislation.
- Lighting or events.
- Either Architecture or French. Architecture because I like designing buildings and landscapes, and French because I like the language and I'd be able to work in theatres in France.
- Arts Management.
- SM is (or should be) so full time that a double is impossible.
- Perhaps a general management course.
- Business management or event management.
- Writing or comms - just where my interremaining lies.
- I did, it was Arts - Communication Studies (I completed 2 undergraduate degrees).
- It would be an area of interremaining outside the industry to have another outlet when not working or for my mental health when on tour.
- Event management, communications.
- Graphic Design.
- Arts Administration.

Question 5: In response to the question of what transferable skills could be applied to other industries from their Stage Management training:

33 responses (verbatim)

- Good Question. Scheduling, people management, team management
- Time and resource management, organisation and scheduling, team leadership.
- Good question.
- Leading / liaising with people Managing a team Time management Scheduling Computer skills Conceptual and also technical thinking Stage Management is basically middle management with time pressure Decisive on the spot thinking.
- Attention to detail, scheduling, budgeting, people management, calmness under pressure.
- Very transferable into prod/events/arts management once you have experience. Skills also transfer to any other management roles Or to branch out into creative roles.
- Budget, management, people management, thinking on your feet, working to hard deadlines, adaptability.
- The management side, being able to schedule, plan and communicate to a large group of people effectively.
- Project management, budgeting, Human Resources.
- Time management, customer service (dealing with members of the company), reliability, multi-tasking and well-management can be transferred to almost every other industry.
- People management, HR, scheduling/paperwork skills can transfer to anything administrative, event management.
- This is a big question and one I’m struggling to tackle. I’m not entirely sure how to market myself for career progression.
- People skills, ability to work under stress, organization skills, punctuality, task juggling, innovation, computer skills for particular programmes.
- All the admin skills we have! The data logging, customer service skill, and managing teams of people.
- Project management, communication, group facilitation, attention to detail, stress management, negotiation, note taking, budgeting.
- Organisation and social skills.
- People skills, scheduling, project management.
- Leadership and management roles.
- Leadership skills, organisational skills, how to act when under pressure, communication skills.
- Time management/scheduling, team management, communication skills.
- Administration.
- Leadership (helped in the infantry). Detailed organisation (helped everywhere).
- Managing people, scheduling, reporting, organisation, time management.
- Time management, organisation, communication, initiative, work well in a team environment, able to work with various departments to a common goal, problem solving.
- Organisational skills, time management, identifying problems in advance and having solutions ready; sourcing skills; people management skills; dealing with stressful situations.
- Paperwork, scheduling, people management.
- Administration, multi-tasking, computer skills (Office, Google Docs, etc)
- Problem solving, conflict resolution, adaptability, administration skills, time management, organisational, analytical skills, leadership skills.
- People skills, time and task management.
- Organisation skills, administrative skills, good attention to detail.
- Running teams, problem solving, customer service.
- Most of them - although I found convincing the other industries of that is the hard part.

Question 6: In light of unforeseen circumstances like the present COVID-19 pandemic, or any other downturn in the arts and creative industries, the other skill set or knowledge the respondents thought would be useful to acquire from their institution in order to have a more secure career are:

27 responses (verbatim)

- Exploring other options for Stage Managers to find other industry related jobs and how to apply and go through job interview processes in formatted organisations - some working Stage Managers haven't had a job interview for years.
- Perhaps the way to budget/secure money as a freelancer.
- Business management.
- Business management skills and credentials so we would be qualified to work in other sectors.
- More qualifications such as a white card.
- Arts admin.
- Fundraising or event management to then be able to work in a large commercial group.
- I think NIDA gave us all the skills to move anywhere in any industry at the time I studied there.
- Possibly a forklift licence, I wish I knew.
- I honestly don't know - I don't think anyone could have seen this coming. I guess in the arts most people are aware that it's good to have a side hustle and the admin skills that you get from SM work can be applied to pretty much anything.
- I'd love to give you a wise and informed response here but I just don't know... maybe it's just a hard time to think about this!
- I guess whatever skill sets that would allow us to fit into council positions, home care positions, working with disability, etc.
- A more detailed framework to understand and promote skills transfer.
- Finance.
- The aforementioned skills, and I think that whatever you learn in Stage Management, you could apply to any other management position anywhere else.
- More of an understanding of budgeting.
- Theory of machine gun fire. For use in the revolution. In other words our careers will never be secure under the current paradigm.
- Money management. Information about contracts and negotiating.
- Breaking the stigma of getting a plan b, building resilience.
- Web design or at least updating thereof.
- White card and building/construction adjacent skills. Maybe more management focus - SM-ing is weird because I can't concretely demonstrate that I can do the management thing in other industries because there's no business or other
backing to the management skills. I don't know.
- Personal tax, administration skills.
- Research skills.
- Awareness of other industries which SMs skills can be adopted and how to network in.
- I think the current situation is so beyond what anyone could have imagined. I have no suggestions.
- Being able to adapt those skills to other careers and industries, having that growth mindset.
- Hmmm.. I'm not sure.

Would you be likely to pursue postgraduate studies in the future?
33 responses

Figure 13: Postgraduate studies

Question 7: The reasons why they would like to pursue postgraduate studies were as follows:

19 responses (verbatim)
- I did to spark my brain in an area I was interested in with the idea that I could move into that field when I was ready to finish up in Theatre.
- To progress in my career to have greater responsibilities and a higher income.
- I’d love to re-study and re-skill but I don’t have any other passion apart from live entertainment.
- Keep my mind active.
- To add to my existing skill set.
- Curious about the world. Would consider a masters in management or business.
- I’m studying a Masters in Business (Arts/Cultural Management) because I want to move into producing or company management and work in a more administrative capacity for an arts organisation or theatre company.
- Always keen to learn more and add more accreditation to my skill set.
- To either further my current career if I didn’t think I could learn on the job, during a situation now where I have time to do something to further my career, or if I was changing my career altogether.
- Am doing a PhD in theatre studies to teach drama and technical production.
- Would like to know more about the legal side of the Arts Industry to navigate my career more informedly.
- To go further in securing work.
- To transition into a different field.
- Teaching, Arts Management.
- Want to do more art, but I’m not sure where or how yet. I got time.
- To acquire new skills and broaden career opportunities and potentially do something else when not stage managing.
- I have a masters of applied theatre and am thinking about a DCA. I’m very interested in the research of industry matters and the role of SM.
- It would be good to have a Masters in Stage Management, figure out a system or another solution that would help the industry out.
- I’ve done a Masters in Project Management (my thesis was on which Project Management tools used in other industries can apply to Arts Management)
Looking back on your training, what methods of teaching do you think would be effective to learn stage management?

33 responses

- Online: 7 (21.2%)
- Face-to-face lectures: 23 (69.7%)
- Workshops: 25 (75.8%)
- Productions: 31 (93.9%)
- Tutorials: 22 (66.7%)
- Internships: 30 (90.9%)
- Research: 1 (3%)
- NA: 1 (3%)
- Simulations of production challenges: 1 (3%)

Figure 14: Methods of teaching stage management

What area(s) have you been working in?

33 responses

- Theatre & Performing Arts: 32 (97%)
- Events: 22 (66.7%)
- Concerts: 7 (21.2%)
- Festivals: 12 (36.4%)
- Entertainment: 8 (24.2%)
- Academic: 12 (36.4%)
- TV and film: 1 (3%)
- Theme park construction and running: 1 (3%)

Figure 15: Areas of work
Before the outbreak of COVID-19, in what capacity did you work?

33 responses

- Full-time: 48.5%
- Part-time: 36.4%
- Casual: 12.1%
- Contract based: 3.0%

Figure 16: Employment before COVID-19

During this period of COVID-19, are you currently employed?

33 responses

- Yes: 60.6%
- No: 30.3%
- I'm technically employed but have been stood down and not receiving my usual wage: 5.7%
- Not in stage management: 0.9%
- Technically employed but no new contracts or casual work: 2.4%

Figure 17: Current employment
Figure 18: Current position

What is your current position?
33 responses

Figure 19: Size of the company

What is the size of your company?
33 responses

Figure 19: Size of the company
What other area of expertise have you been employed for?

33 responses

- Staging: 9 (27.3%)
- Rigging: -3 (9.1%)
- Lighting: -3 (9.1%)
- Sound: -9 (27.3%)
- Visual and Media Production Management: 2 (6.1%)
- Costume & Wardrobe: -3 (9.1%)
- Props: -10 (30.3%)
- Scenic Art: 2 (6.1%)
- Set Construction: -5 (15.2%)
- Company Management: -10 (30.3%)
- Tour Management: -8 (24.2%)
- Producers: -5 (15.2%)
- Arts Manager: -3 (9.1%)
- Events Management: -12 (36.4%)
- Casting: -1 (3%)
- Front of House: -1 (3%)
- Teaching and catering: -1 (3%)

Figure 20: Area of expertise
Figure 21: Years of work experience

Figure 22: Living location
Figure 23: Working location

Figure 24: Level of employability
Figure 25: Relocation for job opportunities

Figure 26: Working overseas
Figure 27: Work cover/ insurance

Figure 28: Private health insurance
Figure 29: Private life insurance

Figure 30: Daily working hours
Figure 31: Weekly working days

Figure 32: Monthly wage
Figure 33: Hours for overtime

On average, how many hours of overtime do you work per week?
33 responses

- 0 hour: 21.2%
- 1-2 hours: 12.1%
- 2-3 hours: 12.1%
- 3-4 hours: 9.1%
- 4-5 hours: 30.3%
- Over 5 hours: 0%
- Most contracts in musical theatre are...
- If you’re counting overtime as over 38...

Figure 34: Paid for overtime

Do you get paid extra for working overtime?
33 responses

- Yes: 69.7%
- No: 30.3%

Figure 34: Paid for overtime
Figure 35: Marital status

What is your marital status?
33 responses

- Single: 42.4%
- Married: 24.2%
- Divorced: 27.3%
- In a relationship:

Figure 36: Working spouse

If you have a spouse or partner, do they work?
33 responses

- Yes: 51.5%
- No: 45.5%
- Not Applicable:
Figure 37: Spouse’s working status

Figure 38: Children
In your current job, where zero would be very little stress, and 10 would be extremely high/debilitating stress, what level of stress or pressure are you typically under?
33 responses

Figure 39: Stress level

Do you suffer from any mental health issues that stem from over-work or work-related stress?
33 responses

Figure 40: Mental health issues
Figure 41: Treatment for mental health issues

Question 8: Do you have any other comments to add?

7 responses (verbatim)

- Thank you so very much for doing this and for taking such a keen interest remaining in bettering the education of future generations.
- Because I work Contracts, I often have a few weeks of downtime between these intense periods to decompress. Which is why I think my mental health is in a good condition.
- I tried to answer for when I work as a Stage Manager, which happens over some of the year but generally I work as a PhD student and casual tutor.
- The questions are skewed to an SM working for a company when in fact many of us work freelance and can’t really answer questions such as how many people in your company as that changes for each contract; with regards to working overseas, I have toured overseas with Australian companies but I
assume you mean working for an overseas company?
- work hard and love what I do and put the hours in to develop an amazing show.
- Happy to chat further, I used the FB group to find SMs for my post grad research work too.
- I also run the blog Prompt-side.com where I could share what you've found if you were interested in that.

Would you like to participate in another survey/ interview (20 minutes) for further discussion in the future?
33 responses

Figure 42: Future participation
Appendix B Information Letter

Information Letter
Master of Arts by Research (Performing Arts)

Understanding Stage Management in Australia in the 21st century -
A Preliminary Survey

Dear Sir/ Madam,

My name is Teresa Fok and I am an MA candidate in Performing Arts at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University (WAAPA@ECU) in Perth, Australia. You are invited to take part in this research study, which I am conducting as part of the requirements of my degree. This research study has had ethics approval from the WAAPA/SAH Ethics Sub-Committee dated 14 January 2020.

This Master of Arts in Research (Performing Arts) aims to survey the current and ex-Stage Managers who are working in Australia with the age group of 18-60+ years old. From my preliminary investigations, there is a scarcity of published writings discussing and analysing curriculum, delivery, content and structure of undergraduate stage management programmes in Australia. In addition, there is a distinct lack of preliminary surveys being conducted to investigate Stage Managers’ career
development and work-life balance. Through this study, I hope to contribute significantly to the theatre, events and entertainment industry and to higher education institutions (HEI). The intention of the study is to become an academic resource for higher education practitioners in this field to better understand the sector; promote collaboration, the sharing of best practice, to note differences and alignments, and to better understand employment opportunities.

The process will involve a consent form and this information letter is sent out to the participants prior to filling in the survey. An Ethical Statement will be included for each participant, outlining the aims of this research, assuring confidentiality in the use of data, and ensuring that personal views expressed in the research will not be revealed in this research findings without full prior agreement. In addition, information will only be collected through the online survey. The survey will take about 10 minutes.

All information collected during this research study will be treated confidentially and will be coded, so that the identities of the participants will remain anonymous. All data collected will be stored securely on ECU premises for at least seven years after the study has concluded and will then be confidentially destroyed. The information will be presented in a written report, in which your identity will not be revealed. You may be sent a summary of the final report on request.

I do not anticipate any risks associated with participating in this research study.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and there will be no penalty for doing so. If you would like to take part in this study, please consider the following:

1) Please sign the consent form attached and return to me via email at your earliest convenience.
2) Participating in an online preliminary survey that will be conducted using Google Forms as the medium.

If you have any questions about the research study or require further information you may contact the following:
Student Researcher: Ping Sum Fok (Teresa)
Telephone number: +65 81223497
Email: pfok@our.ecu.edu.au/
Supervisor: Dr Helen Rusak
Telephone: +61 8 63046160
Email: h.rusak@ecu.edu.au

If you have any concerns or complaints and wish to contact an independent person about this research study, you may contact:

Research Ethics Officer
Edith Cowan University
270 Joondalup Drive
JOONDALUP WA 6027
Phone: +61 8 6304 2170
Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Ping Sum (Teresa) Fok
Appendix C - Consent Form

Consent Form
Master of Arts by Research (Performing Arts)

Understanding Stage Management in Australia in the 21st century -
A Preliminary Survey

Dear Teresa Fok,

I have been provided with the Information Letter explaining the research study and I understand the letter. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I am aware that I can contact your supervisor Dr Helen Rusak if I have any further queries, or if I have any concerns or complaints. I have been given her contact details in the Information Letter.

I understand that participating in this study will involve:

1) Signing of this Consent Form and returning it via email at my earliest convenience.
2) Participating in an online preliminary survey that will be conducted using Google Forms as the medium.
   a) I understand that the researcher will be able to identify me but that all the information I give will be coded, kept confidential and will be accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor.
3) I am aware that the information collected during this research study will be stored in a locked cabinet at ECU for at least seven years after the completion of the study and will be destroyed after that time.
4) I understand that I will not be identified in any report, thesis, or presentation of the results of this research study.
5) I understand that I can withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty.

I freely agree to participate in this project:

NAME: ____________________________________________

EMAIL: __________________________________________

SIGNATURE: ______________________________________

DATE: ___________________________________________