Holding it together: Resilience and solidarity in the economies of Auckland youth performance companies

Molly Mullen, University of Auckland, New Zealand, m.mullen@auckland.ac.nz

Abstract

When financial resources are scarce and uncertain, youth performance organisations find ways to 'hold it together': to carry on no matter what. Engaging critically with theories of organisational resilience, this article examines how two youth performance companies in Auckland experience and respond to a precarious funding environment. The local policy and funding context compels organisations to 'shape up'; to become more effective in the competitive system. Within this environment, however, the promise of sustainability remains ever-elusive. An alternative response, then, is found in the different ways organisations experiment with localised, culturally responsive community and solidarity economies.

Word count: 7,339

Introduction

When financial resources are scarce and uncertain, youth performance organisations are adept at finding ways to 'hold it together', often out of a commitment to the people involved and to the purpose of the work. This article shares two examples of youth performance companies working with young people who, in Aotearoa New Zealand, are disproportionately affected by precarity (van Ommen, Groot, Masters-Awatere and Tassell-Matamua 2017). My focus is on the effects and implications of applied theatre and performance itself being precarious: dependent on insecure sources of income, which only allow for insecure forms of employment/work (see also Mullen 2019; O'Connor & O'Connor 2019). Engaging critically with the concept of organisational resilience, I examine the ways in which youth performance organisations experience, respond to and resist the normalisation of precarious funding for applied theatre and performance in Aotearoa. In doing so, I attempt to disrupt the co-option of organisational resilience into neoliberal discourse by drawing on community and solidarity economy scholarship. Community economy (Gibson-Graham 1996) and solidarity economy (Allard and Davidson 2006) are distinct but aligned concepts. Broadly, both encompass modes of resourcing, organising and forms of labour grounded in ethical and social justice principles. Both eschew notions of 'community' or 'solidarity' as idealised end-states, emphasising instead the ongoing efforts of people to find just, ethical ways to co-exist with human and more-than-human others. Both are global social movements focused on identifying, connecting and cultivating alternatives to or within capitalism. This scholarship illuminates diverse possibilities for understandings of organisational resilience. Ultimately, an ambivalent view of resilience may best enable a nuanced critical understanding of organisation and economy in youth performance.

Creating Change – research overview

The research project discussed in this article, Creating Change, came about in response to increasing evidence of the high number of arts organisations being precariously resourced in Aotearoa, the prevalence of precarious work for artists, and the distinct effects this was having on socially-engaged practices (Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2019; Colmar Brunton 2019; Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre 2019; O'Connor & O'Connor 2019). Socially engaged and community-based artists and organisations indicate that the main challenge they face is unsustainable funding, followed by other problems related to the funding system (Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2019; Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre 2019). The funding status quo necessitates the use of fixed term/casual contracts for staff; making it hard to retain and train staff; limiting the development and expansion of relationships with communities; and restricting innovation and experimentation. In the youth-arts, local research suggests funding requirements contribute to a tendency amongst organisations to articulate the intentions and impact of their work in highly individualised ways and/or within a deficit model (Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre 2019). What is also notable for youth arts organisations is that funding from private philanthropic grants is typically more significant than income from arts or government sources. As detailed below, this has specific implications for the sector.

Creating Change was an organisational ethnography exploring the experiences of three arts organisations as they negotiated the funding and policy context in Aotearoa to achieve wellbeing and social justice with young people[i]. The three participating organisations were purposively selected. Key sector advisors were asked to suggest Auckland youth arts providers they considered to be: established leaders, both for the quality and impact of their creative practice and for their approaches to working with youth; serving young people and communities disproportionately affected by precarity and inequality; and without consistent/core funding. Three organisations working in different art forms and regions of the city were then invited to be part of the research.

 In 2019, the research involved eight months of ethnographic running specialist visual and multi-arts classes and projects for young people and adults and whose work challenges exclusion and ableism.

Crescendo Trust of Aotearoa (CTOA), who provide caring, positive support to young people aged 12-24 through music, mentorship and creative youth development and, in doing so, challenge the deficit discourse of youth that is prevalent in Aotearoa.

Black Friars Theatre Company (the Friars): A pan-Polynesian, multi-generational theatre company working on all possible fronts to decolonise society, challenging the systems, institutions and ideologies that hold down and misrepresent Polynesian peoples in Aotearoa.

In consenting to be part of the research, the organisations agreed to their real names being used on the basis that they check drafts of all material published or presented. Individual participants have opted to be named or have chosen a pseudonym/identifier.

Fieldwork involved observations of practice and an ongoing dialogue with key people involved in running each organisation, as well interviews with people in supportive roles and with groups of young artists. In this paper, I am drawing from the fieldwork with Crescendo Trust of Aotearoa and Black Friars Theatre Company, who consistently work with youth through performance. I want to further introduce these two organisations in a way that does justice to the vibrant, complex and multifaceted nature of their work, drawing on excerpts from multiple interviews.

Introducing the Crescendo Trust of Aotearoa

Melanie Rice, CTOA's Community Liaison Manager, explains: "When people are like, what is Crescendo Trust? I say, Crescendo is a musical term, and it means to gradually grow. And that's what is behind how we work with young people" (CTOA interview 2019). Any young person can sign up with CTOA online and freely access mentorship and other creative programmes. Young people can also be referred from places like the youth courts, iwi[ii] and alternative education providers. Youth wellbeing is a concern across Aotearoa (Clark, Fleming, Bullen et al. 2012). A 2012 youth survey reported increasing numbers of young people affected by poverty, health inequalities and lack paid employment (ibid.). Over a third of Auckland's population is aged under 24 and the region has high levels of youth unemployment and significant disparities for Māori and Pacific young people (Auckland Council 2017). The vision of CTOA is: "to empower the youth of Aotearoa with a strong sense of self and the courage to make positive decisions for their future pathways"[iii]. CTOA draws together music and creative industry expertise with youth-development practice. In an initial interview, **Marcus Powell**, CTOA's CEO, explains how CTOA provides young people aged 12-24 with mentorship from "industry professionals […] but, there's a whole holistic side behind that, too [a] focus on their wellbeing, their happiness and safety" (CTOA interview 1, 2019).

Starting with a conversation about their interests and aspirations, young people work with a mentor to develop the skills, awareness and experiences they are interested in creatively. As **Dave,** lead mentor, explains in his interview, it doesn't matter "Whether they're wanting to pursue music as a career, or whether it's just something that they need, a hobby, a way to vent. We're here to just support young people using music" (CTOA interview 2019). In a youth artist focus group, **Liana**, a CTOA apprentice, explains: When you first arrive you are asked what you would like to do and the deeper you get in … it's very diverse, very loving, very inclusive … you meet the mentors and you are met with so much encouragement … and then you go even deeper and then you find out there are so many other options" (CTOA young artist focus group 2 2019). Within and beyond the mentoring young people have what **Melanie**, describes as "a kete or basket of support, all around support, for our young

people in the organisation" (CTOA interview 2019). This might involve helping a young person access some mental health support, get work experience or navigate WINZ[iv], it might mean encouraging them to take on leadership and apprentice roles (CTOA has a youth-led events team and a youth-led radio station). In a focus group, Crescendo's young artists described it as a place where they are valued and taken seriously – and so is their music. The inclusive, accepting and respectful quality of the 'space' created by Crescendo was viewed as critical by the young artists (CTOA young artist focus group 1 & 2 2019). They described Crescendo as being a home, a source of hope, of safety, support and strength, and a place where relationships are genuine.

Introducing the Black Friars Theatre Company

The Black Friars are, in the words of the young Friar **Ashlee Niuia**: "a pan-Polynesian theatre company, founded in 2006" (Black Friars interview 2019). Founding member, **Michelle Johansson** explains the collective's intentions: "We talk about building bridges and making mirrors. The building bridges part is making bridges for our young Polynesian people to see the literature, the cannon of world literature such as Shakespeare, but including other things as well. And the making mirrors is the part where we hold space for our people, particularly in South Auckland, our Pacific people, to tell their own stories" (Black Friars interview 2019). Auckland is home to about two thirds of Aotearoa's Pasifka[v] people, around half of that number live in the southern suburbs (Auckland Council, 2018). Nearly a quarter of all under 24 year olds in Auckland live in the south. South Auckland is subject to frequent negative, racist representations in the media and public discourse (Allen 2015). Representations of young Pacific people from South Auckland typically perpetuate debilitating discourses of deficit and 'youth at risk' (Allen 2015). As outlined below, they are disproportionately affected by multiple conditions of precarity. The Friars directly respond to this and view their work as always political: "It's about teaching our communities, or arming our communities with the tools we need to fight systemic injustice" (Bayley, Black Friars Interview, 2019). Since the Black Friars first production, multiple generations of younger people have become part of the collective.

Over the past three years, the Black Friars have run a youth leadership project called Southside Rise. The project set out to build a group of young Pasifika leaders, contemporary warriors prepared to fight those who had taken control of their stories and the stories of their people. Each year, hundreds of young people from across South Auckland were brought together to explore what leadership meant to them and to create a musical performance. Participants were supported and mentored through their transition to university or employment and beyond. The young artists who took part in a focus group during the fieldwork described the Friars as a family in which everyone is different, but you carry and are carried by others, including ancestors and future generations. They proposed that being involved with Southside Rise had made them more aware and critical of how Pacific peoples are viewed and treated in Aotearoa and more confident to contest dominant racist views. It affirmed their sense of pride in their Pacific cultures and in their

neighbourhood (South Auckland). They felt supported in multiple ways, with their studies and careers, and also in becoming future leaders. They described the experience of being part of the Friars as one of being heard and upheld, honoured and encouraged (Black Friars young artist focus group 2019).

Precarity and the economies of applied performance in Auckland

Guy Standing (2014) and others, use the concept of precarity to examine the changing nature of labour in neoliberal capitalist economies, including the expansion and normalisation of casual, insecure forms of labour and erosion of worker rights and social security (van Ommen et al. 2017). In some contexts, features of precarity have extended across sectors and income groups to become a new norm (Baines et al. 2014). Beyond labour, there is a sense that precarity, in the wider sense of conditions of uncertainty, insecurity and instability, is now a taken for granted feature of 21st Century life (van Ommen et al. 20172017).

In the editorial to the 2017 special themed issue of RiDE on *Precariousness and the performance of welfare*, Jenny Hughes considers what the concept of precarity means for applied theatre and performance. She proposes that applied theatre and performance frequently takes place in and respond to 'contexts of precarity' (2017, 4). As with most of the articles in that edition, this article shares examples of practice involving people disproportionally affected by contemporary conditions of precarity. Researchers in Aotearoa argue deprivation of "opportunities for cultural expression and embodiment and the struggle to secure safety in intimate relationships" are causes of precarity that should be considered in conjunction with access to secure work, income and social security/support (van Ommen et al. 2017, p. 8). Taking up this approach, Cochrane, Stubbs, Rua and Hodgetts (2017) use national data to show groups in New Zealand that are most likely to experience precarity, including women, young people (aged 15-24), Māori, Pacific peoples, migrants and disabled people[vi]. They attribute this to the effects of a sustained, if uneven, neoliberal project in Aotearoa since the 1980s (Cochrane et al. 2017). Injustices of colonisation and systemic, institutional racism also lie behind the statistics showing disparities in income, employement, access to secure housing, educational and health, and "experiences of discrimination and stigma, as well as cultural isolation" for Māori and Pacific peoples, compared to Pākehā New Zealanders of European descent (Pasefika Proud 2017; Masters-Awatere and Tassell-Matamua 2017, p. 107). In very different ways, CTOA and the Black Friars have shaped their practice as a creative response to the multiple forms of precarity experienced by young people in Aotearoa.

What this article foregrounds are the effects and implications of applied theatre and performance in 'contexts of precarity' being dependent on tenuous sources of income, which only allow for insecure forms of employment/work (see also Mullen 2019; O'Connor & O'Connor 2019). This situation extends beyond the arts, as is outlined in a study of non-profit organisations in Ontario, which identifies three interrelated ways in which precarity

impacts the sector: "1) non-profit labour force; 2) organisational structure and operation …; and, 3) clients and communities…" (Baines et al. 2014, 75). Communities struggling to survive conditions of instability and uncertainty are reliant on precarious services delivered by precariously funded organisations employing a precarious workforce. This is attributed to the neoliberalisation of the funding system in Ontario, but has much in common with the state of play for arts organisations working with young people in Auckland (Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre 2019; O'Connor & O'Connor 2019). In Aotearoa schemes and funding structures enabling some degree of sustainable support for grass-roots and community-embedded arts practice were dismantled in the 1980s (Maunder 2015, Prince 2010; Skillig 2005; Mullen 2019). As in Ontario, short term, restricted grants and contracts from a 'hotchpotch' of public and private sources, undermine organisational stability and inhibit the ability of non-profit arts organisations to engage permanent staff. The narrow focus of funding on projects or services for niche client groups has eroded the ability of organisations to work towards social justice in a strengths-based way, to advocate politically for/with communities, or to engage in diverse forms of collective, critical, grassroots activity (Baines et al. 2014; Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre 2019, Maunder 2015). Over the eight months of Creating Change fieldwork, it became evident that the Black Friars and CTOA were struggling to sustain their work in this context, although each organisation faced distinct challenges.

Just about holding it together

CTOA and the Black Friars resource their work in quite different ways. This section gives an outline of the economy of each company, the key challenges the funding system causes for them, and articulates their commitment to 'holding it together', to keeping going no matter what.

CTOA is a charitable trust run by a board of trustees from across sectors and industries. One of the organisation's most valued resources, but also a significant area of expenditure, is staff. CTOA has a full time CEO, Operations Manager and Lead Mentor. Further mentors, the Community Liaison Manager, Administrator and a Fundraiser work on part time contracts. A number of young mentees have moved into paid work for CTOA as apprentices. A significant cost for CTOA, which may differ from other youth development organisations, is paying creative industry professionals and for industry-standard equipment.

CTOA has found multiple ways to resource its work. At the start of the research CTOA received 85% of its income from charitable grants, with the rest self-generated through events. CTOA had three larger grants, covering some salaries and ongoing costs. One of these was for three years, one was annual and the other required quarterly applications. They applied continuously for smaller sums (under $10, 000 NZ Dollars) with about a one-in-ten success rate. CTOA was working with the council to adapt un/under-used spaces in youth and community centres into recording studios for CTOA and other young artists to use. One community centre provided ongoing space for the youth-led radio station. Much

equipment was sourced through sponsorship arrangements with private companies, the rest is costed into grant applications.

A key challenge for CTOA is resourcing ongoing core costs and activities. A mentee might be involved with CTOA for years, but funding for most mentor time comes from multiple small, short-term project grants, each with discreet outcomes and fixed budgets. This means CTOA struggle to offer mentors secure/stable employment. Cat Percy, CTOA's Operations Manager, describes other, related, challenges:

> so they'll fund mentor hours, but then each grant wants you to have some kind of showcase or performance, some kind of deliverable that's a bit more tangible. To do that is quite admin heavy. And that's not funded [the admin]. And it feels like we're moving away from our objective: doing what our young people want! (CTOA interview 2019)

Further, over the course of the research there were multiple instances when a grant that had previously been described by someone in CTOA as reliable, changed its criteria or was no longer available. This unpredictability made long-term planning feel futile: **Cat:** … that kind of stuff really throws us because we plan based on whatever they *were* doing" (CTOA interview 2019). So, for CTOA, insufficient, short-term and uncertain funding, means that what should be a stable, long term mentee-mentor relationship is inherently insecure and their capacity to let their young artists lead the direction of the company's work was hampered.

The Black Friars is an entirely voluntary collective, aiming for non-hierarchical and democratic decision making processes. Crucially, all Friars understand that it is not, and is not supposed to be, paid work. The labour, knowledge and expertise of the collective is its core resource. For example, Michelle estimates they put over 10,000 unpaid hours into Southside Rise each year. This includes developing relationships with teachers and schools, collaboratively researching and writing the script, administrating and producing all events, training young mentors and continuing to support the young people after the end of each production.

On top of the Friars' voluntary work, Michelle estimates that to run Southside Rise they needed $28k (NZdollars) each year to cover venues, materials, props, costumes, scenery, technical equipment and expertise, and food and transport for the young people (60-160 youth per year). Much of this came from a patchwork of small grants, donations, sponsorship and in-kind support. Also, in different years, the Friars received important financial and in-kind support from a tertiary institution, a teacher training agency, faith organisations and participating schools. Members also raised money by doing external projects or gigs and, at times, pay for things themselves. Funding to ensure the quality of

the process, production and care for the young people, has been largely uncertain, secured year by year, bit-by-bit and, often, at the last minute. **Adrienne,** a long-time supporter of the Friars and Southside Rise, gives an example of the effects of this uncertainty:

> I knew they ran it on an oily rag [but] last year I remember Emily sending the call out to the church saying, 'Blackfriars have literally run out of money, don't know how they're going to feed the kids tomorrow. Can we help?' (Black Friars Interview 2019)

The pressure created by financial uncertainty was compounded by scarcity of affordable, appropriate local spaces. **Agnes Pele,** a young Friar, remembers**:**

> We practiced one of our shows in a car park. The security told us to go because they thought we were a gang {Laughter}. But we were just trying to rehearse for our show the next day. (Black Friars young artists focus group 2019)

In 2019, venues for rehearsals were not found until the week the project started and only then through contacts of company members. These challenges were not new, the Friars knew from the outset that Southside Rise was likely to be precariously resourced. They knew it would place strain on their members to deliver the work to the standard they wanted. For that reason, Michelle explains, it always had to be a time-limited project, ending after three years (Black Friars interview 2019). The nature of the funding context, then, prevents grassroots groups, like the Black Friars, from developing sustainable, long term responses to address injustices and precarity in their communities.

Both CTOA and the Black Friars expressed deep frustration and bemusement at how difficult it could be to resource their work when the need and value seemed so self-evident. But, both also expressed a commitment to the work and the young people that went beyond funding requirements. For example, Marcus describes being part of CTOA as work that 'operates from the heart', a commitment to young people experiencing a kind of unconditional love – not a service conditional on funding or outcomes (CTOA interview 2019). This was echoed by others in CTOA. The Friars described their work as a way of 'paying back' to their communities and to their ancestors. What keeps them going is both the mutual enjoyment of theatre/performance and the urgent need for social change to benefit Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. In the rest of this article, I take up different conceptions of resilience to consider critically specific ways in which CTOA and the Black Friars have experienced, responded to and resisted the normalisation of precarious funding for applied theatre and performance in Aotearoa.

Organisational resilience: Working the (precarious) system

The term resilience has been taken up and mobilised in particular ways within neoliberal projects. This can be seen in the way 'resilience thinking' is constructed in organisational research and practice (Burnard & Bhamra 2011). In some organisational research, resilience is synonymous with 'business continuity', maintaining critical operations and services in a disaster situation and also post-disaster recovery. But, it also transcends this to encompass the ways organisations respond to more generalised "environments of risk" and "turbulent" conditions (McDonald 2017; Burnard & Bhamra 2011). There seems to be an urgent search for ways to understand and develop organisational resilience, propelled by proposals that uncertainty and disruption, radically changing circumstances and conditions, are the new normal (Burnard & Bhamra 2011). Resilience, for organisations, then has become more than being prepared for an exceptional event, it is theorised as a necessary capacity for business success (McDonald 2006; Burnard & Bhamra 2011). The dominant discourse of organisational resilience, then, is not just about organisations adapting to survive in precarious conditions, but adapting or transforming themselves so as to capitalise on precarity to get ahead of competitors. This seems to be an organisational version of what O'Malley (2013) calls the 'resilient subject' of neoliberalism who has the in/foresight, flexibility and agility to thrive on uncertainty.

Many scholars have argued that resilience has been mobilised to promote and normalise neoliberalism: to cultivate individuals, communities and societies accepting of and adaptable to the booms and busts of capitalist creative destruction, to disruptive forms of entrepreneurialism and to social and health inequities (Cretney 2014). Lisa J. Hill and Wendy Larner (2017) and Cretney (2014), however, argue resilience is not inherently neoliberal. They suggest forms and visions of resilience may also be important to the enactment of everyday alternatives to capitalism, to community activism and attempts to de-normalise or de-centralise neoliberalism. They are among a number of scholars arguing that resilience as a concept can support the emergence of diverse counter cultural subjectivities (Hill & Larner 2017; Cretney 2014; MacKinnon & Derickson 2012). Cretney (2014, 635), for example, examines how resilience is often a precondition for activities aimed at "transition and transformation out of the neoliberalised present". In these contexts, she suggests, resilience is aligned with the political strategy of resistance. In feminist research, 'critical resilience' has been proposed to draw attention to the dynamics of power and intersecting identities involved as groups/individuals negotiate within systems and structures that operate to marginalise or exclude them (Campa 2010). Mackinnon and Driscoll Derikson (2012), meanwhile, argue the conceptual origins of resistance in ecological systems theory render it a-political. In its place they propose 'resourcefulness', to which they attach an explicit focus on social justice: cultivating equitable distribution of resources, democratic dialogue and local/community ownership/control. Hill and Larner argue that resilient subjectivities are multiple, shifting and contextually contingent. Their argument opens up a slightly more complex scenario in which individuals, groups, communities, places *and organisations*, might, depending on circumstances and conditions, enact different versions of resilience—

critical resilience, resilience as resignation, resilience as resistance, resilience as resourcefulness, or resilience as self-responsibility.

You'd better shape up

While the language of resilience is only just creeping into the discourse of the arts here in Aotearoa[vii], the dominant/neoliberal version of resilience impacts on applied performance companies in Aotearoa via the direct and indirect ways the funding context compels them to 'shape up'. Even though the Black Friars and CTOA are different kinds of organisation, each expressed the sense that if they operated better or at least differently as organisations they could perform more effectively under the prevailing funding conditions. This included, for example, becoming more effective at fundraising, something which felt almost impossible to the Black Friars:

> **Michelle:** No one has time to sit down and do proposals. I'm probably the only one with the actual information to do it … but we're all working. Full, full and a half jobs [in addition to being in the Friars]. (Black Friars interview 2019)

CTOA, meanwhile, found fundraising consumed a disproportionate amount of staff time. They had raised funds to employ a fundraiser for five hours, but even small grant proposals took around six hours of work to prepare, plus five hours for the final report. Cat outlines the work involved in just making an application:

> **Cat:** … you need to understand the organisation and the funding branch of the organisation, and then what projects they're into and then how can you adapt that for [specific donors]. (CTOA interview 2019)

What seems evident, is that the two companies perceived the problem to be their lack of capacity and skill, rather than, or as well as, the lack of funds or flawed funding system. For example, **Cat** reflects**:** "I think that there is funding out there for us, but … We're not that great at selling ourselves to funders" (CTOA interview 2019).

The experiences of CTOA and the Friars reflect the wider situation in Aotearoa where success with fundraising from public and private donors seems to require dedicated staff time and specific knowledge and skills. Being successful, in terms of achieving sustainability and growth, seems to require finding a way to optimise capacity at an individual organisational level so as to then accumulate more resources. Organisations are compelled to effectively 'work' the funding system so as to get ahead of others. The reports cited earlier, however, indicate that across organisational type and scale, most youth arts organisations and creative spaces experience ongoing challenges with funding. Even for organisations who are relatively well resourced, factors such as sudden changes to priorities

or available funds, uncertainty of outcome, short-term and constrained budgets mean uncertainty and insecurity prevails.

The dominant discourse of organisational resilience also effects organisations via direct and indirect messages about what is required to be an effective organisation. For example, time and again the Black Friars find their organisational model is implicitly or explicitly called into question through the fundraising process. Being an informal organisation makes them ineligible for many grants. There are ways around this, working with an umbrella organisation for example. But, to the Friars, it felt like they were being repeatedly given the message that they needed to 'shape up' as an organisation in ways they neither wanted nor had the capacity to do. This was communicated in many ways, including donors requesting they cost in payment for people working on the project and requiring young people or their parents make financial contributions to participate. As explained in the quotes below, both requests go against the values of the company. **Emily**, another long term supporter of the Friars and Southside Rise, observed how "…there's a whole judgement around, "Oh, you're using people." No, we have a different set of values that you don't understand. We're not running a sweat shop" (Black Friars interview 2019). For **Billy Revell-Sīo**, co-founder of the Black Friars, funding felt like a system with its own rationality, disconnected from their culture and community:

> They don't see the value in what we're doing, that don't understand the value that our kids see as well. They don't have a full understanding of any of it. I don't know how many of them are from our communities or have worked with us, or have any experience of how and why we do things. (Black Friars interview 2019)

For the Friars, it felt like their carefully thought through, culturally embedded, organisational practices were viewed by funders as inadequate. Unless they adopted more conventional organisational norms, they sensed they would always be a risky investment for mainstream donors.

At the time of the research, CTOA had initiated a process of changing their business model. Initially, Marcus was looking for more sustainable, independent income for CTOA's youth-led radio station. Following advice from the Department of Internal affairs and Social Enterprise Auckland, he received support from a philanthropic trust to visit creative social enterprises in Australia and Malaysia. After the trip, Marcus proposed social enterprise as a viable model for CTOA, observing**: "**We were doing all the work already, it was just a matter of shifting our perception around it" (CTOA interview 2019). CTOA was already generating income through events and the board agreed to move this to the centre of their business model – rather than grant funding. The vision currently is for CTOA to become a physical hub where free-to-access, music-based mentoring and programmes, inclusive of all youth,

would be subsidised by commercial creative industries activities. CTOA already help young artists find pathways and opportunities, in the new model they would offer young artists paid work and training on commercial-standard projects and events.

When they discussed the hub with a key funder, the donor offered access to a capacity building programme. Rather than the setting up of the hub, the capacity building focused on preparing the organisation for the change. This was a significant undertaking, involving reviewing the business plan, operations and role responsibilities. By the end of the fieldwork, CTOA were trialling elements of the social enterprise plan and had increased their earned income from 15% to 30%.

Encouraging NGOs to become social enterprises is, perhaps, an inevitable consequence of the wider context, where the model for providing public goods and services is via semi-commercial public entities, public private partnerships and through private for- and not-for-profit companies. Those interested in setting up or becoming a social enterprise can now access advice and support from both private and public agencies. The idea that inefficient non-profits need to shape up and behave more like commercial entities aligns with the dominant version of organisational resilience outlined above. However, concluding the CTOA was just being compelled to pursue an enterprise model overlooks the fullness and complexity of what the hub meant to CTOA.

Emergent solidarity – building resourceful, community economies

Hill and Larner's (2017) proposal, that multiple resilient identities are possible, and co-exist, offers a way into a fuller understanding what resilience might mean in applied theatre and performance. The concept of organisational resilience might appear inherently capitalist. However, alternative ways of thinking about economy, such as community and solidarity economy, can illuminate diverse forms of resilience being articulated and enacted by applied performance organisations.

Gibson-Graham[viii] (1996) propose the concept of Community Economy as part of their strategy to disrupt and destabilise the discursive constitution of 'capitalism as the necessary and naturally dominant form of economy' – what they call 'capitalocentrism' (1996, 54). Gibson-Graham aim to "liberate economic difference" through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction (1996, 56-7). Deconstruction involves (re)reading the economy in ways that foreground difference and contingency rather than the dominance of capitalism. The concept of community economy is proposed to encourage the (re)construction of new/diverse economic subjects and practices. A community economy is not an end state, but a process of "negotiation, struggle, uncertainty, ambivalence, disappointment" (1996, 98). In a community economy, economic decisions and actions are taken with an awareness of and ethical care for interdependent relationships with other "economic subjects, sites,

and practices" (1996, 81). A community economy is an ethical and political praxis that could emerge anywhere in a diverse economic landscape (2015, 9).

Solidarity economy encompasses: "practices and institutions on all levels and in all sectors of the economy that embody certain values and priorities: cooperation, sustainability, equality, democracy, justice, diversity, and local control" (Allard and Davidson 2006, 6). Solidarity economies involve making economic decisions based on a sense of the common/social/collective good and promotion of democratic and participatory organizational and economic forms and processes. Highlighting the social and environmental damage brought about by unregulated capitalism, the solidarity economy movement is focused on economic transformation.

I am interested in how resilience for CTOA and the Black Friars might be understood as the commitment to – articulation, mobilization and enactment of – a core set of values and concern with the social good, and as small acts of economic transformation. For example, the Black Friars felt they were viewed by funders as *failing* to pay people because of some lack of business sense or ethics. However, in refusing requests from donors to pay people working on projects, and by refusing to charge young people or their families to take part in Southside Rise, the Black Friars actively resist monetising relationships. In part, this is because paying everyone the same fair amount would be very costly (10,000 hours just at the 2019 living wage of $21.15 comes to $211,500.), and they see paying some and not all as unfair. They also view fees as a barrier to equitable youth participation. Being part of the Black Friars means more than doing a job for money. Participating in Southside Rise is not equivalent to paying for a performing arts course. Participation in the group and project is grounded in strong cultural and social justice principles. It is from these principles that the economy of the Black Friars (albeit sometimes falteringly) unfolds.

Underpinning the Black Friar's economy is the cultivation of particular kinds of relationships. Many of the Friars use family as a metaphor to explain how the company works, how they get things done. **Adrienne** observes this in action:

> there's never any pressure, really, to turn up. Which sounds like a recipe
> for disaster and sometimes it is, but you're always welcomed, you're
> always affirmed … You don't just turn up and take, you also give. (Black
> Friars interview 2019)

Also, **Agnes**, a young Friar, explains to me how being connected and interdependent with others in the Friars and Southside Rise brings a high level of responsibility: "When we joined we had to remember that we're carrying not only ourselves, but the rest of the Friars, as well as the future Friars we haven't yet met" (Black Friars young artist focus group 2019).

To make change for their young people, the Friars set out to create a 'village', a way of being and working together that counters the divisive, individualist and competitive ethic and economy of colonialism and neoliberalism. This involves the creation of a space in

which mutual support and collective action in the pursuit of social justice are cultivated. For example, **Billy** explains how, through Southside Rise, young people from different schools interact in ways that differ to the norm (competitive inter-school events:

> And [the point of the project] it's not even first to tell the story, it's to come together first to eat together, experience this thing with the Friars together, and form bonds with schools across South Auckland. (Black Friars interview 2019)

Billy suggests creating these relationships is the primary aim of Southside Rise. Billy goes on to explain how the concepts of family and village inform how decisions, including financial ones, are made:

> It speaks to the importance of everyone. None of us are more important than anyone else. … [….] One of the other things that's important to us on any show is that we have open books […] It's been very important to us, when we talk about money and things like that, 1: It doesn't compromise who we are, and 2: Everyone feels like they know what's happening and is in agreement that's what should happen. (Black Friars interview 2019)

The Friars are actively engaged in a praxis of critical resilience (Campa 2010) and resourcefulness (Driscoll Derikson 2012). They are committed to a process of imagining and constructing an economy that supports cultural and social justice and, in doing so, they decentre the mainstream funding system (Gibson-Graham, 1996).

When I first interview **Marcus**, he shares the set of values that guide everything CTOA does:

> That's our kaupapa[ix] right there. I usually start off with that because that kind of describes best, I feel, our foundations and our roots and what we grow our business on. That's a really shortened version of it: Aroha; Mana; Titiro, Whakarongo, Kōrero; Whakawhanaungatanga; Manaakitanga; Mahaki; He Kanohi Kitea[x]. (CTOA interview 2019)

This kaupapa is more than a piece of paper on the wall. It was referred to by almost everyone involved with the company who participated in the research. People referred to it to explain the way they worked or what the organisation meant to them. For example, **Melanie** explains how the concept of whakawhanaungatanga helps her understand her role at CTOA:

> All of our kaupapa is good, but there's one word: whakawhanaungatanga which I love. The best explanation of whakawhanaungatanga that I've ever heard from a Māori matua[xi], was, if someone brings their daughter or their son into the group, you treat them like they're your own children.

It's not just about building relationships, it's actually we *are* whanau[xii].
(CTOA interview 2019)

Whakawhanaungatanga can be understood as "literally, the means of establishing relationships" (Bishop 1995, 226). In their detailed exploration of this term, Rata and Al-Asaad (2019) explain, the "root word" 'whanaunga' indicates a particular quality of relationships, which is of utmost importance in Māori culture. Whakawhanaungatanga, involves establishing "good relationships, characterised as family-like, based on similar experiences, and bound in conditional solidarity" (Rata and Al-Asaad 2019, 213). Marcus's decision to shift the economy of the company was, in part, about finding a mode of economy that better aligned with this principle and with CTOA's kaupapa as a whole. It was about putting the young artists back at the centre of the way the organisation operated, rather than the grant funding system:

> **Marcus:** … when we're decision making, we're always coming back to the why, why are we doing this, is this going to be benefiting our young people? Who are we in service of here? (CTOA interview 2019)

Consistent with these aims, the social hub is envisaged as a holistic resource for young people and the wider community. This social enterprise initiative, then, cannot be read straightforwardly as shaping up to the neoliberal norm, but as a struggle to transition away from the precarious "neoliberalised present" (Cretney 2014, 635).

The non-normative stance taken by community and solidarity economy scholars allows for these quite different approaches and responses by CTOA and the Friars to be seen as connected. Both are engaged in the faltering struggle for sustainability, but are also trying to articulate and enact more ethical and just ways to do economy within and beyond neoliberal capitalism.

Critical and caring economies for (countering) precarious times

Neoliberal policies and restructuring have radically changed the landscape of community-based arts in Aoteroa as well as the wider fabric of society. Consistent with other countries that have gone through similar processes of neoliberalisation, the situation is such that highly precarious communities (living in conditions of adversity and uncertainty) depend on services delivered by precariously resourced organisations, who can largely only offer precarious jobs. At the conclusion to this article, however, I am ambivalent about the term resilience for describing the ways applied performance makers and organisations respond to these circumstances. I propose that having an awareness of the neoliberal version of organisational resilience, and the economic and ethical norms it supports, might enable more critical engagement with funding requirements and systems – with what it is they are calling on applied performance companies to be and do. The *Creating Change* research indicates however that organisations experience the effects of this version of resilience, but

also that they do not always comply. Hill and Larner's (2017) argument that resilient subjectivities are multiple, shifting and contextually contingent seems applicable. Within and between the two organisations, CTOA and the Friars, different versions of resilience are apparent – sometimes simultaneously. I am left feeling, however, that the best way forward might be to develop a rich new vocabulary for articulating the ways applied performance makers and organisations negotiate through precarious conditions and times to imagine and enact more sustainable ways of working with communities. Community and solidarity economy provide one way to make visible the many ways organisations and groups seek and experiment with ethical and just forms of economy, within and beyond their organisations.

What working with conceptions of resilience has made evident is that while youth arts organisations work to address conditions of precarity affecting young people, there are few examples of collective, strategic thinking about how to change funding systems that produces precarity across the youth arts sector. It may be that no organisation has the capacity to lead such action or the *resilience* to withstand the potential consequences of 'biting the hand that feeds'. The question I am left with, then, is what will it take to catalyse funding and policy shifts that better support organisations like the Friars and CTOA to fully enact and further develop their critical and caring economies.

Endnotes

---

[i] Ethics approval was obtained for the Creating Change research from the University of Auckland's Human Participant Ethics Committee: number 022238.

[ii] Iwi can mean tribe or "extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people … often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory"
https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=Iwi

[iii] https://www.ctoa.co.nz/what-we-do/

[iv] Work and Income New Zealand

[v] Pasifika is defined as a "collective term used to refer to people of Pacific heritage or ancestry who have migrated or been born in Aotearoa New Zealand. Pasifika include recent migrants or first, second and subsequent generations of New Zealand born Pasifika men, women and children of single or mixed heritages" (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 3).

[vi] Disabled people is used here in alignment with the social model of disability and the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

[vii] Creative New Zealand's annual *Nui te Kōrero* (leadership conference) in 2020 focuses on resilience in the arts sector.

[viii] J. K. Gibson-Graham is the pen name shared by two feminist economic geographers, Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson.

[ix] Kaupapa can mean "topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, purpose, scheme, proposal, agenda, subject, programme, theme, issue, initiative"
https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=kaupapa

Acknowledgements

References

Allen, Jean. (2015). *Who represents the Southside? Youth perspectives and news media representations of South Auckland* (Unpublished masters thesis). University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand.

Auckland Council Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau. (2018). *The Southern Initiative Tāmaki Herehere ki te Tonga*. Retrieved from https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/place-based-plans/Pages/southern-initiative.aspx

Auckland Council Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau. (2018). I am auckland: An Auckland-wide strategic action plan for children and young people: Status report 2017. Retrieved from https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/community-social-development-plans/Pages/children-young-peoples-strategic-action-plan.aspx

Baines, Donna, Cunningham, Ian, Campey, John, and John Shields. 201). "Not profiting from precarity: The work of non-profit service delivery and the creation of precariousness." *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 22: 74–93.

Bishop, Alan Russell. (1995). Collaborative research stories: Whakawhanaungatanga (Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy). University of Otago. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10523/531

Burnard, Kevin, and Ran Bhamra. 2011. "Organisational resilience: Development of a conceptual framework for organisational responses." *International Journal of Production Research* 49 (18): 5581–5599. doi: 10.1080/00207543.2011.563827

Campa, Blanca. 2010. "Critical resilience, schooling processes, and the academic success of Mexican Americans in a Community College." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioural Sciences* 32 (3): 429–455. doi: 10.1177/0739986310369322

Clark, T. C., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., Denny, S., Crengle, S., Dyson, B., Fortune, S., Lucassen, M., Peiris-John, R., Robinson, E., Rossen, F., Sheridan, J., Teevale, T., and J. Utter. 2013. *Youth'12 Overview: The health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students in 2012.* Auckland, New Zealand: The University of Auckland.

Cochrane, William, Stubbs, Thomas, Rua, Mohi and Darrin Hodgetts. 2017. "A statistical portrait of the New Zealand Precariat." In *Precarity: uncertain, insecure and unequal lives in Aotearoa New Zealand* edited by Shiloh Groot, Clifford van Ommen, Bridgette Masters-Awatere and Natasha Tassell-Matamua, 26-32. Auckland: Massey University Press.

Colmar Brunton. 2019. A profile of creative professionals. Report available from: https://www.creativenz.govt.nz/assets/paperclip/publication_documents/documents/715/original/20052019_a_profile_of_creative_professionals_report_final.pdf?1558318144

Cretney, Raven. 2014. "Resilience for whom? Emerging critical geographies of socio-ecological resilience." *Geography Compass* 8 (9): 627–640. doi. 10.1111/gec3.12154

Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre. 2019. Creative practice for youth wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Report available from: https://creativewellbeingnz.org/research-report-release--creative-practice-for-youth-wellbeing-in-aotearoa%7Cnew-zealand--mapping-the-ecosystem-in-t%C4%81maki-makaurau%7Cauckland

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1996. *A postcapitalist politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hill, Lisa J., and Wendy Larner. 2017. "The resilient subject." In *Assembling Neoliberalism* edited by Vaughan Higgins and Wendy Larner, 263-281. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hughes, Jenny. 2017. "Theatre and the social factory." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 22 (1): 1–6, doi: 10.1080/13569783.2017.1285875

MacKinnon, Danny and Kate Driscoll Derickson. 2012. "From resilience to resourcefulness: A critique of resilience policy and activism." *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (2): *253–270.* doi: 10.1177/0309132512454775

Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage. 2019. Understanding the value of creative spaces. Report available from https://mch.govt.nz/understanding-value-creative-spaces-february-2019

Masters-Awatere, Bridgette and Natasha Tassell-Matamua. 2017. "Introduction to Part Two: Native disruption: Māori and the precariat." In *Precarity: uncertain, insecure and unequal lives in Aotearoa New Zealand* edited by Shiloh Groot, Clifford van Ommen, Bridgette Masters-Awatere and Natasha Tassell-Matamua, 106-109. Auckland: Massey University Press.

Maunder, Paul. 2013. *Rebellious Mirror: Community-based theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Canterbury University Press.

McDonald, Nick. 2006. "Organisational resilience and industrial risk." In *Resilience Engineering: Concepts and precepts* edited by Erik Hollnagel, David D. Woods, and Nancy Leveson, 155–179. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Mullen, Molly. 2019. *Applied Theatre: Economies*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Mullen, Molly. 2017. "The 'diverse economies' of applied theatre." *Applied Theatre Research* 5 (1): 7–22. doi:10.1386/atr.5.1.7_1

Mullen, Molly. 2012. "Taking care and playing it safe: Tensions in the management of funding relationships." *Journal of Arts & Communities* 4 (3): 181–198. doi:10.1386/jaac.4.3.181_1

O'Connor, Peter and Briar O'Connor. 2019. "Waiting on a miracle: The precarious state of the everyday in applied theatre." In *Applied Theatre: Economies* edited by Molly Mullen, 135–152. London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

O'Malley, Pat., 2013. "Uncertain Governance and Resilient Subjects in the Risk Society." *Oñati Socio-legal Series* 3 (2), 180–195. Available from: http://ssrn.com/abstract=2221288

Pasefika Proud. (2017). Pacific peoples in New Zealand: Understanding our regions. Retrieved from https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz/

Prince, Russel. 2010. "Policy transfer as policy assemblage: making policy for the creative industries in New Zealand." *Environment and Planning* 42: 169–186.

Rata, Arama and Faisal Al-Assad. 2019. Whakawhanaungatanga as a Māori approach to indigenous–settler of colour relationship building. *New Zealand Population Review*, 45, 211-233

Skilling, Peter. 2005. "Trajectories of arts and culture policy in New Zealand." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 64 (4): 20–31.

St. Martin, Kevin, Roelvink, Gerda, and J. K. Gibson-Graham. 2015. "Introduction: An economic politics for our times." In *Making other worlds possible: Performing diverse economies* edited by Gerda Roelvink, Kevin St. Martin & J. K. Gibson-Graham, 1–25. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Standing, Guy. 2014. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Utting, Peter. 2015. "Introduction: The challenge of scaling up social and solidarity economy". In *Social and Solidarity Economy: Beyond the Fringe*, edited by Peter Utting, 1–40. London: Zed Books.

van Ommen, Clifford, Groot, Shiloh, Masters-Awatere, Bridgette and Natasha Tassell-Matamua. 2017. "Introduction." In *Precarity: uncertain, insecure and unequal lives in Aotearoa New Zealand* edited by Shiloh Groot, Clifford van Ommen, Bridgette Masters-Awatere and Natasha Tassell-Matamua, 12-17. Auckland: Massey University Press.