

RESPONSIVE PROGRAM GUIDE BOOKLET

Your guide to making a
responsive proposal



criticalpath

Critical Path's Responsive Program aims to support choreographers to realise their own research aims and objectives. It seeks to deepen research practice throughout the NSW dance sector by creating occasions for shared experience of research practice and by fostering exchange and dialogue between peers.



CRITICAL PATH IS A UNIQUE ORGANISATION IN AUSTRALIA WHICH ALLOWS THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS TO GROW

— ANTON

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INFO

CRITICAL PATH'S
RESPONSIVE PROGRAM:
SELF-DIRECTED, BLUE SKY
RESEARCH

Each year, Critical Path responds to choreographers' proposals to conduct practice-based research by offering financial support for artists, space, equipment, technology and advice.

The Responsive program is designed to enable choreographers and dancers to achieve their potential. It includes multiple opportunities that seek to provide platforms for practice-led research:

- for choreographers from culturally diverse practices;
- to support mid-career and senior artists;
- to offer younger choreographers new professional experiences;
- to create initiatives that promote a playful relationship between audiences and research.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Independent choreographers and dance artists across all cultural practices and at any stage of their professional career can apply. Proposals require the listing of two referees. This requirement is specifically there to allow access to choreographers at early stages of their career. So if you are unsure if you have produced work of a standard to call yourself a professional choreographer, please seek advice from a choreographer you believe could speak to your credentials.

STEP INTO NEW RESEARCH AND TERRITORIES AND STEP OUT WITH FRESH IDEAS

— LIZ LEA

HOW CAN CRITICAL PATH SUPPORT YOUR RESEARCH?

We have various Responsive residencies available, including funded or space-only residencies at the Drill Hall or offsite, as well as at the Io Myers Studio in partnership with the Creative Practice Unit (CPRU), School of English, Media and Performing Arts, UNSW. At present we are able to support up to eight to twelve funded research residencies; and starting this year, applicants may apply for up to \$20,000 for any one proposal, although it is expected that most projects will involve less.

We also offer Research Room Residencies (sponsored by Woollahra Municipal Council) which offer up to two months of office space and facilities and video editing equipment. In 2012, we have also made available a Curatorial Residency (to curate a night of research outcomes for the Responsive program) and an Adelaide Festival/APAM residency which includes travel and living allowance.

For opportunities outside of Critical Path's Responsive Program, please visit our website for news and information on Critical Path's Facilitated Program.

WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Research is the process of discovering and of communicating those discoveries. Critical Path encourages practice-led research which is based on the learning, risk-taking and play involved in exploring ideas. Research is part of a creative journey and part of the joy is not being sure where or when you will arrive.

Does your idea need to be new? No, research often looks back. Research residencies are a great opportunity to reflect on past work. You may want to return to an old work or previous theme to see how it has influenced your current ideas. Or you may want the opportunity to create a community discussion around dance histories or to create a documentation of a previous work.

The act of researching can reflect any number of approaches to suit your practice and concept. It may involve working with ten people for a day or a week. Or it could be working with two dancers for 10 weeks. It may involve a presentation of choreographic ideas to others to receive feedback – maybe from a mathematician or a poet. Or you could create a workshop to develop your movement vocabulary. Practice-led research could be trying a new collaboration with a composer, a dramaturge or a lighting designer. It could be a solo exercise to explore a movement response, or an investigation around visual media. Or to simply allow you some time to take some risks, play with your inspirations or try new ways of working. The possibilities are boundless...

THIS SOUNDS GREAT... BUT HOW DO I WRITE A WINNING PROPOSAL?

Our aim is that the program reflects YOUR diverse needs and forms of expression. Your proposal should explore ideas and materials that are inspiring you now! So what's in a proposal?

To start with, describe the questions or your points of investigation for the research, then explain how it connects to your ongoing practice, or how it will give you the opportunity to interrogate other practices to enhance yours.

Give other examples of other research or artists' practices that are relevant to yours and explain in what ways they might be relevant. You may also want to situate your research in an appropriate genre.

A large part of your proposal should be a description of your methodology: how will you explore these questions? Define the role of each of your collaborators, and why they are needed for the project. How many artists do you want to work with? How long do you need to work for? What other resources do you need? Do you need any production or technical support?

Finally you will also need to outline how you wish to document/evaluate your research, and the tools you may need to support the documentation/evaluation.

We encourage you to be ambitious! But realistic. And recognise that our mandate is to support a diverse range of research projects in any one year.

Use plain English, and get someone else to read over your proposal before you submit it.

Remember, clarity of the proposal and integrity of your research idea, the methodology and tools, are the ingredients to a winning proposal.

DO I NEED TO BE WRITING THE PROPOSAL IN AN ACADEMIC LANGUAGE?

Plain English is best!

Practice-based research is not the same as academic research. There is no requirement to write in an academic language or to have formal academic qualifications. Critical Path encourages proposals from choreographers who simply have ideas they want to understand better. In order to receive support for your proposal, you need to be able to articulate your ideas somehow, but this need not involve academic writing. Your proposal may be a combination of written work, documentation, audio, visual or video material.

Short-listed applicants will have the opportunity to speak directly to the panel about their proposal and to outline the relationship of support material to proposals.

We aim to provide all applicants with the support and tools they require to take advantage of our range of opportunities.

HOW DO I KNOW MY PROPOSAL IS A RESEARCH PROJECT AND NOT CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT?

There is discovery, risk-taking, play, new explorations and knowledge in both research and creative development. So what is the difference between the two? It is definitely a grey area, but if you are beginning a specific new work, or you have a presentation date set, or you have a clear picture of the end result and you are just working out how to make it happen, this constitutes creative development rather than research. Critical Path's mandate is to support research only, and not creative development. This can be characterised by a sense of not knowing where or when you are going to arrive, by being free to stop and reflect on the way, by being open to influences from new knowledge, and by being completely free to change your mind and to disagree with previous assumptions. A research project may result in identifying something that doesn't work, as successful research projects can often involve failure.

RESEARCH HAS BECOME A STAPLE OF MY PROCESS BEFORE I BEGIN ANY NEW WORK NOW

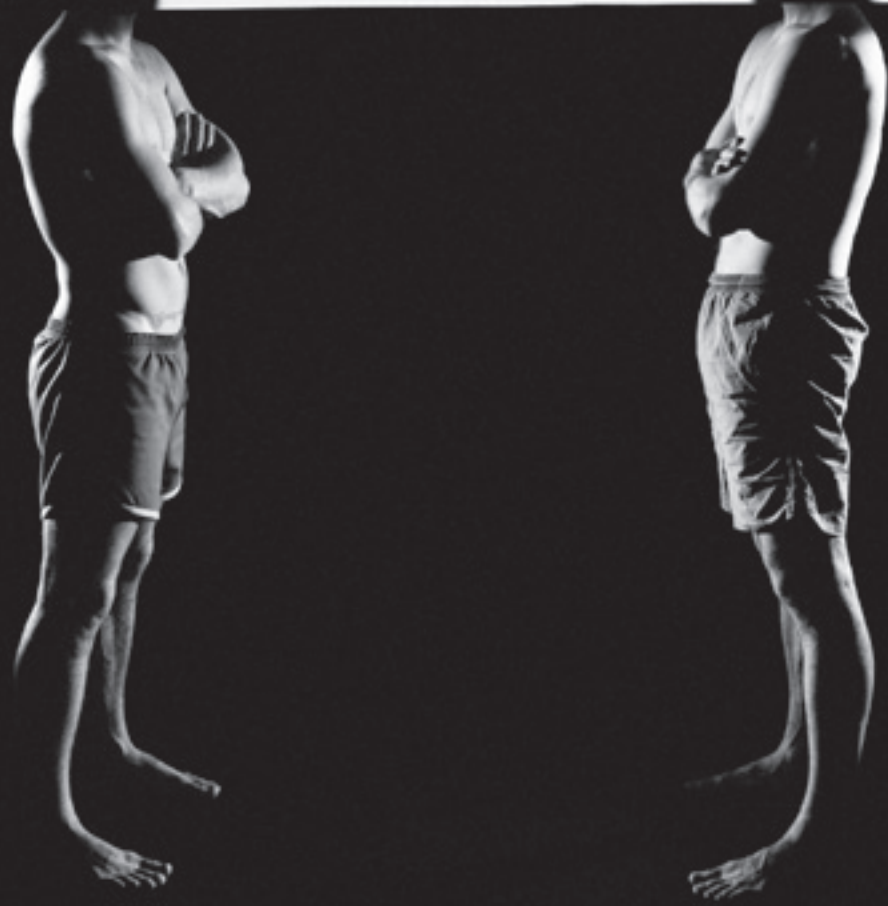
— ANNALOUISE PAUL

HOW SHOULD I COMMUNICATE MY RESEARCH?

Sharing is the process of communicating and asking questions, of receiving feedback on your research, and of articulating what you have learned. It is not a performance and it is not an academic paper; there are no rules on what a sharing should be. Past participants have found that sharing is a useful element of their research; they have found it helpful to find ways to let people into their journey and what they have discovered. The act of discussing your journey and discoveries with whomever you choose, and showing how your ideas have changed over the time of your research, can create useful stimulation for further ideas, as well as enriching the understanding of the dance community. It also provides one way of tracking the effectiveness of the Critical Path program.

WHEN IS IT BEST TO SHARE? WHO SHOULD I SHARE WITH?

Participants sometimes find that directly at the end of a research period, it is simply too soon to share. You may prefer to digest and align all the threads you have explored. You may need to watch the hours of video documentation made in the research before formulating any conclusions. You may be excited to find you have really discovered something, and you want the world plus all its producers and presenters to know, now! You define and set the context for your sharing. Discuss your ideas with Critical Path's director, decide who to invite, and when. Alternatively you may prefer to write an article or make a film. Do whatever you think will be the most useful.



We hope this booklet will help choreographers understand research is not a restrictive and limiting process but rather an open and stimulating opportunity to explore, discover, share and debate what interests them about choreography. Most of all, we hope this booklet inspires you to begin writing your proposal today. Please download the proposal from the [Critical Path website](#).

I DON'T THINK I'VE GAINED
MORE FROM A PERIOD OF
WORKING BEFORE

— NARELLE BENJAMIN



QUOTES

Anton

Critical Path gave me the space and time to delve into the real critical mass of my work in a way that was safe and led me in a path that allowed me to see what I wanted to make. Critical Path is a unique organisation in Australia which allows the needs of individual artists to grow.

Sarah Jane Howard

I had an amazing and fruitful time in my residency and felt so supported and nurtured by Critical Path, Su Goldfish, Mark Mitchell and the staff at Io Myers, University of New South Wales.

Over the years I have constantly been inspired by one of my mentors New Zealand, choreographer Douglas Wright. Douglas moves like an animal, neither male nor female... at times both... not a person imitating an animal, but the *human animal*.

This was the key area of my research, finding ways of getting behind the movement, behind the actions, discovering an original way for my body to move, as well as finding tools to find this quality in my performers.

As this kind of movement needs to have a reason to exist, needs courage, and needs to come from an emotional and relevant place, I designed some questions to ask myself.

My aim was to explore themes of emotional and behavioural repression, how needs or urges transform, what they become, and finally, how they are expressed. (For example, what happens to primal hunting instincts when there's no longer the need in society to hunt for food?)

By the end of my research residency I found ways to enhance and refine my choreographic voice. We explored a raw and explosive vocabulary and ended up creating an emotional environment for the movement to inhabit, a controlled environment where temperature, oxygen and the human body are manipulated.

The sharing we held had about 100 people attend, including the dance students from UNSW. I think it was very important to share our ideas with younger artists to show them where and how the seeds of ideas are started and developed.

I received a lot of interesting and valuable feedback from my peers about my work. Due to the relaxed nature of the sharing I feel people are more generous with sharing their views and I found this very useful.

Annalouise Paul

Research has become a staple of my process before I begin any new work now. I love to explore seedling ideas just by asking the most fundamental questions; and every time I do, I walk away with new tools or solutions to problems, or a pretty good sense of what it can look like before I even start. It makes planning really easy and gets me to the heart of what I want to say.

Liz Lea

Critical Path's Responsive residency gave me an opportunity to step completely outside of my regular practice, to explore and be financially supported while I did so. Backing support from such an organisation gave me credence with the National Film and Sound Archive and afforded me great trust and space to move. I am now embarking on an entirely new pathway of creating and choreographing – an opportunity that I would not have had without the CP support; and the new pathways were not ones I would have dreamed of. Step into new research and territories and step out with fresh ideas.

Kristina Chan

Prior to my residency in April 2011, I had a very fixed idea of what I thought was expected of me. For some reason very early on in my dance career, I had understood that creative research and the approach to it was academic. I entered into my residency having done a lot of preparation and 'research' (prior to my research), which was informative and gave me great starting points, but I found very quickly that I became stuck and was blocking myself of creative thinking and practice. I had separated 'creative' from 'research', and had banned them from working together. In fact the creative research and intelligence was already present in my body and imagination. The moment I could understand that, I could trust that anything that I did during this time, so long as it interested me, could be called research.

Kimberley McIntyre

I had one of the most profound creative experiences to date during my two weeks at the Drill and the zoo. Research time is so precious, it allows an artist to try new collaborations and test ideas with the support of time, space and income. I am still grateful for the insights my research lent to my practice and even the perception I had of myself as an artist.

I discovered a lot about my capacity to be interested, and also realised a passion to reach into my practice with more depth.

I was very pleased with the outcome of my research residency and the opportunity for a showing to peers.

Don Asker

Several colleagues shared an interest in investigating our relationship with local places. The subjectivity of individual perceptions and their contexts including historical links were explored in terms of emerging images, and action-shaping behaviours. We were all familiar with developing our own performance and visual media that reflected and arose out of direct experience. Our 'Horizons of meaning' project grew quite naturally out of consideration of steps we would like to take in furthering this interest. We determined how we might need to proceed; in our case that meant being together in several sites, and subsequently assembling materials for consideration and public interaction. We clarified the ways we would approach this practical inquiry and how this was of value to our practices and our communities.

This research has since contributed to many strands of our practices in significant ways. Being in a regional and remote community, this project has contributed to local participation and ownership of creative processes and stimulated discursive engagement more broadly.

Karen Pearlman

Creative research is about understanding your ideas – turning something that is on your mind in a vague or general way into a more specific question that can lead to actions, which in turn can lead to manifestations of your thinking in physical, visual or performative form. I have found research invaluable for advancing my practice and my capacity to articulate my ideas so that creative collaborators can engage with them.

Elly Brickhill

This is what it felt like to do research at Critical Path: Research at Critical Path is about finding your heart's desire; whatever all-engulfing, burning notion or obsession you have, you can tease it and play with it through Critical Path's research strand. It's like having a whole carton of your favourite ice cream all to yourself, and you don't have to share it. The results can be whimsical, fun, non-academic; there is no one to judge you except yourself; you do not have to make any conclusions – it can be part of a longer, more on-going project, or a tiny sliver of an idea. Research at Critical Path is for your benefit. You do not have to fulfil anyone else's ideas of what you should be doing. Once you've got a plan for yourself, and it's been approved by the committee, your project is yours alone. Research at CP helps you find out and clarify where you're up to, what you're thinking about, what shape you're in, to decide whether it's got legs or not. What comes out of a research period doesn't even need to be dance, it could be film, poetry, design, music, writing a diary ... the possibilities are boundless. Research at CP can never be wrong! And sometimes that can feel, well, really self-indulgent. But that's okay, because that's the deal.

Whereas research at uni can encompass a much bigger project, one that might go on for months or years. At uni you do need to have 'results', and there will be someone checking out what you do, so you will need to be able to justify your actions. And they will be critical and they'll let you know where you're going wrong! You will need to fulfil some of the university's requirements, not just your own. Once you feel able to do that, there might be some areas of overlap between Critical Path and university research: perhaps you'd like to do a showing of your uni work through Critical Path; perhaps you have made contact with colleagues in a Critical Path project and you'd like them to be part of your uni performance. There is overlap, and this can be where you can bring the different skills from each situation, each kind of research, and apply them to the same material, but to different ends.

Paul Cordeiro

So what has Critical Path provided for me personally and as a mid-career established artist? I would say that even though I am mid-career, my ideas are still emerging and my practice is changing, evolving and developing. There is a notion that artists like myself, who are choreographers/performers and teachers, need less assistance and stimulation from interaction and collaboration at a certain point in their career. This may be true at certain stages of their working life. However there are times when the opposite applies. Being an independent artist, one can often feel isolated and disconnected from the rest of the dance community.

Well, Critical Path has provided a place where I have been provided the crucial opportunity to experience choreographers from leading companies from Europe, such as Emio Greco, Jochen Roller and Antje Pfündtner, who were inspiring and helped me when I was on the threshold of discovering my practice as a choreographer and exploring of movement, and have helped me discover the nature of some of my processes.

Critical Path's Responsive program allowed me a space residency to explore themes and elements of Tango when I needed to investigate how I would workshop these ideas working on bodies. It allowed me to completely step out of being a performer and concentrate on the role of choreographer/director and observe my choices. This is an important process to be able to do this and have this opportunity at different times in your career.

Adam Linder

I partook in a collaborative research residency with Jordana Maisie in 2009. The learning that resulted from this formalisation of a period of research is the most valuable outcome of this residency, actually, not necessarily in regards to the project's ideas or execution, but rather in the learning about collaboration. The question of "what is collaboration?" was brought to the forefront of my attention and I was able to deduce a stronger understanding of what I consider is fundamental to "collaboration". This first rigorous experience of collaborative work has enabled me to embark upon further collaborations with a stronger insight into what collaborative work is and [the] work it demands.

Meryl Tankard

As a recipient of the Critical Responsive program, I am very grateful for the opportunity it gave me (for the first time in my career!) to work in a pressure-free environment. Through the support of Critical Path I was able to truly experiment and extend my skills as a choreographer. Through this program I have been able to meet a whole new network of dancers and also develop a very positive relationship with the University of New South Wales.

Jane McKernan

I undertook a Responsive program residency in January 09 to focus on solo work, alongside Lizzie Thomson. We were working together in a separate way, or separately together. And we both still often talk about how immense it was for us. I think it really set the foundations of working on my own, after a long time working in collaboration with The Fondue Set, and felt, and still feels, like a very important time. I felt I engaged with a new process, the freedom of researching, following one idea as it leads to another, as well as generating a lot of material. Two years on, I still feel supported by this period, like I reached a new depth and that has become the new base level. I hope this makes sense. More tangibly, from this work, I conceived of a new solo which has been funded by the Australia Council, had residencies at Rex Cramphorn Studio, Sydney University and Fraser Studios, and a season at Liveworks, Performance Space. But more so than this, it has supported a way of working, a confidence, and laid many seeds for future work. I don't think I've gained more from a period of working before.

Narelle Benjamin

I have received one Responsive grant from Critical Path, which ended up informing and developing into the work *In Glass*. The research grant was to explore partnering material, as usually when I am making work, due to time restraints I don't focus on or explore partnering choreography. I usually work out most of the choreography by myself in a studio before rehearsals to save time. I was going to work with four dancers, but two of them couldn't make the times, so by pure chance I was in the studio for three weeks with Paul White and Kristina Chan. Lizzie Thompson also worked part-time with us for a week, and another dancer Ben Hancock, who was at the VCA. This relationship has also continued, as he is working in my next piece.

The time in the studio with the dancers was invaluable. We could just concentrate on choreographic material without any pressures to produce, so I felt like I had the freedom to generate choreographic material in different ways to my usual process. Ideas about a piece then came, and I could start informing the partnering choreography with intention as well as researching some of these ideas choreographically and conceptually.

From the Critical Path grant, we used the footage that we shot during our sharing to then apply to the Australia Council for a development grant for the piece, which we received.

The piece was then picked up by Spring Dance and Dance Massive, so my outcome from the responsive grant was that choreographic material and other conceptual research ended up being the backbone of my first full length work.

Craig Barry

This project was for the first research development of what is now a worked called *side to one* in collaboration with Lisa Griffiths. Since our initial research, we have gone on to do two more intense developments with showings, one at the Drill Hall and one at the Leigh Warren and Dancers Studio, Adelaide. Lisa and I have been able to develop further a couple of new choreographic techniques we discovered during this process. One we call 'pressure point' and the other 'numbers and directions'. Both of these techniques have been fully realised in the work which we are about to perform later this year, 2011, with seasons both in Adelaide and Sydney.

During the showing at Critical Path Drill Hall, along with many other invited guests, was Rafael Bonachela (SDC). Subsequently he offered me the opportunity to create a work on Sydney Dance Company for the inaugural Spring Dance Season at the Sydney Opera House 2009. This was an incredible opportunity to try my skills on other dancers and experience a supportive and exciting change to the dance scene in Sydney.



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