

How to successfully collaborate with your partner

ArtsHub

SABINE BRIX ([HTTPS://WWW.ARTSHUB.COM.AU/STAFF-WRITER/SABINE-BRIX](https://www.artshub.com.au/staff-writer/sabine-brix))

We speak with creative couples who haven't let their work ruin their relationship.



Fiona Harris and Mike McLeish. Image: Haydn Thompson

Writers and performers in both the television and theatre sector, Fiona Harris and Mike McLeish were married for nine years before they first collaborated on a project together for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Now they work together on the web series *The Drop Off*, which is produced by their company Kiss & Go Productions.

'We'd always been each other's first port of call for notes and thoughts on our own individual ideas, scripts and projects, but had deliberately avoided making the leap to teaming up on the same project,' Harris and McLeish told ArtsHub.

'It was organic to a degree, because we both had the chance to get to know our separate sensibilities, but making the decision to work together was not taken lightly. But clearly, in the end, we decided that just being married and having kids wasn't challenging enough!'

Read: **[Creative life after kids – how to make it work](https://performing.artshub.com.au/news-article/features/performing-arts/sabine-brix/creative-life-after-kids-how-to-make-it-work-257255)**

(<https://performing.artshub.com.au/news-article/features/performing-arts/sabine-brix/creative-life-after-kids-how-to-make-it-work-257255>)

For projection artists Nick Azidis and Rose Staff, a collaborative duo who create immersive projection installations, deciding to collaborate was a mutual decision. With a shared love of geometric abstraction and optical illusion, they first worked together in 2016 to produce an installation for White Night Melbourne. Over the last three years, they've worked on many major events and projects throughout Australia and Internationally, but it's their shared experience working with dome projections in immersive spaces that brought them together collaboratively.

'I created a 360 dome projection for the inside of the State Library of Victoria in 2015 a year before Rose and I met each other,' Azidis said. 'Rose also had experience working with dome projections because of her work at the Geneva Mapping Festival in 2015, so it seemed that we were both on the same trajectory creatively.'

If you're thinking of producing creative work with your partner, these are the tips to keep in mind.

EASE INTO IT

To establish whether or not your creative partnership is a good fit, Staff and Azidis suggest working together on a small scale project first.

Staff said: 'For one of my solo shows in Melbourne I asked Nick to help me install the work and I also helped him with some of his projects including a website refresh and cutting together a showreel of his work. Eventually as new opportunities came up we began to directly collaborate together.'

BE WILLING TO COMPROMISE

Obviously being able to come to a mutual decision is essential to any creative pairing, but especially so when you're working with your partner.

For both Harris and McLeish, who bring a different skillset into their writing practice – McLeish writes dialogue and jokes while Harris works with narrative structure and character arc – at the centre of their practice is an ability to let go of ego.

'If you like your idea better, fight for it, but be willing to admit if someone else's idea is better. That sounds much simpler than it is, but it's crucial. Bring some humility along to temper your ego. That applies to any collaboration. If you're collaborating with your "partner" partner, be sure to switch off and just be with the person you love.'



All Together Now

from Radiance

ArtsHub

06:46

[All Together Now \(https://vimeo.com/289673012\)](https://vimeo.com/289673012) from [Radiance \(https://vimeo.com/vjradiance\)](https://vimeo.com/vjradiance) on [Vimeo \(https://vimeo.com\)](https://vimeo.com).

CONSIDER CO-BRANDING

Rose Staff and Nick Azidis worked on the Façade Building Projection of Curraghmore Estate at the *All Together Now* festival in Ireland.

When Azidis and Staff began collaborating they noticed that Staff's name would often mysteriously go missing from the work.

'We both want to be credited for the work that we do equally,' they said. 'Some festival organisers are sensitive to this however some have in the past left Rose of the bill and written about the installation as though Nick was the sole creator of the work. This has even happened in official printed programs. To overcome this bias we specifically rewrote our biography to be a combined one, and we use a bio photograph that has the both of us in it together rather than two separate individual images.'

ESTABLISH BALANCE

And if you're both working and living together, McLeish and Harris advocate for a set of rules that allows for downtime where work isn't discussed.

'One of the main challenges is that you're always together. ALWAYS! So, it's difficult to know when to clock off, put your tools down and stop talking about work. Our kids have been instrumental in establishing times of "No Work Talk" at home, which we're grateful for, because it's tough to put the brakes on when you feel like you're onto something good.

'Unfortunately, that's also a benefit, because if you have an epiphany about a project in the middle of the night, you can just roll over, shake your partner's shoulders and scream "WAKE UP! I'VE GOT IT! I'VE GOT IT!"'

FIRST PUBLISHED ON MONDAY 20 MAY, 2019

230

Shares

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sabine Brix is a writer, editor, podcaster and electronic musician with a specific interest in personal storytelling that captures the essence of how people create. She was the former Online Content Producer at Archer Magazine and editor of the LGBT website Gay News Network.

She has produced sound art for BBC's Radio4 and composed music for the web series Starting From Now, which screened on SBS.

Follow Sabine on Twitter @sabinebrix