Chasing Your Own Tail: on Artists and Projects

In *Temporaries* (2012), contemporary dance artist Igor Koruga talks about the working conditions of artists and how these shape artists' lives. He concludes that 'it comes down to this everlasting accelerating loop of chasing a promising future that might never come'. This phrase is reminiscent of Wile E. Coyote who keeps chasing the Roadrunner, while everyone knows he will never catch it. Coyote's chase stands for the ever-unsuccessful attempt to achieve something. In the project-based performing arts sector, many artists never seem to make ends meet despite being resourceful and motivated. Within my contribution, I will especially focus on the artist's chase, which has a threefold dimension: firstly, project-based artists are continually **chasing money** in order to pursue their art making, in the first place, and to earn a living, in the second place. Additionally, artists are **chasing programmers**, who facilitate the chase after money; because the ball is in their court to offer studio space, to provide co-production budgets, and to present creations. My fieldwork has exposed the often-vain efforts artists make in endless networking and self-promotion. Lastly, project work goes hand in hand with paperwork and much time is spent **chasing papers** concerning administration, finances, legality, or unemployment benefits. Through dissecting this three-dimensional chase and providing an empirically grounded description, I aim to illustrate how the prevalent project system keeps artists poor.