

The Art in Sport

Sydney 2000 Paralympic Arts Festival

If you thought the Sydney Paralympic Games in October were just about sport, you would be wrong. The sporting action of the Paralympic Games may run from the 18th until the 29th of October, however, people will be entertained by a unique Arts Festival which will be held in association with the Games, starting on the 13th of October, through till the 29th. The Festival program includes theatre, music, dance, visual art and street performance, as well as a number of forums and workshops, regarding disability and the arts, entitled "Microgroove".

Recently Arts Access spoke to **Back to Back Theatre** who are performing in the Festival and track athlete, **Greg Smith** about the Festival and the Sydney Games.

Geelong's Back to Back Theatre is Australia's only professional theatre company driven by an ensemble of actors who are identified as having an intellectual disability. Since 1987 they have been making compelling work for theatre and award winning short films. At this Festival, the company will perform a production entitled "Mental" and have short films shown in their giant inflatable outdoor cinema, which is in the shape of a duck.

"Mental" interweaves the stories of three characters and uses digital effects, surround sound, theatre, virtual performers, music and a touch of cartoon to tell these stories. Artistic Director, **Bruce Gladwin** says that the show raises some really interesting discussion points and it is an honour to be included in the cultural festival of the Paralympic Games. "We (the company) feel that it is an opportunity for us to be a part of a cultural phenomenon that is operating on a national scale. We are really interested in seeing what other works are also being presented from an Australian and international context."

The Paralympic Arts Festival organisers saw the show at its premier season last year in Melbourne. Back to Back will do eight performances in its Sydney season. The one-hour show will include the five member ensemble that forms the core creative force in Back to Back and two outside performers. The performance has a futuristic storyline "It projects us into the future, to a point in time where artificial intelligence replaces human intelligence. It looks at a point where we as a society, species or a race are rendered intellectually disabled," said Bruce. Leading up to the Paralympic Arts Festival the company has a hectic schedule. Currently they are creating their



new work entitled "Dog Farm", which will premiere at LaMama on the 4th of September for a week and then move to Geelong for a further week of shows at the Courthouse. After this they have one week off and then go straight into rehearsals of "Mental" before flying off to Sydney.

Track athlete/wheelchair racer, Greg Smith, (Silver medallist for the 5000 metres in Atlanta) believes having the Paralympic Games in Australia will give the Australian public a lot more exposure to people with a disability. It will encourage both the media and the general public to the experiences of disability in all areas of life, not just sport.

"Having a Paralympic Arts Festival is a great idea." Greg said. "It will give those who are into sport a much heightened awareness of what is going on in the arts by people with a disability."

Further information about the Paralympic Arts Festival is available on the official web site for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, www.olympics.com, (follow the prompts), or you can request a copy of the brochure for the Festival by calling (02) 9297 4069 TTY (02) 9212 5950 or email paralympic_arts@socog.com.au

Details of the full program for "Microgroove", can also be obtained by calling Accessible Art's Information Line on (02) 9294 1411.

The core creative force of Geelong's Back to Back Theatre Company (left to right) Nicki Holland, Mark Deans, Darren Riches, Sonia Teuben and Rita Halabarec who will perform their production of "Mental" at the Paralympic Arts Festival.



Photographer Jeff Busby

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From the desk of the Executive Director

Welcome to the Winter edition of Arts Access news. Despite the cooler conditions outdoors, the office provides a warm and cosy environment for the many activities in which the staff are engaged. A major internal focus for the last couple of months has been the development of systems that support the creative programs and efficient operations of the organisation. We are delighted to have two new staff members – Crien Gehrke and Jenny Penhall. They are great team members and are charging ahead with terrific ideas for making everything work in the best possible way.

You will see from the reports on various projects that Arts Access continues to initiate and develop a wide range of artistic projects that provide opportunities for people with a disability and people who are disadvantaged to participate in the arts. The creative development workshop with MSO and Handspan Visual Theatre for Synesthesia was a great experience and there is much excitement about the further development of this performance work. We are also celebrating the launch of an exhibition of works created in the Supported Residential Service visual arts project at Footscray Community Arts Centre. One of the great strengths of Arts Access is that it works so well with both expert professional artists and community members with little or no access to and experience of artistic practice – and produces great outcomes from both.

In its role as a leader in community cultural development, one of the great challenges for Arts Access is to ensure that its plans, programs and services meet identified community needs and aspirations and provide a model for other organisations. Our demonstrated ability to meet this goal leads us to fascinating places – DHS has supported us to deliver an 'arts and health' venture in Tallangatta (the town that moved) which will involve young people in a contemporary music performance and recording project. It also encourages us find new solutions – VicHealth has commissioned Arts Access to compile a database of information on artists experienced in working in community. With funding from DHS, Arts Access is also completing a kit – Simple Access Solutions and Ideas – for use by community organisations, venues and event managers to assist in their efforts to improve inclusion of people with a disability in their programs, events and activities.

These are but a small sample of the projects on which Arts Access is working at the moment. There is always something to keep us busy. Sometimes we feel that we will never get on top of the pile of 'must do'. Then we realise another need, see another opportunity, think of another idea and we're off again, adding to that pile. In addition to projects, Arts Access plays a really important role in providing information on the full gamut of arts, disability, access, community cultural development, health, etc. An important feature of this role is the Training Program, details of which are included in this issue. We are also delighted that the Telematics Trust has provided funds for the redesign of Arts Access' website and, within the next few months, we plan to launch it as a key element of our communication strategy.

Thanks for your continued support of Arts Access and as always I encourage you to get in touch with us if there is anything about which you would like more information.

Best wishes

Jane Haley [Executive Director]



In the Spotlight

Performer and Visual Artist Ernie Baker

Kingsville resident Ernie Barker has been involved as a performer and visual artist with Art Day West for almost six years.

Over this time he has taken on a type of directorial/ leadership role within the group, offering new ideas and suggestions for Art Day, particularly in developing storylines, which the group utilises for storytelling or improvisation, leading to performance. These ideas come from a range of sources, such as books and drawings and inspiration drawn from other shows that he has seen.

"He is a real stalwart, he provides a really strong backbone to the group," said Lyndsay Mason, the visual artist, who works with Art Day West. "He takes his work very seriously and enjoys it immensely. He feels very much a moving force during Art Day, is a support to others and is extremely respectful towards other people. Ernie does take his time to think things through and he does come up with some really interesting slants".

Ernie himself says that he loves playing different characters, is not frightened of the limelight and loves the "adoration of the crowd". In his visual art practice over the last few years, Ernie has steadily developed an interesting rainbow style and people within Art Day West refer to it as 'the rainbow movement'. His incorporation of rainbow colours has inspired some of the other participants to do the same in their work.

An important aspect for Ernie during his involvement with Art Day West is the opportunity to make contact with a diverse

range of artists and people, which often develop into friendships.

Ernie Baker pictured here in the white panama hat, during one of Art Day West's performances.



Photograph by Angela Bailey

Mission

Arts Access provides access to arts and cultural activity for people who are disadvantaged, including people with a disability.

Values

Arts Access' programs and services are based on four fundamental community cultural development principles:

- that participation in the arts is essential to the wellbeing of the individual and the community
- that all people should have equal access, choice and opportunity to participate in the arts and attend arts, entertainment and cultural events
- that the arts provide an ideal mechanism for the development and expression of individual and community identity and diversity
- that actions to ensure the inclusion of people with a disability improve access for the whole community

An audio tape version of Arts Access News is available. Please call the office to arrange your copy.

Copy deadline for next issue
1st September 2000

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A Kaleidoscope The "SYNESTHESIA" Project

Red rings louder in your eye and a taste of blue lingers at your fingertips. You have a neighbour whose constantly green voice grates against his consistently deep blue suit. Believe it or not, this is what a collaborative performance project between Arts Access, Handspan Visual Theatre and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, will be all about.

Known as 'mixing of the senses', synesthesia is the rare capacity to hear colours, taste shapes or experience other equally startling sensory blendings. Senses normally work together in parallel to each other, however synesthesia actually fuses them together. A synesthete might describe the colour, shape and flavour of someone's voice, or music as a "shard of glass", a scintillation of jagged, coloured triangles moving in the visual field. The experience is frequently projected outside the individual, rather than being an image in the mind's eye.

By taking the experiences of those with synesthesia as a starting point, this contemporary work will be almost hallucinogenic in its combination of elements. It will investigate the association of sound and vision, images, heightened sensory elements, and distill them to a collective performance that uses object manipulation, movement, design, lighting and music.

Director of Handspan and the collaborative project, David Bell's vision is to have the performers seem as if they are literally 'inside' a kaleidoscope.

Director, David Bell, from Handspan Visual Theatre.



Sharing a moment in movement, Marc Brew and Annabel Dickens.



Funding was secured from the Myer Foundation for a creative development workshop. In May, Arts Access and Handspan auditioned professional performers with a disability to form part of the creative team to develop "Synesthesia".

David admits that he had no clear idea of what he was looking for or what they would do. Of the three people that were selected from the auditions, two were dancers and one a circus aerialist. "It seems to be more about movement," he said.

David sees the work as being very abstract and has an interest in merging music and colour in a very emotional and visceral way. At the moment, he sees the piece being underpinned by a simple structure with the possible narrative being non-linear.

Music for the production will be drawn from the classical repertoire as well as specially composed pieces. "Noise Maker", DJ Dave Franzke, will work in collaboration with members of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra to develop a soundscape, mixing live music with atmospheres, samples and the spoken word.

In many ways the June workshop was an initial exploration – of the skills of all of the creative team and the potential they offer to the project. It was a crucial 'team building' exercise,

Photographer, Catherine Acin

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) musicians, providing surround sound.



Left to right: Ian Perry, Asphyxia (circus skills performer), Eve Newsome, Jodee Mundy (interpreter) and Andrew Moon.

In close up: Ian Perry, Asphyxia, Jodee Mundy and Eve Newsome



about forming an ensemble. "Everyone just hurled themselves into it ...and because of that I think we advanced in quantum leaps". David states that this first week spent in creative development is one step in many that will influence the outcome and direction of the project. The second stage of the project, which is a further two weeks of creative development in October, David sees as being about generating material in a very concrete way with the end being a glimpse of the work's possibilities. This, he said, would need some serious pre-planning and, in the process, the piece may take on different form than first thought. David imagines that at the end of this stage it will be, "Some kind of bone, with a little bit of meat on it, that makes you look and say this is interesting."

The next stage will be the critical period during which the research – both for text and composition of the production – will be analysed and explored. Decisions will be made about the approach, design and scope of the production. The periods between workshops will also enable Arts Access, the producer, to search for resources.

David confessed that part of the reason that the topic of synesthesia was chosen for this project is that he himself has this unique blurring of the senses. "I find it really important when ever I develop something, that I have a real personal stake in it and feel really connected to it".

As a synesthete, he links colours to numbers and letters of the alphabet; music and shapes are also linked - "Music feels very three-dimensional to me"- as he experiences a sense of the architecture of music.

The "Synesthesia" project acts as a vehicle for the professional development of artists and emerging artists with a disability, as well as enhancing the relationship between professional companies, supporting the objectives of Handspan and the MSO to make their practices more diverse.

Dance artists, Janice Florence and Marc Brew, taking the floor.



EASE

ENTERTAINMENT ACCESS SERVICE

CLOCKTOWER CENTRE

Leading the way in accessibility

The Clocktower Centre has opened its doors to reveal itself not only as an exciting new home for performing arts in Moonee Ponds, but as a leader in accessible venues.

There is something quite exciting about visiting a new theatre, but a theatre as welcoming and universally accessible as the Clocktower is special indeed. Designed with people in mind, this is the first venue to be constructed to the new Arts Victoria benchmarks and a project of best practice on 'access for all'.

Originally the old Moonee Ponds Town Hall, the building has been transformed with great care to retain its proud heritage, while creating a state of the art facility for the community, performing arts, social events and corporate activities.

The most positive feature of the centre is the inclusion of accessible rehearsal space, dressing rooms and stage. While many venues are addressing the problems associated with access for audience members, there is still little being done to improve access to staff areas and performance spaces, leaving many people unable to gain employment within the industry due to lack of suitable access.

The stage has been designed to be easily accessible from both backstage and the auditorium, an initiative that enables everyone in the audience to access the stage if required, ideal for awards nights and graduations.

The raked auditorium has no steps, wide side aisles and swing away armrests on the ends of each row, making access easy for people using frames or transferring from wheelchairs. For people who wish to remain seated in their wheelchair, accessible areas and accompanying seats for family and friends are available in both the stalls and dress circle.

The centre also provides TTY facilities and induction loops have been installed in both the theatre and at the box office to assist people who are hearing impaired to make bookings or enquiries.



Clocktower Centre

Hopefully the first in a long line of user friendly venues, there are some features missing from the design that would enhance the facility even further including an accessible lighting box and fly grid, a soundproof space for audio describers, captioning facilities and an area for sign interpreters.

The Clocktower Centre is not perfect but is certainly a step in the right direction.

Arts Access 2000 Training Calendar

Disability Awareness Training... with a twist!

When: Monday 14th August 2000
Time: 9.30am – 4.30pm
Where: The Balcony Room
The Clocktower Centre
750 Mt. Alexander Road, Moonee Valley
Cost: \$ 75 per person (Lunch and Information Kit included)

When: 17th November 2000
Time: 9.30am – 4.30pm
Where: The Pascoe Room
The Clocktower Centre
750 Mt. Alexander Road, Moonee Valley
Cost: \$ 75 per person (Lunch and Information Kit included)

Artists Forums

What: Speaking Creatively –
Arts Practice & Arts Therapy
When: Monday 25th September 2000
Time: 10am – 2pm
Where: The Tower Room,
C.U.B. Malthouse Theatre
113 Sturt Street, Southbank
Cost: \$10 per person (Lunch included)

What: Priority Process : Priority Product
When: Monday 4th December 2000
Time: 10am – 2pm
Where: The Tower Room,
C.U.B. Malthouse Theatre
113 Sturt Street, Southbank
Cost: \$10 per person (Lunch included)

Skills and Abilities Seminar Series

To provide an opportunity for artists, support workers and arts educators to gain practical skills for use in their arts practice

What: Arts practice for, by and with people with an intellectual disability
When: Monday 4th September 2000
Time: 9.00am – 4.00pm
Where: The Pascoe Room
The Clocktower Centre
750 Mt. Alexander Road, Moonee Valley

What: Arts practice for, by and with people with a psychiatric disability
When: Monday 2nd October 2000
Time: 9.00am – 4.00pm
Where: The Pascoe Room
The Clocktower Centre
750 Mt. Alexander Road, Moonee Valley

What: Dance and movement for, by and with people with a disability
When: Monday 6th November 2000
Time: 9.00am – 4.00pm
Where: The Studio
The Clocktower Centre
750 Mt. Alexander Road, Moonee Valley

SPECIAL OFFER

Save money - and get the whole Skills and Abilities series for just \$200 or \$75.00 for each session (includes Lunch & Information Kit)

An Untapped Market

To provide local and amateur theatre and dance companies with an insight into the potential opportunities that exist within the disability community.

When: Saturday 25th - Sunday 26th November 2000
Time: 10am – 4pm Sat & 12pm - 4pm Sun
Where: Chapel off Chapel
Cost: \$150 (includes Lunch and Information Kit)

An AWFULLY BIG Adventure!!

A bus tour of the highlights and lowlights of Melbourne's entertainment Venues for arts industry staff providing a practical, hands on experience of what makes a venue accessible for people with a disability

When: Friday 3rd November 2000
Time: 10am – 4pm
Where: Various locations – Ending at the Clocktower Centre, Moonee Valley
Cost: \$100.00 per person (includes Bus Tour, Lunch, Information Kit and Wine & Cheese finale!)

Employment of people with a disability in the arts

When: 28th August 2000
Time: 10am – 4pm
Where: The Balcony Room
The Clocktower Centre
750 Mt. Alexander Road, Moonee Valley
Cost: \$75 (includes Lunch and Information Kit)

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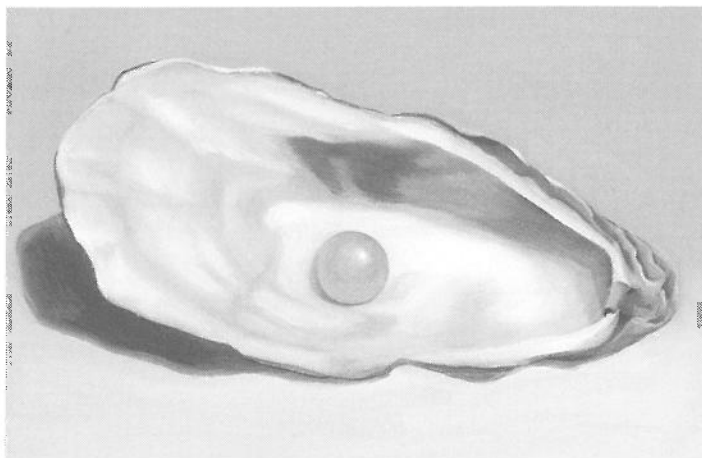
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Oyster Grit is a collection of writings by Australian women with disabilities. Each woman has written about aspects of her life experience, revealing extraordinary abilities of endurance, humour, and creativity. Experiences, some spanning many years, are described with laconic humour and understatement.

Women with disabilities are often ignored in histories and accounts of the struggle for disability rights. ***Oyster Grit*** is a fascinating account of how diverse women have experienced their lives.

This book is a valuable resource for anyone who wishes to broaden their knowledge of women, people with disabilities, and the ways women with disabilities have been treated by our society. Women's studies, welfare and disability studies, students will learn much from these writers.

Cost

Waged	\$12.00 + \$2.00 postage
Unwaged	\$7.00 + \$2.00 postage

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