

# Access



*Season's Greetings*

Newsletter of Arts Access Society Inc.

December 1987

## Children plus Arts equals, stimulation

**During 1988 Arts Access has run a wide range of programmes aimed at increasing opportunities in the arts and in the community for children with disabilities.**

A large number of these programmes have been funded by the Schools Commission. They've ranged through music, drama, movement and the visual arts. They've taken place as far afield as Frankston and Bairnsdale and they've provided countless sources of development and stimulation for the children involved.

Staff, parents and support workers have participated in programmes and in staff workshops aimed at exposing them to the options offered by arts activities.

One of the many stories which encourages our consistent efforts to financially support these activities involves a young girl from an ethnic background. Her family was not happy that she was attending a co-educational Special Development School and subsequently she missed both the stimulations and options of school activities.



*A Bird Is Born*

movement artsworker and a Lebanese dance artsworker. Her development over the time has been marked. She obviously enjoys rhythm and movement. She is developing greater communication skills and for the first time partici-

pates in recreational activity with other children without disabilities. Her own pleasure, and the enthusiasm of those supporting her has been terrific. It seems as if developing music skills is now a real option for her.

## Working Together

**It is sometimes the case that artists may have to work closely together on a programme with little prior contact, as individuals or practitioners.**

One such case was the Special Accommodation House programme. Artists Helen Lenga, David Bridie and Bernice McPherson decided that for this project it was vitally important that they understood how each person worked and how their various art-forms could be integrated to best effect.

Consequently they decided to run a workshop together at Arts Access and requested that other interested artists be invited to join in. Arts Access saw this as a great opportunity to introduce new artists to the type of work we do and invited a number of artists with different skills to come.

The day proved to be extremely useful and was greatly enjoyed by all the participants. This model may be of interest to other artists and could be a fascinating alternative to an artists' day next year. We would love to hear your views as artists and look forward to getting some feedback on the idea.

## See EASE!

**Inside you will find more than just pages 2 and 3. You'll find the Entertainment Access Service newsletter.**

EASE aims to help people with special needs attend Melbourne's entertainment events by providing information, social support and incentives. EASE aims to encourage promoters to ensure physical access is available to all venues and performances.

So turn the page with Arts Access and read on with EASE.

**It hardly seems twelve months since I predicted that Arts Access would have an exciting and innovative 1987.**

*Now, while I'm not claiming to be Nostradamus I believe that prediction has come true.*

*The year has been highlighted by:*

- the permanent employment at Larundel Psychiatric Hospital of the artists Libby O'Neill and Richard Benge;
- the further development of our work at Mont Park and Plenty hospitals;
- constant requests for staff workshops for those working in community-based organisations and institutions;
- the production of a book "Pen-pushers" written by the Over 50s Writing Group from the Western Region and the Western Region Aged Programme;
- the launching of the ticketing programme "EASE," which has already distributed tickets, and;
- the development of Arts Access programmes in East Gippsland.

*Artists are our life line, and each year we discover a new group who have new ideas and new directions and we hang on grimly to our regular group hoping that they will be available to work for us. The problem is that they are often needed in so many other arenas.*

*Each staff member that leaves Arts Access leaves a gap and Michelle's going is no exception—of course we wish her and John good luck, but we will miss our very efficient and cheerful office administrator very much. We will have a new administrator in place before the end of the year.*

*As 1988 begins Kate Brennan will travel to the United States for three weeks as part of the Arts Dialogue return trip and Carey will be absent for three months as she travels back to the United Kingdom to celebrate her parents Golden Wedding.*

*1988 will see the implementation of the first year of our five-year strategy plan. Hopefully we will also have a trainee working at Larundel and our building completed. We will be welcoming new members to the committee and introducing more and more people to our work.*

*I want to thank an incredibly dedicated and hard-working committee and staff and on behalf of all of us I wish you all a Happy festive season and a prosperous New Year.*

*Dinny Downie*

## Michelle... farewell

**Of course, we should have known! All at Arts Access thought that when Michelle and John Stone moved from Frankston to Broadmeadows it was just a simple, straightforward change of address.**

But, it wasn't! It was part of a intricate plan, and now the Arts Access investigative team is in the position to reveal the full details ... and it's an EXCLUSIVE!

Documents and secretly recorded tapes (The Arts Access Tapes) reveal that the move from Frankston to Broadmeadows was just one small move in a major series of moves to eventually get to Brisbane.

Starting in Devonport several years ago, the couple moved to Melbourne, with John transferring to an Army position here and Michelle eventually joining Arts Access in October 1985 as an office assistant and skyrocketing to the position of Office Administrator due to her exceptional capabilities.

Their actions have followed a

familiar pattern, with a series of smaller, almost un-noticeable shifts, followed by another large move. Arts Access has confirmed with another document (her resignation) that the Stones intend leaving Victoria in January to head for the capital of the Banana-state. Michelle leaves Arts Access on December 22.

Executive Director, Dinny Downie, is shocked and saddened by .... the allegations.

"I wish Michelle and John all the very best. Her contribution to Arts Access has been fabulous.

I just wish it was the Arts Access investigative team which was going to Brisbane, and not Michelle," she said.

Michelle has refused to speak to reporters about the allegations ... except to say that she is sad to be leaving... and point out that Brisbane has warmer weather.

Despite the immense disappointment of all concerned, we all wish Michelle and John best wishes and future happiness.

## Building community—the special accommodation project

**During the last few months Arts Access has been involved in a challenging project with residents of three Special Accommodation Houses.**

Visual artist Bernice McPherson, musician David Bridie, and dramatist Helen Lenga have developed a programme aimed at assisting those people in the SAH's who are able to take advantage of community arts and recreation activities to have confidence to move out of the homes.

The programme uses the recollections and histories of the older residents and encourages them to share and value things which most of them have not discussed for many years.

The first task in each of the houses has been to establish a sense of community amongst the residents. Many people had lived together for years and yet did not know or have reason to recall each other's names. Through the music, visual arts and storytelling activities, the difficult task of breaking the ice, instilling confidence and developing motivation to be involved have been tackled.

Noel Skinner, one of the proprietors of the houses said, "The amount of enthusiasm in the participants has greatly increased whilst the programme is



*Dominic gets into the swing of things at Wattle Lodge.*

going, and the programme becomes the focus of discussion throughout the following week. Overall I have noticed that the residents' general awareness of their surroundings has increased and they tend to interact more."

The Special Accommodation House Project will continue into next year after such a positive beginning.

## Creating an event

**Take three artists, a motley collection of materials and 22 enthusiastic participants, put them in a workshop for a day and you have all the ingredients for a fascinating arts event.**

This is what happened at Clarendon Clinic on November 20th when Arts Access ran a workshop for staff from a wide range of psychiatric clinics. The idea of the workshop was to demonstrate how simple drama and movement exercises can be developed, with the use of very ordinary materials and a lot of imagination, into something way beyond the sum of the ingredients—an event.

Artists Maud Clark (drama), Sally Marsden (visual) and Greg Sneddon (music) led the participants on a journey of exploration. After getting to know each other through a series of trust and improvisation exercises, participants were asked to create four worlds—a side-walk cafe, an island, a dark forest and a high place—which became the focus of the days' activities.

From the chosen worlds participants were asked to write THE letter participants had never written before and post it into another world. The contents of these letters were then used to develop a series of small performances in movement and drama.

The day ended with a discussion of the process and structure of the day. The artists explained that what had been developed in a day could actually be broken down into material for a number



*Experiencing the Art form—Staff workshop*

of workshops with the participants' client groups to be developed over time.

The workshop generated some extraordinary work and the participants' response was receptive and enthusiastic.

One person said that through doing the workshop it had made her realise

how vulnerable we can feel when asked to do something unfamiliar and how that would assist her in future work with her clients.

Most people left the workshop with a sense of achievement and renewed belief in the potential of working creatively.

## Arts Access...Forward!

**The Forward Plan for 1988 was endorsed by the Management Committee at their all-day meeting on Sunday November 8.**

The plan includes programmes with an emphasis on integrative activities for adults with intellectual disabilities; programmes involving people who are

leaving institutions to live in the community but who still remain isolated, particularly in Special Accommodation Houses; and the development of programmes in East Gippsland and an Artist-in-a-Community residency model in a range of settings.

Needless to say, work in other areas with children and other people who have disabilities or who are disadvantaged, will continue.

Yet again the Arts Access Committee deserves congratulations on its insight and dedication. A big thank you from all the staff.

## Programme Update

**Austin Hospital**—Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit Maud Clark and Sally Marsden are currently running a series of drama, mask and puppet workshops involving staff and residents, with a view to establishing programmes next year.

**Mt Evelyn**—Special Development School David Wells and John Wilson are running a series of music and movement workshops involving staff and students.

**Plenty Hospital**  
As a result of matching funding from Plenty the drama programme there has continued on with artists Noel Maloney and Maud Clark.

**Fitzroy Music Programme**  
Funded by the Department of Sport and Recreation this

programme will commence in the new year with artist David Bridie and young men from the Holden Street Community Residential Unit linking up with community-based music programmes.

**Brunswick West After-School Drama**  
Joan Murray has begun a series of drama and storytelling workshops for children of Arabic and Lebanese backgrounds. The programme will continue in 1988.

**1988 Senior Citizens Projects**  
Exciting projects will run from January through to March in Bairnsdale, Melton, Hawthorn and at Mt Royal. Each programme uses varying artforms and promises to be a challenge. More later.

# The Wizards of Larundel

It seems that every Arts Access newsletter features something about the Artist-in-Residency programme at Larundel.

Now the hospital is funding Richard and Libby's salaries the activities and events get bigger and better. On the 18th November a grand parade, using the theme of "The Wizard of Oz" was staged in the hospital grounds.

Over 500 people from Larundel, surrounding hospitals and clinics, staff from the hospital, well wishers and support-workers got into the swing of things in fancy dress and braved the blistering conditions to cheer the Wizard of Oz parade around the grounds.

Floats representing all the characters from the Oz story were built by staff and patients and towered up to 5 metres high. The characters were transported on an assemblage of hospital vehicles and proceeded down the specially-painted yellow brick road.

The final moments of the parade saw



those present sharing in the singing of "Somewhere over the Rainbow," as a thousand multi-coloured balloons each bearing wishes of those within the hos-

pital were released into the sparkling sky over Larundel. It was an experience representing many long hours of work for all involved and an inspiration to witness.

## Arts Access

Arts Access Society Inc is a non-profit organisation committed to providing access to those who are disabled and disadvantaged.

Please contact us if you would like to become a member of the Society or know more about our activities.

Executive Officer: **Dinny Downie**  
Programme Director: **Kate Brennan**  
Office Administrator: **Michelle Stone**  
Ticketing Project Officer: **Chris Milton**

Office Assistant: **Susie Dickson**

Public Relations Officer: **Mark Madden**

Volunteer Office Assistant: **Suzanne O'Dwyer**

Arts Access Society Inc, 109/111 Sturt Street, South Melbourne, 3205. Telephone: (03) 699 8299

Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

## Calling Artsworkers

We're always eager to hear from new artists with high quality skills in community arts.

We particularly value recommendations from artsworkers who work with Arts Access already. If you know of anyone who would be interested in working with the society in the future ask them to contact Kate Brennan, on 699 8299.

### ARTS ACCESS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Registered by Australia Post  
Publication No. VAW7218

Postage  
Paid  
Australia

If undelivered return to:

Arts Access Society Inc.  
109-111 Sturt Street, South Melbourne, 3205. Australia.