

Festivals and Disability Arts in Australia

- Representation, Culture, Creativity
- Access, Accessibility, Inclusion
- Connecting / Collaborating with mainstream



Early Festivals & Events

Paralympic Arts Festival (Sydney, 2000) – held alongside the Sydney Paralympic Games 2000, Australian and international artists across venues like Sydney Opera House, Seymour Centre, and Olympic Park.

Wataboshi Music Festival (Brisbane, 2003) – festival for Disabled musicians and poets run in Japan and other Asia Pacific countries since 1975, hosted by Access Arts at Queensland Cultural Centre

Awakenings Festival (Horsham, 1990s-2012) – presented by Council in partnership with arts and health organisations, celebrating the experience, culture and creativity of Disabled artists

High Beam Festival (Adelaide, 1998-2006) – biennial festival produced by Arts in Action (now Access2Arts) showcasing local, national, and international artists across theatre, dance, music, and visual arts, creating national discourse on disability arts, culture, and inclusion

Amalgamation Festival (Hobart, Launceston, Burnie, 2006) – produced by Arts Action, promoted as Tasmania’s first disability arts festival, state-wide music, theatre, film, and visual arts program, addressing barriers and lack understanding of what Disabled people can do

ACT DisAbility Arts Festival (Canberra, c. 2002-2010) – presented by artsACT, followed by programs like *IGNITE: Alternative Arts Academy* (2015- Belconnen Arts Centre) and *ACT Arts Inclusion Project* (2018- in collaboration Accessible Arts)

Art of Difference Festival (Melbourne, 2009) – presented at Gasworks, addressing barriers to access, promoting Disabled artists’ work, and providing opportunities to engage with mainstream arts, as Australia launched National Arts & Disability Strategy (2009)



Current & Continuing Festivals

Undercover Artist Festival (Brisbane, 2015) – Produced by Access Arts, biennial festival presents theatre, dance, cabaret, and music, creative and career development opportunities, advocates for access, inclusion, Disability-led creation

Alter State (Melbourne, 2022-) – Produced by Arts Access Victoria and Arts Centre Melbourne, biennial program showcases artistry, creativity, and culture of d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent artists, presenting work, promoting access aesthetics, equity, and inclusion in the industry, and hosting discussion events.

Flow Festival (Melbourne, 2022-) – Deaf-led national event, Deaf-led film, performance, and visual arts work, in culturally safe spaces, collaborations with other festivals like Alter State and Midsumma Festival

Film, Screen, New Media Festivals

The Other Film Festival (Melbourne, 2004-) – Australia’s first disability-led film festival, produced by Arts Access Victoria, Australia’s first disability-led film festival presents local and international work, promotes stories that centre the experience of Disabled people, promotes access through Auslan, captions, audio description, and provides opportunities for Disabled filmmakers to enter the industry

An/Other Film Festival (Perth, 2024-) – after presenting The Other Film Festival WA program in 2022, DADAA initiated An/Other Film Festival in 2024

Focus on Ability (National, 2009-) – Produced by NOVA Employment, short film festival showcases the stories of Disabled people, with screenings, a competition, with winning films broadcast on SBS

Sit Down Shutup & Watch Film Festival (Adelaide, 2014-) – Run by Tutti Arts and a Steering Committee of artists with Intellectual Disability, biannual event includes screenings, and training, and promotes access through Auslan, captions, audio description, and other assistive tools.

Engagement with mainstream festivals

Back to Back Theatre - Present work at many national and international festivals

Australian Theatre of the Deaf – ‘*Dislabelled*’ (2000) at Adelaide Cabaret Festival and at Seymour Centre as part of Paralympics Arts Festival; ‘*Language of One*’ (1999) at Newtown Theatre and ‘*Deaf and Gay*’ (1994) at Stables Theatre as part of Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival

Rawcus – ‘*The Heart of Another Is a Dark Forest*’ (2008) at Melbourne Fringe, ‘*Song for a Weary Throat*’ (2018) at Theatreworks then at Melbourne International Arts Festival

Restless Dance Theatre – Adelaide Fringe Festival residencies, presented works like ‘*Intimate Space*’ (2017), ‘*Guttered*’ (2021), ‘*Exposed*’ (2022), and ‘*Private View*’ (2024) at Adelaide Festival, other Disability Arts festivals such as Alter State, other mainstream festivals such as Brisbane Festival.

Tutti Arts – regular presentations of artists’ work in the **SALA Festival (South Australian Living Artists Festival)**, founded by the Australian Commercial Galleries Association in 1998, profiling South Australian Visual Artists

Screenability – launched by **Sydney Film Festival** in 2017 to promote the practice and industry participation of d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent filmmakers.

DADAA - Partnered with Perth International Arts Festival 2016-2019 to promote inclusion of Disabled artists

Undercover Artist Festival – presented as a part of the Brisbane Festival since 2022, works developed and launched at UAF – such as Oliver Hetherington Page’s ‘*The No Bang Theory*’ (2021) – then presented in Brisbane Festival.