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Accessing Creative Expression, the Accessible Arts Magazine

Issue 27. April 2003

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www.accessibility.com.au

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get involved...

wataboshi festival

Living the Dream

**Curtain Rising on Dream Festival:
the 7th Asia Pacific
Wataboshi Music Festival**

**November 16th to 23rd,
2003 Brisbane Powerhouse,
Centre for the Live Arts
Presented by Access Arts (Qld)**

Wataboshi 2003 Festival comes to Australia for the first time this November. The curtain is rising on the international celebration of dreams and artistic expressions of people experiencing disabilities.

Brisbane is the setting for this unique world event, the Asia Pacific Wataboshi Music Festival that will showcase music, performance and visual arts from 13 countries in a week-long celebration of the creative expressions of artists, including soloists and bands from around Australia.

Centre stage is the Brisbane Powerhouse (www.brisbanepowerhouse.org) on the banks of the Brisbane River and its superb theatre and courtyard venues. Brisbane Powerhouse is a friendly, accessible venue, attracting wide range of audiences interested in supporting innovative ideas and forms. It's also the home of Access Arts, Queensland's premier Arts and Disability organisation, who are hosting the 2003 Wataboshi Living the Dream Festival.

Late last year, Matt Foley, Minister for the Arts held a reception for Mr Harima, Chair of Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation, Nara, Japan, at Parliament House to confirm his commitment to the Wataboshi 2003.

During the celebrations of the International Day of People with Disability, Judy Spence, Minister for Disability

Services called the Queensland artists to participate in this high profile event.

Neal Price, Executive Director of Access Arts said that Access Arts is deeply honoured to be the first Australian Arts and Disability organisation to receive the invitation from the Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation to host the Wataboshi Festival. "We are very proud to host the first Australian Wataboshi in 2003, which will coincide with our 20th birthday celebrations. The invitation is a great honour and we are delighted to have been able to accept it through the support and funding from the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and Disability Services Queensland," he said.

The Brisbane Wataboshi joins Singapore (1991), Seoul (1993), Shanghai (1995), Bangkok (1997), Nara (1999), and Kaohsiung (2001) in the international biennial version of the event that began in the ancient Japanese city of Nara in 1976. Nurtured by the Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation, this one off event has blossomed into an annual festival in Japan (with performances in over 50 cities) and a biennial international event that captures the imagination of people around the world, deeply touched by its message of world friendship and tolerance.

Wataboshi (pronounced what-ah-boshi) is Japanese for the seeds of the dandelion flower and like the seeds carried by the wind, the festival seeks to share and convey a message of peace and harmony throughout the world. With each festival the Wataboshi movement strengthens, attracting people from the general community as well as the disability sector in a celebration of creativity of all abilities.

an Australian musician of remarkable ability with a remarkable story, David Helfgott is the International Ambassador of the Brisbane Wataboshi. His own experience with mental illness and his tenacious spirit to express himself through music will make him a touchstone for the many artists visiting from different countries.

Brisbane Wataboshi Festival Director, Ludmila Doneman and her team are dedicated to making the Brisbane Wataboshi a profoundly positive world event in 2003 "We look forward to welcoming all to Wataboshi – performers and spectators – to share new insights of our individual stories and through Wataboshi create environment for ongoing exchanges including movement, theatre, visual arts, and writing, with music being the strong original force," she said.

"What begins to develop as a theme of the festival is the expression through first hand experience of performers who have been displaced, labelled or dis-empowered and have discovered a commitment to the arts as a way of expressing personal and political messages to the general public."

"Much of the work and ideas presented to us centres around the politics of 'difference' and 'diversity'" adds Neal Price." While some work might develop from the experience of having a disability or centres around the issues that performers are experiencing, the artistry and musicianship that is expressed by performers living with disability, ongoing civil unrest or concerns about social justice issues is the major preoccupation of many of the performers."

Queensland artists interested in performing at the Wataboshi 2003 are many, amongst them Jeff Usher, Liz Navratil, James Kerwin, Julee-anne van der Boor, Caitlan McMorro, Belinda Andreussi, Purple Patch, The Bennisons, Janelle Colquhoun, Morwenna Collett, just to mention some... Poet and comedian Philip Patston from New Zealand will display his wide repertoire, alongside with ten members of the Sydney band Junction House. Join them - under the direction of ex-Go-Between drummer Lindy Morrison, their 'Battle for Something Special' will take you through the Powerhouse Spark Bar on a great adventure, calling for your participation!

Get Involved!

Please indicate your interest in participating in the Wataboshi Festival as soon as possible– so they can forward their letter of support to you in time for forthcoming grant deadlines (in case you are planning to develop new work or if you need to cover travel costs to Brisbane). If you are expressing interest in presenting existing work, Access Arts will inform you about the level of their contribution to cover costs/honorarium as soon as they have a clearer program outline.

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volunteers wanted

audio description

Wanted:

Audio Description Volunteers

Audio Description volunteers wanted by Sydney Royal Blind Society

An innovative arts access program developed by Royal Blind Society in Sydney is calling for volunteers to audition for their Audio Description program, which enhances the experience of visual and performing arts and other attractions for people who are blind or vision impaired.

Audio Description is an innovative and rapidly developing arts access practice with practitioners and audiences worldwide. An art-form in itself, Audio Description involves the skills of highly trained Describers who translate visual elements into a verbal format so that a vision impaired person no longer feels they are missing out on essential detail, nor needs to depend on someone next to them to explain what is happening. In a theatre context, Audio Describers work alongside the production crew, broadcasting live to tiny hand-held receivers to fill in the gaps around actors' dialogue with essential visual information.

The program currently partners several high-profile cultural organisations - such as the Sydney Opera House, the Powerhouse Museum, and the Sydney Theatre Company - "to provide Audio Description to their patrons" says Lisa Gibson, Manager, Community Access Products, "This is a unique opportunity for people who love the arts and are passionate about making them accessible to everyone, to join a team of talented individuals and receive training in this ground breaking discipline."

Potential Audio Describers will have strong observation skills, a flair for descriptive language, an interest in arts and cultural events, and some time to give. They will be fully trained in the exacting art of Audio Description, an expanding access service that enriches the experience of theatre, museums, exhibitions and public spaces for people with vision impairment.

Applicants must be Sydney-based and able to attend triple previews of plays as well as evening and weekend performances, broadcasting live to fill in the gaps around actors' dialogue with essential visual information.

If you would like to learn more about what is involved, and are prepared to make a regular commitment throughout the year, please contact Donna Willson.

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