

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. Featured 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. Originated in Japan and Asia Pacific since 1975. Hosted by Access Arts at Queensland Cultural Centre.
- **Awakenings Festival** (Horsham, 1990s–2012)
 - Presented by local council with arts and health partners. Celebrated creativity and culture of Disabled artists.
- **High Beam Festival** (Adelaide, 1998–2006)
 - Biennial event by Arts in Action (now Access2Arts). Showcased theatre, dance, music, visual arts. Sparked national discourse on disability arts and inclusion.
- **Amalgamation Festival** (Tasmania, 2006)**
 - Produced by Arts Action. Tasmania's first disability arts festival. State-wide music, theatre, film, and visual arts program.
- **ACT DisAbility Arts Festival** (Canberra, ~2002–2010)
 - Presented by artsACT. Later evolved into IGNITE: Alternative Arts Academy (2015) and ACT Arts Inclusion Project (2018).
- **Art of Difference Festival** (Melbourne, 2009)
 - Held at Gasworks. Addressed access barriers, promoted Disabled artists, aligned with launch of National Arts & Disability Strategy.

Current & Continuing Festivals

Undercover Artist Festival (Brisbane, 2015–)

Biennial event by Access Arts. Presents theatre, dance, cabaret, music. Supports career development and Disability-led

Alter State (Melbourne, 2022–)

Produced by Arts Access Victoria and Arts Centre Melbourne. Biennial showcase of d/Deaf, Disabled, Neurodivergent artists. Promotes access aesthetics and equity.

Flow Festival (Melbourne, 2022–)

Deaf-led national event. Features film, performance, visual arts in culturally safe spaces. Collaborates with 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. Features local and international work. Promotes access via Auslan, captions, audio description.

An/Other Film Festival (Perth, 2024–)

Initiated by DADAA after hosting The Other Film Festival WA in 2022.

Focus on Ability (National, 2009–)

Produced by NOVA Employment. Short film festival showcasing Disabled stories. Winning films broadcast on SBS.

Sit Down Shutup & Watch Film Festival (Adelaide, 2014–)

Run by Tutti Arts and artists with Intellectual Disability. Biannual screenings and training. Promotes access tools like Auslan and captions.

Engagement with Mainstream Festivals

Back to Back Theatre

Presents work at national and international festivals.

Australian Theatre of the Deaf

'Dislabelled' (2000) at Adelaide Cabaret Festival and Paralympics Arts Festival.

'Language of One' (1999) at Newtown Theatre.

'Deaf and Gay' (1994) at 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 and Melbourne International Arts Festival.

Restless Dance Theatre

Adelaide Fringe residencies. Works include 'Intimate Space' (2017), 'Guttered' (2021), 'Exposed' (2022), 'Private View' (2024). Featured in Alter State and Brisbane Festival.

Tutti Arts

Regularly presents at SALA Festival (South Australian Living Artists Festival).

Screenability

Launched by Sydney Film Festival (2017). Promotes d/Deaf, Disabled, Neurodivergent filmmakers.

DADAA

Partnered with Perth International Arts Festival (2016–2019) to promote Disabled artists.

Undercover Artist Festival

Since 2022, presented as part of Brisbane Festival. Works like Oliver Hetherington Page's 'The No Bang Theory' (2021) developed at UAF and showcased at Brisbane Festival.