

Arts Access



NEWSLETTER OF ARTS ACCESS SOCIETY INC. JUNE 1986

Older People and the Arts

Arts Access Society organised an innovative seminar for Senior Citizens' Week titled "Older People and the Arts", at the Grant Street Theatre. The seminar was sponsored by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and is the first time that arts activity has been funded for Senior Citizens' Week.

A considerable number of people attending the seminar were those professionals working with older people, such as occupational therapists, nurses and recreational officers, keen to expand their knowledge.

Laurel Sutton, an occupational therapist at Willsmere Hospital, and artists, Heather Hill, Sally Marsden and Elizabeth Patterson talked in the morning about their specific experiences working with older people. They were joined in workshops by more artists including Helen Martineau, Trina Parker, Anne Marie Power, Shelley Scown and Michelle Howard. Between them all, they offered a huge combination of experience and skill which they generously conveyed

During the middle of the day the seminar was enlivened by two groups of performers. Firstly the Tombolas, a group of older people aged between 60 - 80, performed a compilation of their previous shows with tremendous warmth and humour followed by the Dominoes who performed a very interesting play from the stories of older residents at Mount Royal Hospital.



Tombolas in action

The skills and discussion workshops held both in the morning and in the afternoon, focussed on specific areas such as "Working with Older People in the Community", "Artists in Institutions: What is their Role?", "Arts or Therapy: Is there a Difference?", and "Older People and the Arts: What are the Benefits?". Some of the benefits of the arts to older people were:

- . increasing movement and mobility
- . learning
- . increasing self-esteem

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- increasing quality of life
- enhancing self-expression

The role of the artists going into institutions and providing fresh stimuli to the staff and residents alike was emphasized.

A participant wrote:

"The programme was an inspiration and opened new issues concerning the old".

Clearly the seminar has just touched the surface in this area and ideas were flowing about future activities. As older people represent a large section of our population, whose creative potential may be unrealised, the need for arts activities in the community and in institutions is clearly demonstrated. Certainly Arts Access hopes to take a more active role in this area in the future.

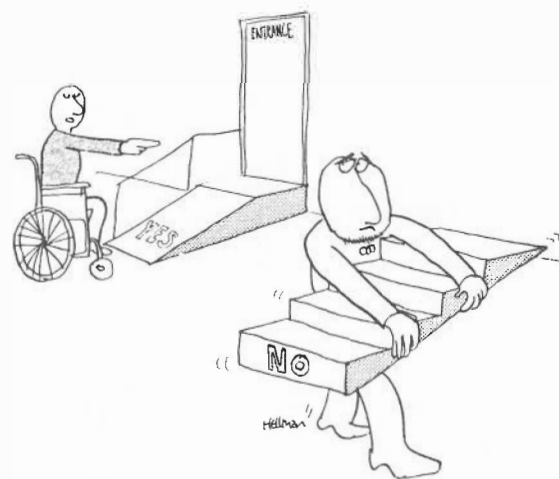
Ticketing for All

Arts Access has been assessing the feasibility of an arts ticketing scheme for disabled and disadvantaged people in Victoria.

Belinda Kirkwood has completed her written report which will be forwarded by Arts Access to the Department of Sport & Recreation (who funded it) and to the Ministry for the Arts.

Many people and organisations were consulted including clients, BASS, promoters, theatre companies, venue owners, managers and people involved in similar schemes overseas.

As Edith Hall (Paraplegic & Quadriplegic Association) says, "Of all public buildings theatre venues are some of the most challenging spaces and venue owners and promoters the most reluctant of business people to fully acknowledge the needs of people with disabilities".



Issues which the report discusses include:-

- current ticket prices - concessional and discount schemes, and their applicability and benefits.
- venue access, facilities and services.
- client and industry information needs.
- client motivation and needs.
- the mechanics of a possible ticketing scheme.
- recommendations.

The scheme can be a very effective way to spearhead major change in access to live entertainment for disadvantaged people. To maximise the potential of a ticket distribution operation an advocacy and developmental role is seen as essential and the report has recommendations on this.

The major recommendation will be that a scheme operate separately for 12 months after which time it should be clear whether to continue with an independent, separately staffed scheme, or whether to leave the industry, now sufficiently educated, to incorporate the scheme into its everyday operation.

Please contact Arts Access if you would like to find out more about these developments.

Access in Action

Since joining Arts Access three months ago, I have had the privilege of visiting many of the arts programmes we are running in institutions and with community organisations around Melbourne.

Artists, staff and participants creating, expressing and working together whether they be at the Melbourne Zoo, in a room on a ward at Mont Park Psychiatric Hospital, at Nepean Special School, in the gym at Heidelberg Technical School or in the community space at Park Towers housing estate, the experience has been inspiring for me in my work as project officer.

People having fun, moving, acting, weaving, sewing, dancing or playing music together. Crossing new boundaries, learning new skills and discovering new spaces within themselves. Often frustrated or angry because they can't move as they want to, and express themselves as they need to, but gradually through the patience and affirmation of others, breaking through with a smile that says "I did it".



The dedication of artists, the commitment of staff and the willingness of participants are, I believe, the essential ingredients for a successful arts programme. Programmes of this nature have an important role to play in the development of every person who is lucky enough to be a participant.

It is my hope that more and more people become aware of the important contribution that arts programmes make to the lives of individuals and the whole community, especially to those who are disabled or disadvantaged. The arts should not be seen as the icing on the cake, but as its basic and essential ingredient.

Trisha Collinson

CHANGES

As this is our first newsletter for 1986, I would like to mention our new staff members, Jo Caust (Programme Director) and Trish Collinson (Project Officer) who have already made their presence felt with a restructure of Arts Access committees.

As part of this restructure a programming advisory group is being formed with client and artist representation. This group will be discussing programming ideas and long-term integrated planning for the Society. Meanwhile our 1986 programmes are well on their way and running smoothly. I am anticipating an exciting year of new ideas and new directions.

ARTS ACCESS IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION WHICH MAKES CULTURAL ACTIVITIES MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE INSTITUTIONALISED AND THE DISADVANTAGED.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR ACTIVITIES, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO RING US ON (03) 699-8299.

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International Links

Three weeks overseas always leaves me with a jumble of information to be sorted out for months after my return! I went, representing Arts Access, to a conference in Washington, sponsored by Very Special Arts. I was one of nine international delegates, the others coming from Venezuela, Panama, Barbados, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland, the Netherlands and Kenya. The main aim of the conference was to establish a world wide network of people all working in the field of arts and disability. On day three, delegates from all over America joined us and it was fascinating to compare notes and discover so many new and different programmes being developed.

Very Special Arts have much to offer Arts Access in the way of resources and it will now be up to the Board of our Society to discuss whether we are to affiliate with this huge organisation. I will have more news of this in later newsletters.

New York houses Hospital Audiences Inc. run by dynamo Michael Spencer, who is the founding godfather of Arts Access. H.A.I. has brought over 3,000 artists to over 240,000

institutionalised people each year, as well as running participatory workshops for thousands. They also run a programme called ArtCart, which is a lending library of photographs, for patients in hospitals and institutions to choose for their rooms. There was such a plethora of ideas and possibilities that we have much to think about.

London was full of daffodils, and whilst in England, I visited the famous Manchester Hospital project which we are hoping to emulate here in Melbourne. The idea is to provide permanent multi-art programmes in large institutions, to not only lift morale but to also establish an artist-in-residence programme. It was fascinating to realise that much of the Manchester Hospital was built before Australia was discovered by Europeans!

The whole trip was an exciting experience establishing and re-establishing links with people all over the world, and the benefits I'm sure will begin to appear as time passes.

Diana Downie

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