

A group of people, including men and women of various ages and ethnicities, are gathered around a vintage car on a beach. A large surfboard is leaning against the car. The scene is set outdoors, likely on a beach, with a warm, orange-toned background. The overall mood is nostalgic and community-oriented.

*The event resonated with audiences and participants alike because it reflected their own sense of place and community in all its diversity. Moreover, it reflected the multiplicity of experiences and concerns that exist within our sense of place.*

Elizabeth Walsh, Executive Producer, Ten Days on the Island

**Journey Through Asia** performed by Kita Performing Arts Company provided a special learning experience for school children across regional Victoria about Asian cultures.

**The Spirit of Adventure** program has revitalised the Museum of the Riverina in Wagga Wagga, NSW, by focusing on regular public events with local content and community involvement.

**Unhiding, VisAbility through the Arts** gave people with disabilities an opportunity for a valued and meaningful role in a community arts project in Albany, Western Australia.

**Bute Utes** created sculptures from utes that reflected seldom-heard stories about four towns in regional Victoria.

**Wonderlands**, a play focusing on the issue of Native Title, is the work of HotHouse Theatre, a national theatre company based in Albury-Wodonga.

**Love Bites** film project saw young people work with media professionals to produce 30 short films focusing on cultural diversity in the Greater Derwent District of Tasmania.

five

Creativity and diversity

# Journey Through Asia

## Kita Performing Arts Company



An Australian-based performing arts company specialising in Asian traditional culture has entertained, delighted and informed primary school students across Victoria. Journey Through Asia was Kita's first arts-in-education tour to primary schools. Each performance lasted an hour, and included seven traditional Asian dances, plus storytelling, audience participation and cultural exchange.

Kita Performing Arts Company sprang from an idea proposed by Kim Dunphy, then a lecturer in dance at Box Hill TAFE in Melbourne. She saw an opportunity for some graduating students whose skills in traditional Asian dance and music were unlikely to have immediate commercial value within mainstream Australian arts. The company began in 2002 as a troupe of three dancers from Taiwan, Korea and Indonesia, with Kim as director and Box Hill TAFE providing studio space for rehearsals. The troupe has now expanded to include five performers, with a mix of Australian citizens, permanent residents and overseas students.

During 2003, Kita's Journey Through Asia meant that children, often living in isolated, mono-cultural communities, had a unique educational opportunity. Students from 16 primary schools were captivated by Kita Company's presentations. The tour visited Harcourt Valley, Wedderburn, Wycheproof, Walpeup, Ouyen, Nangiloc-Colignan, SeaLake, Culgoa, Portland, Learmonth, Linton,

Bacchus Marsh, Napoleons, Maiden Gully, Bendigo and Echuca. And students from Underbool, Tempy, Torrita and Patchewollock travelled to their nearest town to see the show.

One Chinese dance which Kita performed dates back 1000 years. Another, the traditional Indonesian coconut dance, *Tari Temperung*, was reinterpreted by Kita. The dance tells the story of Indonesian school children playing with coconuts fallen from trees in the school yard, much like Australian children would kick a footy or soccer ball. It drew this question from one surprised child: 'Do they have schools in Indonesia?' A Korean dance, *So Go Book Chum*, was performed with small hand drums by farmers celebrating the rice harvest.

*Kita's Journey Through Asia meant that children, often living in isolated, mono-cultural communities, had a unique educational opportunity.*

Journey Through Asia performances always included an active, athletic *Kung Fu Shun* fan dance. In this dance, the



Top: Kita Company. Photo: Catherine Acin  
Bottom: Dancers: Nixson Eduard and Rizal. Photo: Catherine Acin  
Right: *Kung Fu Shun* fan dance. Photo: Sabrina Chou  
Far Right: Dancer: Wei Lung Chou. Photo: Catherine Acin



silk fan emits a loud, metallic sound which guaranteed immediate interest and quiet focus from even the noisiest school group. Even the more lyrical Chinese ribbon dance—about an Emperor’s dream of fairies in the Moon Palace dancing in silk robes resembling clouds—gained interest when performers would invite a male teacher (usually the school principal) to take the role of the Emperor wearing a beautiful costume.

During the tour, Kita Company spent two weeks on the road in a four wheel drive towing a trailer specially designed to carry the company’s costumes and musical equipment. Sometimes Kita travelled to three schools in one day, wheeling costumes into a school library, gym or

community hall, where they would set up a minimal stage, collapsible backdrop and a sound system. It was a happy coincidence when some students spoke the languages also spoken by Kita performers.

For the performers of Kita Company, the tour was their first opportunity to experience country town culture as well as the unfamiliar dry red Mallee plains or Murray River landscapes.

Kita Company are currently developing a new show, *Tales of the Moon and other Oriental Adventures*, which focuses on traditional stories about the moon and its importance in the cycle of life. This will tour to schools throughout regional Victoria and suburban Melbourne.



Funding/support: Journey Through Asia performances were supported by Regional Arts Victoria’s Arts2Go Schools Program, with some very small schools also receiving funding through the Australian Childrens’ Theatre Foundation.

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# Spirit of Adventure

## Museum of the Riverina

In Wagga Wagga, the Museum of the Riverina has revitalised its links to the community over the past three years through a vibrant cultural program, Spirit of Adventure: Cultural Diversity at the Museum of the Riverina.

The Museum of the Riverina operates out of two Wagga Wagga sites. The Wagga Wagga Botanic Garden site focuses on the people, places and events which give Wagga Wagga its distinct character, while a second site was established five years ago in the city's Historic Council Chambers—and it's here that the Spirit of Adventure begins.

*The museum's innovative program has created a meeting point for local industry, business, artists and even scientists, who have contributed to creating exciting and locally relevant museum experiences.*

Manager Thomas Graham began by putting together a program of travelling exhibitions sourced from



organisations and individuals across Australia. But instead of passively displaying the exhibitions, he developed an exciting program of complementary local content and events to bring each exhibition to life. This program aims to make vibrant connections through local content, supported by targeted community groups, with the wider community of the town and surrounding district.

In 2002, for example, the Museum of the Riverina hosted a Powerhouse Museum exhibition, 'Women with Wings'. This inspired the museum to mount its own local mini-exhibition, 'Women with Altitude', about the experiences of 11 local women with aviation, including two pilots, a balloonist, paraglider, aircraft technician, and one who built her own plane. This exhibition toured to Griffith, Temora and Tumut.

The museum's innovative program has created a meeting point for local industry, business, artists and even scientists, who have contributed to creating exciting and locally relevant museum experiences. During Science Week 2002, over 40 students from Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga were rostered at the museum as tour guides to explain the scientific principles behind interactive exhibits to school groups. Two Aboriginal site officers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service ran participatory workshops for school groups about bush tucker, using theatre, music and dance. Charles Sturt University Professor, Nic Klomp, delivered workshops to older school students on issues of species sustainability, while younger school students explored these principles through outdoor drama games.

Above: Heather Ward, Public Programs Officer, Museum of the Riverina, tests the metal detector equipment as part of the 'Smuggler: Customs and Contraband' exhibition.

Top Right: Francois and Lyn Retief, members of the South West Slopes Vigenons Association, at 'Wine! An Australian Social History' exhibition

Bottom Right: Neville Smeardon, president of the local Vietnam Veterans Association, points out a detail to Kapooka army recruits (left to right) Kelly McKee, Chris Webb and Lt Dean Roberts during the 'My Vietnam' exhibition  
Photography: courtesy of The Riverina Media Group



The museum also initiates and tours its own exhibitions, many of which have proved extremely successful. In 2000, the year of the Sydney Olympic Games, the museum mounted an exhibition about Olympians who grew up in rural Australia. 'They Came From the Bush: Our National Olympic Heroes' toured across four states for over two and a half years.

In April 2003, the museum organised the 'My Vietnam' exhibition focusing on 'images Vietnam veterans would like to remember, rather than those they would like to forget'. The exhibition showed 50 photographs from a book of the same title by a local veteran Steve Lewis. With a Royal Australian Air Force base outside Wagga Wagga and the nearby Singleton Army Barracks (where national servicemen trained prior to duty in Vietnam), plus a large and active local Vietnam Vets Association, the exhibition had special local relevance. An opening night concert featuring Denise Drysdale and Patti Newton, both of whom had toured Vietnam in the 1960s, attracted 500 Vietnam veterans and their families.

In 2001, the museum hosted two exhibitions—'Indigenous Australia: Standing Strong' and 'Indigenous Australians: Australia's First Peoples'—which drew local Aboriginal communities into the building for the first time. But one local elder at the Standing Strong exhibition prompted a rethink: 'A great exhibition, but no one from the Riverina is represented!' Museum staff responded to this by curating 'Talking About Ourselves: Our Local Aboriginal Community' with stories from nine local elders, which is now a permanent feature at the Botanic Gardens.



This outreach program significantly stretches the resources of a small emerging museum, particularly when it is managing two sites. To succeed, it has had to draw on the commitment of casual staff and the enthusiasm of volunteers. Over the course of the past three years, skills have developed dramatically to the benefit of the whole community. One early volunteer progressed to casual, then permanent part-time employment at the museum, and finally graduated to become the full-time public programmer. She is now the special projects officer at Eastern Riverina Arts Program and describes her story as a 'Cinderella experience'. Today, the museum has two full-time staff, plus casual workers. The museum's volunteer staff scheme is project driven, with people participating in those exhibitions with particular relevance to them.

Looking ahead, the museum can count on strong local support. The Science Week event attracted 2500 visits over five days. The museum mounts a new exhibition every two months, and staff are active in retaining links and contacts within the local community, constantly looking out for new ideas and audiences.

Spirit of Adventure may be a program with very limited resources, but it makes a big impact through its use of local creativity, talent and culture.

Funding/support: NSW Ministry for the Arts, Wagga Wagga City Council, Visions of Australia Touring Program, Powerhouse Museum, New England Art Museum, Australian Museum, Charles Sturt University, NSW Education Department, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Ethnic Community Council in Wagga Wagga, Wiradjuri Elders Group in Wagga Wagga, The Bureau in Adelaide, Vietnam Veterans' Association, Department of Veterans' Affairs.

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# Unhiding, *VisAbility through the Arts*

Vancouver Arts Centre, Lower Great Southern Community Living Association, and Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts Australia WA

Albany's Unhiding project was a creative and collaborative two-year process to give people with a disability living in regional Western Australia a positive community presence through arts activities such as workshops, exhibitions and performance.

Unhiding grew out of a partnership between the Vancouver Arts Centre (VAC), Lower Great Southern Community Living Association (LGSCCLA), and Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts Australia (DADAA) WA.

In 2000, 60 people travelled to the Vancouver Arts Centre in Albany to participate in a weekend community consultation workshop, facilitated by DADAA. The workshop developed a broad vision for the cultural inclusion of people experiencing disabilities in the communities of Albany and the wider south-east region.



'The thing I really loved was that instead of us having to break barriers by asking local community groups if they could make their services accessible to people with a disability,' says Kathy Hough of LGSCCLA, 'Unhiding was a desirable, exciting, fun project that belonged to us. We could invite the community to join in and this also resulted in the promotion of the message *VisAbility through the Arts*.'

An arts project reference group was formed and began to meet monthly. Its 11 members included three community representatives of people with a disability, representatives from four local support organisations for people with a disability, and representatives from LGSCCLA, VAC and DADAA WA. This group drew up a detailed memorandum of understanding about its aims and objectives, including a decision about how to achieve and maintain an equal balance of power between the representatives of more powerful, well-resourced organisations and those with fewer resources. DADAA was represented on the project reference group, but the organisation made a strategic decision to remain a neutral body. While it did not participate in decision-making, it resourced the project in various ways, including facilitating workshops and disability awareness training for local artists and support workers.

The organisers held a series of basic workshops to enable potential project participants to decide which artforms would suit them. These introductory events were followed by a more intense series of Unhiding project workshops over three months between 2001 and 2002. Ninety people

with a range of disabilities participated in a series of weekly workshops over three months in writing, visual art, choral, dance, film and sculpture. These were facilitated by five local artists and two DADAA WA workers who are also artists.

*'Unhiding was a desirable, exciting, fun project that belonged to us. We could invite the community to join in and this also resulted in the promotion of the message VisAbility through the Arts.'*

'It was an immensely rewarding project for me,' says Teresa Hughes, Unhiding choir leader. 'I had such a good feeling about it. I learnt that people with a disability are individuals who are often lumped together as a group, but who are keen to be part of our community and do things that everyone else does.' Project participants noted improved self-esteem, confidence and pride, plus new skills in various artforms. 'It made me come out of my shell,' says participant Hazel Cameron.

In tandem with these workshops, DADAA WA facilitated disability awareness sessions for artswokers, members of

Above: The Unhiding Choir perform at the celebration concert

Right: Three of 50 artworks from a collage created during workshops now on permanent display at the Vancouver Arts Centre

Photography: courtesy of Vancouver Arts Centre



the reference group and support workers for people with a disability. The workshops gave the 30 participants a range of common procedures and principles to guide their practice, such as community cultural development methodologies and the Disability Service Standards (*Disability Service Act 1986*).

The final public celebration and exhibition of Unhiding was a highly charged event at which 90 people exhibited, performed and celebrated. For the first time they were socially visible and connected to the community instead of hidden and isolated. 'We learnt a lot—how to perform and present ourselves in public,' says Greg Stevens, a participant. For many families it was the first time they had seen their children included in a community celebration, or participate in a project with such successful outcomes. 'For me, Unhiding was about community, the things we can discover about ourselves by supporting one another. And the fun and enjoyment that comes from that,' adds Greg.

As a crowd of 400 people entered the main gallery space they saw an array of artworks hidden by coloured cloth. After the official speeches, the cloth was removed to display the artworks, and the choir emerged from the crowd asking: 'Are you hiding?' and telling everyone through a song they had written, 'I'm not hiding any more'. The Unhiding project was an opportunity for the Albany community to find common ground for their support of people with a disability and to consolidate their resources.

At the beginning of the project, few of the participating organisations had worked together. People are proud of a project which initiated and achieved a high level of cross-agency collaboration. For VAC, Unhiding embodies its access and equity principles. It has exposed the centre to a large number of people who may not otherwise have made use of the venue. And the whole community benefits from having an accessible arts centre.

Since the project concluded, the Unhiding choir have recorded the 'Unhiding' song, continue to meet for weekly choral practice and have been booked for local performances. In addition, a group of visual artists from the project have exhibited work in the Off the Wall gallery at an

Albany shopping centre. Prior to this project, people with disabilities had never accessed programs run by the Vancouver Arts Centre for the whole community, but they are now comfortable about integrating into the centre's generic programs. The Unhiding project has received funding for an ongoing program of cultural workshops over 12 months in 2004, which will aim to make links with surrounding regions, through a local, paid project coordinator.

The chorus to the 'Unhiding' song, written by choir member Carol Mundell, perhaps best expresses this project's aims and outcomes: 'We'll burst out, we'll sing and dance and spout lots of poetry. We'll make noise and be about. And we'll be free.'



Funding/support: Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council, Country Arts WA, City of Albany, DADAA WA, Lower Great Southern Community Living Association, with enthusiastic support from family, friends, carers and other health service and community agencies.

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# Bute Utes

## Regional Arts Victoria



Who would have guessed the hard working ute could be a thing of beauty? During the Bute Utes project, four ordinary utes were driven into sheds and panel shops in the Victorian towns of Hopetoun, Kyneton, Lakes Entrance and Rushworth. They came out transformed, worked upon by many hands into sculptures which told unique stories about their communities. After local display, the Bute Utes were taken to a prime city location—the Victorian Art Centre and City Square—and displayed as part of the outdoor program of the 'Melbourne International Festival for the Arts' 2002.

Utes have an iconic place in regional culture. They are an essential tool of life for regional people, particularly young men who wouldn't normally associate themselves and their experiences with art. The project offered a golden opportunity to encourage regional panel beaters and car mechanics to work alongside quilters, upholsters, visual artists and musicians in a collaborative arts project.

Bute Utes was conceived by Regional Arts Victoria (RAV). RAV supports community-based arts projects and encourages local artists to work within their communities. In the case of Bute Utes, Hopetoun Arts Council, Kyneton's Brandhall Gallery, the Nowa-Nowa community development group in Lakes Entrance and Rushworth's Bark'n Arts were the agencies to participate in the project.

Donna Jackson was appointed artistic director, to develop the project concept and its framework, take an artistic overview of the four projects, and facilitate communication

between each of them. Donna was first inspired by the challenge set by the RAV to engage a group of people who rarely participate in regional arts projects—young men. She was also encouraged by a Shepparton community arts project, linking cars, art and young people called 'Car Art to Wear and to Drive'\*; which involved five groups of young people aged between 12 and 25. And then there was her personal love of big old cars and her previous one-woman show, 'Car Maintenance, Explosives and Love'. As Donna says, she drives a '64 Chev and comes from a family of petrolheads.

*'It was loads of fun, but sometimes challenging because that year the whole community was feeling the depressing effects of drought.'*

Four local project coordinators were appointed to support community involvement with four local artists. A central advantage of this framework was that it released the artists from administrative tasks like project schedules, budgets, fund-raising, timetables and publicity. They were free to devote maximum time and energy to working creatively with their communities.

Through workshops and consultations each community chose a central story. The artists then assisted their

Top: The Kyneton Copper Bute Ute Artist: Anton Hasell. Photo: Bindi Cole  
Bottom: The Sky-Raising Magpies Artists: Catherine Larkins, Poogie Hayes, Rheb Brodie, Josephine Jakobi, Elaine Terrick, Dianne Cameron, Daniel Jenkins. Photo: Catherine Larkins  
Right: Two heads are better than one, work in progress. Photo: Bindi Cole



community to tell this story in sculptural form through the project's common vehicle of expression, the ute. Donna Jackson says: 'We had \$2000 to \$5000 to spend on each ute, so we selected them carefully to make sure they were fairly road-worthy and had good brakes. After all, we were going to be making sculptures which could run people over, so occupational health and safety considerations were important.'

In Rushworth, artist Angie Russie and the community produced a ute sculpture *Two heads are better than one*, which subverted their community's reputation for being inbred, with a comic and positive statement about the reality of successful partnerships in Rushworth.

In Kyneton, artist Anton Hasell and the community turned the back of their ute into a scale version of their town, the people and the fertile landscape, including the flowing waters of the Capaspe river and clouds which produced rain.

Deb Burdet, whose family settled in Hopetoun in 1911, worked with a small community of Hopetoun farming families to make *Utopia*, a sleek, white and stainless steel sculpture. *Utopia* celebrated farming as the community's major activity, depicting the ute as a chariot, with a stainless steel cut-out male farmer holding the reins. The back of the ute depicted the backbone of this community—its women—with 70 cut-out stainless steel female shapes, standing with arms aloft looking, from some angles, like stalks of wheat in a field. The community's volunteer labour base was depicted by photographic GT stripes down each side of the ute. 'It was

loads of fun, but sometimes challenging because that year the whole community was feeling the depressing effects of drought,' recalls Deb. During the project, Deb mentored a local emerging artist in his final year of high school, Jeremy James. This supported his successful enrolment the following year in a Melbourne arts course.

An Indigenous creation story, *Sky-Raising Magpies*<sup>†</sup> provided an opportunity for artist Catherine Larkins and the Lakes Entrance community to collaborate cross-culturally. Over three months their 1957 midnight blue Holden ute was transformed into a glorious magpie. Locals, including Guy Newman, pop-riveted intricately feathered metal wings onto side panels. A beak was attached to the bonnet and a tail to the tail gate. Respected Indigenous



basketweaver Elaine Terrick and non-Indigenous sculptor Josephine Jakobi turned the back of this ute into a huge woven magpie's nest cradling blue glass eggs blown by Trisha Allen. Visual artist Poogie Hayes etched traditional designs of the local Gunai Kumai people into the car's metal wings by cutting into the black and white paint. Young Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants took part in hip-hop and rap dance workshops run by Marika Diaz. The process of the whole project was recorded by Daniel Jenkins on DVD, edited, and played in a loop from a screen installed in the ute's dashboard. Bucket seats upholstered in plush red velvet were embroidered with the story of *Sky Raising Magpies*. Life-size metal magpies were made by jeweller Marcus Foley, to stand on the parcel shelf behind the back.

'The project had an amazing sense of collective community spirit and exchange through just sitting and talking while we worked together on the back veranda of an old house in town,' recalls Catherine Larkins.

Summing up the benefits of Bute Utes, Bin Dixon-Ward, manager for Creative Communities, RAV says: 'This model of working can build a new level of understanding in communities about the benefits of being involved in arts projects which stretch the boundaries of art-making to include forms which are not traditional and processes which are not traditional either.'

\* Car Art to Wear and to Drive, Shepparton, Victoria February and March 2002. Project artists: Angie Russi, Jan Donaldson, Glenda Cornell, Carol Webb, Helen Broo. Funded by Vic Health and the Shepparton Arts Festival with in-kind support from local businesses.

† *Sky-Raising Magpies* was adapted by this project with kind permission from New Holland Publishers, from the book of the same name, and with approval from the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages.

Funding/support: Regional Arts Victoria through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government initiative, VicHealth, Melbourne International Festival for the Arts and local arts groups who attracted local sponsorship and in-kind resources totalling \$80,000. The project was also supported in each region by hundreds of volunteer hours from local artists, local industry and the community.

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# Wonderlands

## HotHouse Theatre

HotHouse Theatre in Albury-Wodonga is one of the leading regional theatre companies in Australia, and yet, like all regional theatre companies, is grappling with the challenges of distance, a smaller market and nearly double the costs of its city counterparts. Yet with its production of *Wonderlands*, this small to medium size company has demonstrated that a regional voice can have a very big impact on the national stage.

After a successful premiere season in Wodonga in 2003, *Wonderlands* toured to Wagga Wagga then played a four-week season to enthusiastic audiences in Sydney. HotHouse plans to mount an extensive national tour of *Wonderlands* in 2005 with a view to touring overseas in 2006.

*'An inspired commission and a wonderful production.'*

In 1999, on the cusp of the new millennium, HotHouse Theatre invited three playwrights to send expressions of interest for a play about 'significant moments of the 20th century'. Sydney-based writer Katherine Thomson was selected to pursue her concept of a play dramatising the issues surrounding contemporary Indigenous property rights, or Native Title. The development of this idea into a



professional theatrical production was a three-year process during which HotHouse Theatre worked with the playwright and other nationally-recognised artists.

*Wonderlands* unfolds when a white Australian grazier takes the initiative to walk into a Native Title Office. She's there to negotiate with traditional owners about 'shared access' to pastoral land her family 'owns' in law. While Katherine's play is a work of fiction, she spent two weeks in Queensland in 2000 researching a contemporary event as well as reading 19th century writings of white settlers and 'observers of the violent frontier wars'. This research inspired her play which was primarily written for, as well as about, regional audiences. She felt it was 'a privilege' to be able to extend herself by writing about situations outside her immediate sphere of experience.

To bring the production to life, HotHouse brought in specialised talent. Director Marion Potts, designer Ralph Myers and sound designer Max Lyandvert came from Sydney; and associate director Wesley Enoch and stage manager Angela Pamic from Melbourne. Lighting designer Rob Scott and production manager Bernadette Haldane live in Albury-Wodonga. The cast of six actors hailed from four Australian states and New Zealand. All these artists came to live and work in Wodonga at various stages during the three years spanning creative development, production and performance.

Despite the work of city-based professional theatre workers, HotHouse regards its output as strongly

Above: (Jim) Isaac Drandich  
Middle Right: (Lon) Roger Oakley in foreground, (Tom) Scott Johnson  
Far Right: (Alice) Gwyneth Price, (Jim) Isaac Drandich  
Photography: Jules Boag



influenced by the company's geographic, social and cultural setting in Albury-Wodonga.

And certainly, the experience of working and living in regional Australia nourished the creativity of these imported professionals. Associate director of *Wonderlands*, Wesley Enoch, describes his working life in Wodonga as 'having opened new channels of creativity'. Wesley also enjoyed working for and with regional audiences, who, he feels 'were able to be emotionally demonstrative through their connection to issues in the play which reflected their lives on a practical level, even though the play didn't prescribe what they should be doing or how they should be doing it'.

For HotHouse Theatre the production of *Wonderlands* was ambitious and sometimes very challenging. The cost of rehearsing in regional Australia and the lack of any funding support to offset the unique costs of producing work in the regions makes it very difficult for regional companies to produce works of this quality and size. The sensitivities of the material and a commitment to telling the real story made the development process relatively slow. HotHouse Theatre embraces the responsibility of tackling hard issues but it was an enormous financial commitment and something of a risk to make a quality, new mainstream piece of theatre around such controversial material. Nevertheless, HotHouse Theatre was resolute in its commitment to presenting a regional voice to metropolitan Australia. And for a regional theatre company to develop its own play and put in on in Sydney is a huge success.



As well as producing professional theatre, HotHouse Theatre maintains strong links to community, including schools. In addition to its annual subscription season, HotHouse tours productions to small communities in the regions where people are very lucky to see one piece of live, professional theatre a year—the production team is experienced at transforming a community hall or a tin shed into a 120-seat studio theatre. These programs are significant because they connect HotHouse intimately to its community. Without this strong support base it would not be in a position to sustain these risky artistic ventures.

The success of *Wonderlands* is both a vindication of that ambitious local vision, and a reward for what one Melbourne critic called 'an inspired commission and a wonderful production'.



Funding/support: *Wonderlands* was supported by the Myer Foundation with touring funding from NSW Ministry for the Arts. HotHouse Theatre's major funding partners are the Australia Council (Theatre Board), Arts Victoria, the NSW Ministry for the Arts, VicHealth, the City of Wodonga and AlburyCity.

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# Love Bites

Glenorchy City Council, Department of Education and Derwent Valley Regional Arts

The Love Bites short-film project consisted of 30 short videos, adding up to 110 minutes of vision using digital video cassette, produced to television broadcast standard. It was produced by around 200 young people aged 10 to 30 under the guidance of a small group of professional film makers, composers and artists. The films celebrate the youth and cultural diversity of the Derwent region and the great characters, legends and special places that characterise this region of Southern Tasmania. The project was a way to use popular multimedia tools to motivate young people in an area which has Tasmania's highest level of unemployment, and school leavers are, on average, only 15 years old.

Love Bites was a joint endeavour between Glenorchy City Council, the Department of Education and Derwent Valley Regional Arts. It was guided by a steering committee including representatives from Derwent Valley Regional Arts, Migrant Resource Centre, Cosmos Disability Service and a youth representative, Kellie Hills. This diverse and well-connected group ensured that Love Bites retained its strong and explicit commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, empowerment and social justice. Committee members linked the project back to different communities including young people with disabilities, migrant groups and Aboriginal community groups. The committee also raised the funding and steered the process to a successful conclusion. Tony Woodward of the Department of Education and Jennie Gorringer of Glenorchy City Council provided the driving energy behind the project.

The filmmakers, composers and artists selected to work with the young people were chosen because of their sensitivity to, and understanding of, youth culture in regional Tasmania. In fact, most of the young professional team—Sheona McKenna, Marcus Kahn, Roland Gabatel, Angie Zacharek, and musicians Geoff Allan and Jodie Haines—grew up and undertook their professional training in Tasmania. This ensured they could serve as credible role models for the participants.

*This diverse and well-connected group ensured that Love Bites retained its strong and explicit commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, empowerment and social justice.*

These professionals took their skills out to young people through practical workshops in schools and community settings. Participants learned about narrative, documentary and animated scripting, story-boarding, budgeting, the use of cameras, sound and editing equipment, location-scouting, set design, and the production of rap, country, rock and funk music into video sound tracks. The experts then supported the project teams in schools or community groups as they set about

making their films on the themes of love, family, home, friends, rural/urban, work, life and death.

Aboriginal musician Jodie Haines worked with young Indigenous project participants to produce video music clips. Well-known Aboriginal elder, Aunty Ida West, brought her son Darryl, a famous footballer, to speak to school students about his experience of professional football and racism in sport. His frank discussion with students was captured as a documentary video by the team from grades four to five at Springfield Gardens School. Tamika Burgess-Green wrote and performed on video her song, 'Stolen Generation', which she subsequently performed at Tasmania's Rock for Diversity concert. Young Aboriginal poet Josell Brewer wrote the poetic voice-over to the opening images of the Love Bites video, showing the Derwent River's journey from Lake St Claire Highlands to the ocean. Following this project, Josell went on to work as a trainee writer with Terrapin Puppet Theatre and has now begun a university degree.

COSMOS Disability and Recreation Service engaged one of its workers to help two project participants with intellectual disabilities make a short video, *Beautiful 2000*, during which they performed in front of large-scale photographic images they took themselves and projected onto a wall. Fifteen young men from the Hmong community (indigenous people from the Laos and Vietnamese mountain borders) helped conceive, write and produce *Try Hard Gang*, a rap music video in Hmong

Top Right: The Try Hard Gang

Bottom Right: Tamika Burgess-Green and Jodie Haines, Love Bites Launch 2001

Photography: Sam Rose Warne, Frontpage Photography



dialect with English subtitles. Seventeen year-old Kellie Hills wrote, filmed and edited a short documentary, *The Dogs*, about a family's involvement with greyhound racing.

Each and every video, from *The Fine Art of Ferreting* to the *Tough Man* animation video by Dallas Eaves, provides an insight into young lives and experiences in the context of the wider community.

This project has also resulted in subsequent projects including four short videos produced with young people from Sudan, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Other indicators of success are the young African people who drop into the Moonah Arts Centre to say hello, and the new friendships that have blossomed between local Aboriginal and migrant youth. Love Bites videos were also screened during the Ten Days on the Island festival and on ABC TV.

Love Bites committee members are convinced that such solid outcomes would not have been possible without the dedication of the project's professional film makers, composers and artists; strong relationships nurtured over a six-year period between local artists, migrant, Aboriginal and educational groups; and learning from a previous music skills-based project, *Moving On, Video Project* (1998) about young people in Glenorchy.

A small amount of seed funding for Love Bites came from Glenorchy City Council and the Department of Education. Jennie and Tony had previously collaborated on the



*Moving On* project. They proceeded to form a partnership with Derwent Valley Arts, and applied to Screen Tasmania and Arts Tasmania for further funding. A total budget of \$41,000 was raised to produce the 30 short videos, with an extra \$3000 from Screen Tasmania for the launch screening.

SBS made an additional \$20,000 available to enable director Sheona McKenna to work with a post-production team and edit five films from the original 30 Love Bites videos. The resulting half-hour program, *Short stories from the Valley of Love and Beyond*, was part of the SBS *Australia By Numbers* series on SBS. Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon officiated at the premiere screening of the Love Bites videos in the Glenorchy Village Cinema to an audience of 370 people. He noted that Love Bites had blazed a trail for young filmmakers in the emerging Tasmanian film industry.

Footnote: Permission to write about Aunty Ida West, who passed away in September 2003, was granted by her daughter, Lennah Newson.

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