

MELBOURNE
FRINGE



2023 MELBOURNE FRINGE ANNUAL REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Melbourne Fringe respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work, play and gather people together.

We acknowledge that the oldest living culture in the world has been kept alive by a rich and continuing history of storytelling, music, dance, art and language.

We pay our respects to the people of the Kulin Nations and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, who maintain an enduring spiritual and cultural connection to the land. Sovereignty was never ceded.



MESSAGES



Michael Kantor
Chair

At the heart of Melbourne Fringe's mission lies a deep commitment to sustaining the arts ecology in Victoria. We believe that artistic expression, cultural vibrancy, and creative innovation are essential components of a thriving society and fundamental human rights. Melbourne Fringe serves as a beacon of these beliefs year-round, and the advocacy and support we offer are ever more important in a really challenging time for independent artists.

One of our core functions is talent incubation. Melbourne Fringe has nurtured countless emerging artists, providing opportunities to develop their craft, connect with audiences, and establish themselves within the industry. Our commitment extends beyond traditional boundaries, embracing diversity, inclusion, and new artistic forms.

Melbourne Fringe and our yearly festival are about participation—by artists of all calibres and backgrounds and audiences of all ages and economic capacities. This participation fosters a community that celebrates diversity and leans into the future with compassion and optimism.

The influence and impact of Melbourne Fringe on the city, its culture, and its economy have grown exponentially. As we celebrate our mid-40s, we invite you to join us in celebrating creativity, embracing diversity, and shaping a more vibrant and inclusive arts ecosystem in Victoria and beyond.



Simon Abrahams
Creative Director & CEO

Perhaps we've never needed the arts more than we do right now.

The 2023 Melbourne Fringe Festival brought people together to celebrate difference, diversity, inclusion and, yes, the unexpected and strange – because seeing things differently is precisely what the world needs. Our giant swing was the centrepiece of the 2023 Festival, an enormous artwork with a big message to this city: embrace creativity, and follow the lead of children – because they listen to new perspectives, they aren't

too proud to say 'sorry,' and with their expertise in play, children's innate love of the arts brings people together to express themselves, to heal and to celebrate our differences.

Thank you for opening your mind to Melbourne Fringe, and to the world. Keep listening to the voices of children and young people who, as always, are the best at seeing the path forward. Find that inner child, break the rules, and don't forget to play up.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

"When it comes to seeing enthralling theatre, you can always count on the Melbourne Fringe Festival to sign, seal and deliver a whole bunch of eclectic productions, and this year is no different."

- Time Out Melbourne 2023

The 2023 Melbourne Fringe Festival invited people to see the world through different eyes, and to discover the familiar in new and surprising ways.

A whopping 288,388 people turned up in droves for the **461 events** that made up our most daring and expansive yet.

More than **3,400 independent artists** unleashed play on every part of the city, including iconic public spaces such as Queen Victoria Market, State Library Victoria, Melbourne City Baths, Melbourne Town Hall, and

Fed Square, which hosted everything from epic battles between hulking Norse gods to a 50-year comedy project by one of Australia's most beloved comedians.

At the heart of the 2023 Festival's provocation to audiences to **PLAY UP** was our enormous **eight-metre-tall sunshine yellow playground swing**. The State Library Victoria Forecourt and Footscray Station became sites of giddy joy and childlike whimsy, bookending the Festival with a glorious art event that captured the imagination of the city.

The Festival Hub at Trades Hall came alive with **121 events**, transforming our historic home into an art adventure playground. Fringe went west, bringing communities together across the western suburbs. The Blak Lodge was a meeting place and home to urgent and compelling First Nations art, and our Radical Access commissions redefined what accessibility in performance can be.

We proudly commissioned and financially supported over 100 new projects and distributed **\$2.6 million in grants, commissions, bursaries and ticket sales** to independent artists. Our artistic programs showcased impressive independent talent working at the top of their game alongside emerging voices with something potent to say.

The 2023 Festival was home to everything from a massive lamb-summoning ritual to a sensual contemporary dance in a public swimming pool. It included a three-course meal cooked on a treadmill, a Middle Eastern wedding with an absent bride and groom, a sex clown composting herself on stage, a dark time travel along the Birrarung and, oh, a green man dressed as Frankenstein who took 75 minutes to blow up a balloon.

This report is filled with not just the facts and figures of what went down in our 2023 Festival but also stories of the impact Melbourne Fringe had on artists, audiences, and our city's cultural landscape.

461
EVENTS

288,388
ATTENDEES

3,443
ARTISTS

92
VENUES

\$2.6
MILLION
IN PAID
FINANCIAL
SUPPORT TO
ARTISTS

\$1.8 MILLION
IN TICKETS
SOLD

\$31 MILLION
ECONOMIC
IMPACT

95% OF
AUDIENCES
RATED
POSITIVE
FRINGE
EXPERIENCE

SWING INTO ART

CELEBRATING SUCCESSFUL ART INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE

Public art activations brought Melbourne Fringe to the streets so that anyone and everyone could exercise their right to participate in our city's vibrant artistic and cultural life. In our most wide-reaching public art program to date, Melbourne Fringe delivered five striking, accessible and playful public events in 2023 that transformed the city, **and reached a whopping 71,260 people.**



“Swing stands as a testament to the uncomplicated and enduring power of play.”

– *The Saturday Paper 2023*

Swing

The swing is the simplest piece of childhood play equipment – just two ropes and a seat.

In *Swing*, our 2023 Civic Commission, it was spectacularly reimaged by leading independent artists Ian Pidd and Sue Giles, as a giant eight-metre-tall sculpture and interactive public art event. Facilitated by children to upend the traditional hierarchy of adults-are-in-charge, and accompanied by crowd-sourced singalongs, *Swing* bookended the Festival with spectacular outings at State Library Victoria Forecourt and Footscray Station.

VOLO: Dreams of Flight

This virtual reality experience at Fed Square by Studio Go Go enabled audiences to take flight in fabulous flying machines just by swinging on a simple playground swing.

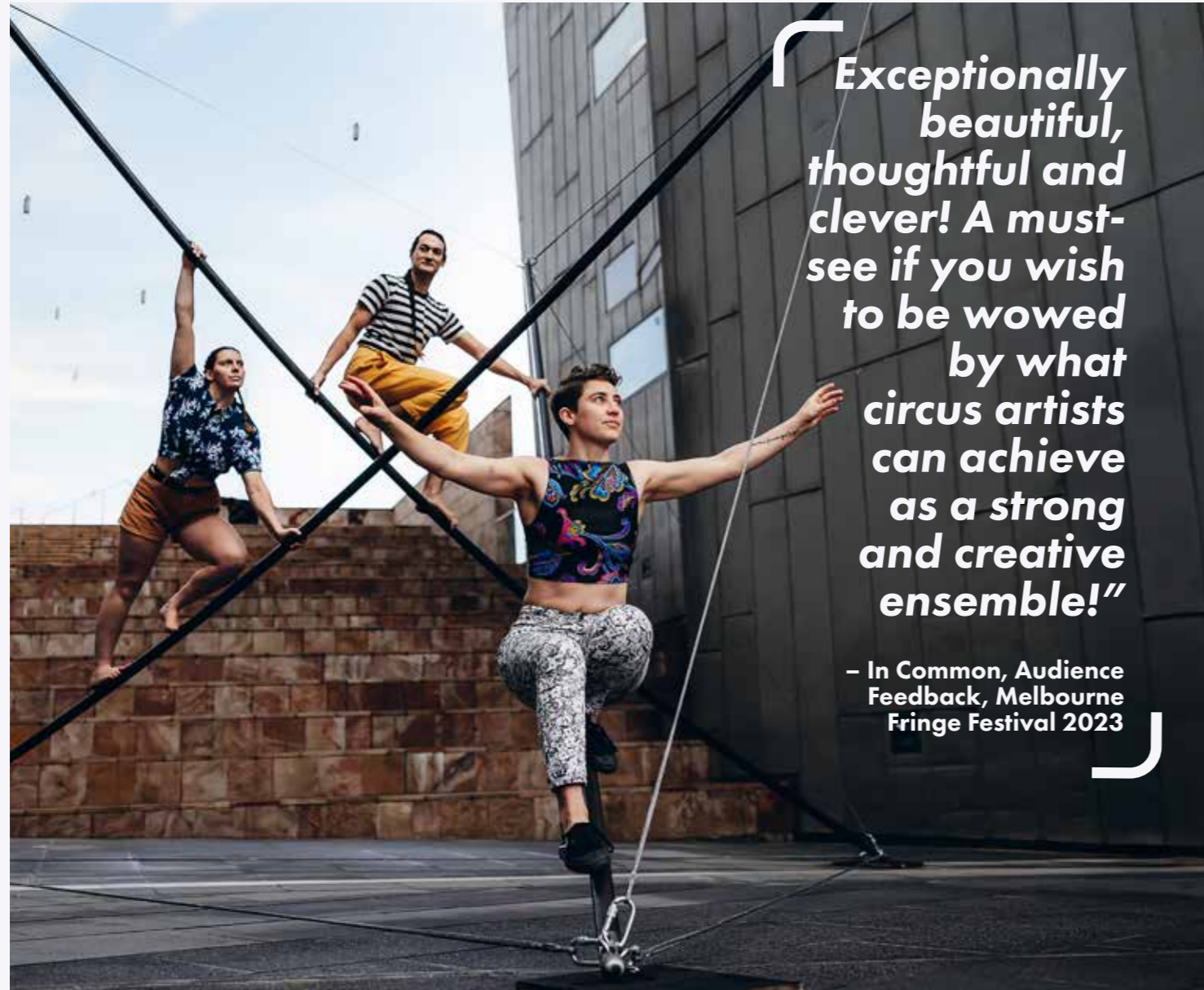
Complementing and extending on our major Civic Commission artwork, *VOLO*'s da Vinci-inspired virtual reality experience saw 2,560 riders, each wearing a VR headset, transported into an exhilarating dream experience where they captained one of four iconic flying machines, with each one offering a different, embodied sensation of flight and wild interactive discovery.

“I would do it one million more times if mum would let me!”

– *Volo: Dreams of Flight, Audience Feedback, Melbourne Fringe Festival, 2023*

SWING INTO ART

CELEBRATING SUCCESSFUL ART INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE



“Exceptionally beautiful, thoughtful and clever! A must-see if you wish to be wowed by what circus artists can achieve as a strong and creative ensemble!”

– In Common, Audience Feedback, Melbourne Fringe Festival 2023

In Common

With a custom apparatus built from PVC piping, wire and steel, and seemingly floating in space and held aloft with invisible tension, **One Fell Swoop Circus** activated public spaces across Melbourne with their thrilling new outdoor work of circus and sculpture, *In Common*.

Across three outings at the Festival, the garden parklands of Gasworks Arts Park, the buzzing Nicholson St Mall in Footscray, and the Amphitheatre at Fed Square in the heart of the CBD, over 5,700 people watched this exhilarating and heart-racing circus work that took our Best Circus at the Melbourne Fringe Awards.

Sky Symphony

This extraordinary sound, water, and light symphony was crafted in lockdown and played out in the skies above the Birrarung.

Crowd-sourced photography of the sky created a symphonic light installation, accompanied by a sky-inspired symphony composed by Shaun Rigney and performed by Orchestra Victoria; *Sky Symphony* was a breathtaking and contemplative spectacle witnessed by more than 11,500 people.



Cult of the Lamb: The Ritual

Our epic collaboration with Melbourne International Games Week and ACMI brought a touch of Fringe to the biggest week on the gaming calendar.

Among the programming on offer was *Cult of the Lamb: The Ritual*, a massive collective participatory experience that saw 6,000 people jam into Fed Square to celebrate the hit game *Cult of the Lamb* with immersive storytelling, co-operative game play, and more.

IN 2023 MELBOURNE FRINGE WENT TO MORE PLACES THAN JUST MELBOURNE

Melbourne Fringe is Victoria's largest and most accessible and inclusive cultural celebration, and in 2023, our reach continued to grow beyond just the city itself. Our partnerships, collaborations, commissions and touring initiatives saw us reach further into the western suburbs, right out to Geelong, halfway across the country and even internationally with a series of programs and projects that speak to the incredible reach of our Festival.

Fringe Focus Taiwan: Puzzle and Mr 3

In its fourth exciting year, this cross-cultural collaboration saw Taiwan's celebrated Formosa Circus Arts (FOCA) bring two internationally acclaimed circus works to Melbourne: *Puzzle* played free in public spaces around the city, and *Mr 3* featured as part of our Circus Hub at NICA.

"Mr 3 was inventive, funny, surreal and the skills were incredibly high. One of my absolute favourites at Fringe this year."

– Melbourne Fringe audience member, 2023.

The Little Nests

Enjoying six sold out sessions at ArtPlay, *The Little Nests* was an enchanting immersive installation exploring safe spaces and refuge for children, inviting young audiences to visit the little nests of special creatures and unravel mysteries in strange new environments.

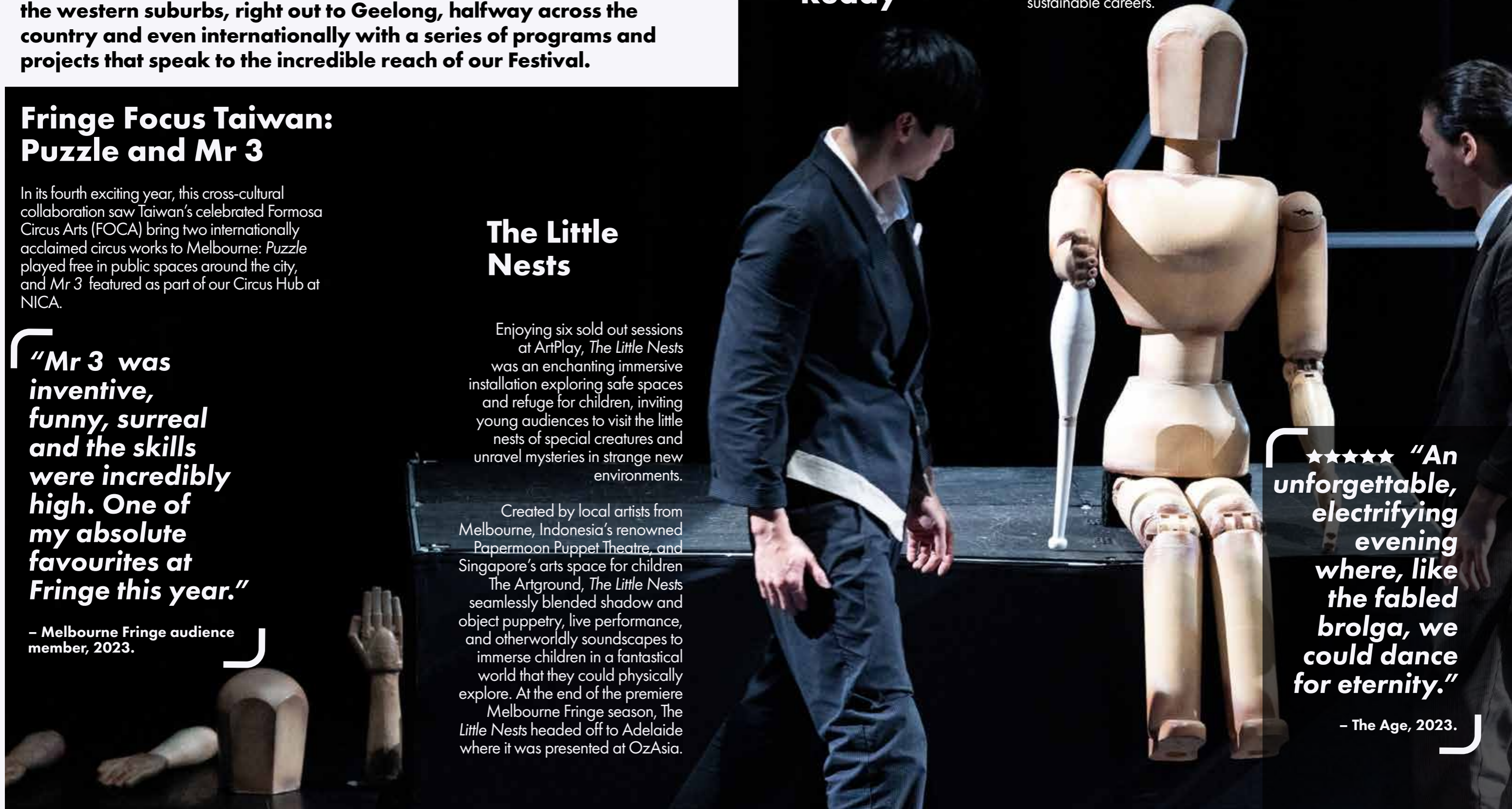
Created by local artists from Melbourne, Indonesia's renowned Papermoon Puppet Theatre, and Singapore's arts space for children The Artground, *The Little Nests* seamlessly blended shadow and object puppetry, live performance, and otherworldly soundscapes to immerse children in a fantastical world that they could physically explore. At the end of the premiere Melbourne Fringe season, *The Little Nests* headed off to Adelaide where it was presented at OzAsia.

Geelong Arts Centre – Melbourne Fringe Encore

Before we put the 2023 Festival to bed, we sent five incredible Melbourne Fringe shows on the road to light up the Little Malop Street precinct at Geelong Arts Centre. For the third year running, this encore program enabled Fringe artists to connect with brand new audiences, who in turn got to experience the talents of a cohort of local artists, comedians and breathtaking performers.

Tour Ready

Our Tour Ready program sets shows (and artists) up for the long game, helping build relationships between presenters, venues and artists that increase the longevity of artworks and help artists build sustainable careers.



★★★★★ "An unforgettable, electrifying evening where, like the fabled brolga, we could dance for eternity."

– The Age, 2023.

IN 2023 MELBOURNE FRINGE WENT TO MORE PLACES THAN JUST MELBOURNE

Go West – Together, This is What We'll Do

Melbourne Fringe partnered with The Substation, Maribyrnong City Council and Footscray Community Arts to deliver a program of commissions and presentations that responded artistically, socially, culturally and politically to the world as it changes around us, and to the people and places of the west.

Celebrating voices from the margins and artistic risk-taking, these bold new works enabled discovery – about artists and art forms, about the western suburbs and its inhabitants, and ultimately about ourselves:

WAKE, by THE RABBLE at the Italian Social Club Altona. Part party, part surreal vaudeville show, part conversation and part town hall meeting, this new performance installation about the body, death and loneliness was created with an ensemble of older women from Melbourne's west.

Brolga: A Queer Koori Wonderland, by Joel Bray Dance at The Substation. A contemporary gathering ground created through an immersive queer dance party full of light, colour, projected images and ecstatic dancing bodies.

Guài, by Mindy Meng Wang and Monica Lim at Footscray Community Arts. This immersive augmented-reality mirror used state-of-the-art technology to map your face (and emotions), and transformed you into a fantastical monster avatar that reflects the uniqueness of you.

In Common, One Fell Swoop, Nicholson Street Mall.

Swing, by Ian Pidd and collaborators, at Footscray Station.



DEADLY FRINGE

A MEETING PLACE FOR MOB AT THE BLAK LODGE

Deadly Fringe's multidisciplinary arts hub the Blak Lodge was a place where Melbourne Fringe audiences could tune in and listen to the voices of First Nations artists, amidst the disinformation and noise of the Referendum.

The Blak Lodge transformed the Meat Market and featured a potent program of First Nations-led projects and artworks.

This included Na Djinang Circus' Deadly Fringe commission *Of the Land On Which We Meet*, the burlesque variety show *Deadly Sinners* in which a First Nations troupe teased out the seven deadly



“Harley Mann’s connection to country absolutely incarnates in the intensity of deep emotional fullness of his shows, finding new ways to connect history to our present.”

- Binge Fringe, 2023.

RADICAL ACCESS

WE ADVANCED THE ARTFORM OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE TO MAKE IT MORE RADICALLY ACCESSIBLE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

In 2023, our major Radical Access commissions centred work by d/Deaf and Disabled artists in the Festival.

One of these commissions was delivered in partnership with Chunky Move and awarded to Fayen d’Evie to support the creation of her formally radical work *...derelict in uncharted space...* about Project Communicator, an abandoned 70s era non-profit initiative to bring the wonderment of Star Trek to blind audiences, through descriptive radio plays.

In its world premiere season, a stellar collaboration of dancers, artists, writers, musicians, and designers paid homage to the creative innovation and collective ethos of Project Communicator and, in doing so, redefined what art by, with and for d/Deaf and Disabled people can be.



FRINGE COMMON ROOMS IS A CULTURAL ENTERPRISE THAT HELPS US SUPPORT ARTISTS YEAR-ROUND.

MELBOURNE
FRINGE
COMMON ROOMS

COMMON
ROOMS

Our support for artists doesn't start and stop with the Festival.

Fringe Common Rooms is our bricks-and-mortar year-round venue at the historic Trades Hall, and operating it as a cultural enterprise means we can maximise the support we give to artists at every step of their careers.

Throughout 2023, our dedicated and year-round Common Rooms team continued to focus on developing our support for independent artists by providing them with access to subsidised space for rehearsals and developments, as well as hosting events including the fierce and fabulous First Nations queer party *AUNTY* and the iconic Melbourne dance party *Mr McClelland's Finishing School*.

We continued to adapt the Common Rooms revenue model by growing our strongest potential area of growth – expanding the market for functions and events.

So, as well as the nexus around which we build our annual Festival Hub, and hosting independent art events throughout the year, the income from weddings, parties and anything else, builds the sustainability and commercial viability of Fringe Common Rooms as a social enterprise, and provides the income stream needed to support us to support artists.

WE SUPPORT INDEPENDENT ARTISTS BY FUNDING, RESOURCING, AND PLATFORMING THEM AND THEIR WORK.

Melbourne Fringe is a talent incubator. We fund, resource and platform independent artists and their art to create pathways into the industry and build a thriving and sustainable ecology where artists can flourish. In 2023, we connected artists with more funding opportunities, higher-profile presentation platforms, and essential resources to help them usher forth their work and level up their art-making.

This year, we elevated the voices and works of emerging and leading independent artists within some of Melbourne's most iconic and established cultural and civic institutions.

Our Pulse program saw some of our most radical and innovative thinkers and makers embedded at Malthouse Theatre (the award-winning immersive Middle Eastern wedding *Zaffé* by Stéphanie Ghajar and collaborators), Melbourne City Baths (the evocative and sensual contemporary dance *Shower Thots* by Jonathan Homsey), State Library Victoria (the multi-sensory digital tour experience *Solace* by Melinda Hetzel & Co) and Fed Square (the virtuosic circus work *In Common* by One Fell Swoop).

By enabling these impactful presentation opportunities, we helped artists raise their profiles and introduce their work to new audiences.

The Fringe Fund plays a vital role in the creation of new artwork by removing financial barriers and supporting independent artists to develop and present their work. The fund provides financial support, which enables artists to take creative risks and develop bold and innovative work and creates opportunities for artists from diverse backgrounds and skill levels to build their capacity and further their careers. In 2023, we delivered over \$621,821 in artist commissions, grants, and fee concessions directly to 975 independent artists to present 105 new works in the Festival or at Fringe Common Rooms.

Our mighty Artist Services team is the beating heart of our work at Melbourne Fringe, providing year-round support to artists and equipping them with resources, skills and initiatives to help get their event up and running, no matter their experience.

Our 2023 drop-in Salon Sessions enabled artists to connect with Fringe staff and get the low-down on everything from publicity to touring, to mental health and resilience in the arts. Our workshops and panel discussions skilled up emerging artists looking to grow their knowledge and connect with other artists. The team also prepared and managed the Melbourne Fringe free online Resource Hub which offers detailed information packs on producing, budgeting, making accessible work, marketing, upcoming opportunities and more, taking some of the grunt work out of putting on a show and giving artists more time to, well, make art.



OUR ARTISTS, AUDIENCE AND VOLUNTEERS

“Just wanted to say a huge thank you for such a wonderful Fringe experience and I will definitely be coming back to Volunteer! It has been an absolute pleasure and I look forward to seeing everyone again in the future!”

– Volunteer feedback,
Melbourne Fringe Festival
2023

Independent evaluators Culture Counts once again surveyed participating artists, volunteers and audiences to evaluate the 2023 Festival and assess our impact.

In 2023, 50% of participating artists were presenting a show at the Festival for the first time, with 64% having previously engaged with the Festival in some way – which tells us that in addition to being a vital platform for emerging artists, Melbourne Fringe plays an important role in nurturing artists at all stages of their career.

Most surveyed artists (more than in 2022) agreed that the Festival inspired their own creativity, contributed to the development of their arts business or practice, and connected them with other people in their field.

We welcomed an epic 288,388 attendees to the 2023 Festival, selling over \$1.8 million in

tickets. Almost our entire surveyed audience (95%) reported having a positive experience at Melbourne Fringe, with most agreeing that Festival artists are not afraid to try new things, and that the Festival provides an important addition to the cultural life of the area, making a positive impact on their physical health and mental wellbeing.

More than 192 volunteers helped keep the Melbourne Fringe Festival rolling in 2023, with nearly three-quarters (74%) new to the Festival. 100% of the volunteers we surveyed reported having a positive experience with us – netting us a volunteer Net Promoter Score of 67 – and over 90% agreed that the Festival makes an important cultural contribution to the city.

MONASH INTERNSHIP

Our successful Monash internship program brought 14 Monash students into the organisation to intern across the areas of production, event management, marketing and administration. This partnership is grounded in shared values of discovery and openness, as well as a common commitment to developing talent and cultivating the next generation of leading artists and arts professionals. An independent evaluation of the internship program in 2023 overwhelmingly demonstrated the success of the program, with interns recording high levels of satisfaction, new skills learned and professional connections established.

**Olivia –
Monash intern,
2023**

**As part of her
Bachelor’s degree
at Monash Arts,
Olivia completed
a winter
internship with
Melbourne
Fringe in 2023.**

She undertook the internship to gain experience working in a creative industry and as part of an ongoing journey to consciously enjoy the process of figuring out her future career. For Olivia, an internship at Melbourne Fringe was “a really rewarding experience. It opened up a lot of ideas for the future for me.”

Olivia was keen to broaden her understanding of event management in the arts and wanted to learn about making events accessible and improve her copywriting skills. Olivia was excited to work collaboratively, “I was really keen to work in the group and get a flow going and just learn about the back of house and all the steps it takes to plan these events”.

During the internship, Olivia worked with seven interns to plan, produce and present a cultural event. Each week, interns consulted with a different department at Melbourne Fringe, to seek guidance and mentoring. They listened to a presentation and then workshopped

questions and ideas. For Olivia, these forums were one of the most beneficial elements of the internship, “that was the most interesting and the most condensed part of learning. I could have asked questions all day. The presenters were all just super knowledgeable.”

Working in a creative context and appealed to Olivia, and she found the Melbourne Fringe staff extremely supportive.

Olivia has many skills and interests and has not decided where her career might take her, but she has invested in the process of figuring it out. “I’m keen to dip toes in many things and enjoy different things,” she said. “I really don’t know yet what kind of career I want or would be suited to. The internship made me realise that I don’t need to know exactly. I can give these things a go, and it was really enjoyable. It made me realise how I can be adaptable. I feel confident in my ability to listen and learn and be curious, and to want to do it well..”

CASE STUDY

IN 2023, OUR ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS CONTINUED TO GROW.

Melbourne Fringe's impact extends beyond artists, audiences and the creative industries – we're also good for business.

In 2023, the Melbourne Fringe Festival had an economic impact of \$31 million on the Victorian economy.

The direct expenditure impact from visitors to Melbourne was \$13 million, with Melbourne locals contributing an estimated additional \$12 million through their attendance and expenditure at Melbourne Fringe.

Our programs work hard to illuminate the positive benefits of participating in the arts.

Our 2023 audience survey revealed that 62% of attendees agreed that engaging with Melbourne Fringe Festival gave them a better understanding of today's world. And of the seven dimensions we measured, the highest average scores went to

- Risk (86%)
- Cultural Contribution (83%)
- and Wellbeing (80%)

– indicating that almost all respondents agreed that Fringe artists were not afraid to try new things, that the Festival provides an important addition to the cultural life of the area, and experience what Melbourne Fringe has to offer had a positive impact on their wellbeing.



MELBOURNE FRINGE LEVERAGES GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO SPIN STRAW INTO GOLD.

In 2023 Melbourne Fringe used the government support we received to grow an even greater pool of funding, opportunities, resources and support for independent artists – and we did it through the extraordinary backing of donors, trusts, foundations and other philanthropic supporters who have stepped up to save the sector.

With Government support for our core operations making up roughly just 4% of our total income, we celebrate our philanthropic achievements.

Over ten years, our philanthropic income has grown from just 0.5% of our annual income to

an impressive 17% in 2023. Philanthropic leveraging enables us to capitalise on our resources to achieve maximum results, and has helped us to dramatically grow the organisation by building an interconnected support base that nurtures the ecology from the roots up.

FINANCES

As the figures here demonstrate, our finances have settled after the bumpy few years of the pandemic and receiving some temporary recovery funding.

Our turnover has grown substantially and our investment in courageous and risky art continues to pay off, posting a small surplus in 2023.

YEAR-ON-YEAR TURNOVER



INCOME

Our turnover is comprised of different revenue streams, with earned income contributed 49%, government income accounting for 31%, private giving philanthropy representing 16% and corporate partners providing 4%.

Melbourne Fringe continues to face financial uncertainty.

With many funding sources having ended in 2023, and core operational funding remaining a tiny 5% of our total income, additional government investment is urgently required to secure the longevity and sustainability of the organisation. We anticipate deficit budgets, which will be covered in the short term by accumulated surpluses.



EXPENDITURE

Our primary focus has been on supporting the independent artists that drive our mission.

Artist fees were the most significant expenditure, totalling \$2,383,174 and accounting for 36% of our total operating costs.

This substantial investment underscores our commitment to compensating artists fairly and fostering an environment where creativity can thrive.

Program and production costs represent 13% of our expenses, ensuring that our events and programs maintain their high quality and impact.

Marketing and development costs totalled 7%, reflecting our efforts to expand our reach and promote our offerings.

Administrative costs amounted make up just 4% of our total expenses, which highlights our achievements in streamlining our administrative processes.

OUR BOARD & STAFF

Michael Kantor -
Chair

Stephanie Hamilton -
Deputy Chair

Louise Goh -
Company Secretary

Feyi Akindoyeni -
Director

Joel Bray -
Director

Kirsty Ellem -
Director

Michael Hyde -
Director

Felix Moon -
Director

Rupert Sherwood -
Director

Creative Director and CEO -
Simon Abrahams

Deputy CEO - Will Dawson

General Manager - Toby Sullivan

Head of Development -
Miranda Borman

Acting Head of Marketing,
November '22–March '23 -
Michelle Tseng

Head of Marketing -
Casselly Main

Head of Programs & Projects -
Danny Delahunty

Access Advisor - Carly Findlay

Assistant Ticketing Manager -
Natalie May

Associate Producer (Signature
Events) - Harriet Wallace-Mead

Artists & Venues Liaison -
Nicholas Tee

Business and Operations
Manager - Louise Richardson

CRM & Data Analyst -
Ciaran Frame

Development Coordinator -
Amelia Saward

Executive Assistant - Kaho Chow

Funding, Strategy and
Evaluation Manager -
Pauline Cady

Grant & Copy Writer -
Dan Giovannoni

Marketing Assistant -
Lizzy Carmine

Marketing Coordinator -
Emma Shaw

Marketing Coordinator
(Digital) - Ethan Cavanagh

Marketing Manager (March to
September) - Harry Erickson

Producer (Major Projects) -
Eilysh Toose

Producer (Special Projects) -
Erica McCalman

Production Coordinators -
Rudi Lorimer, Ali Graham

Production Manager (Festival
Hub) - Jess Dunn

Production Manager
(Signature Events) -
Genevieve Cizevskis

Program Coordinator (Artists
and Venues) - Dani Leever

Program Coordinator (Deadly
Fringe) - Peta Duncan

Program Manager (Hub and
Artist Development) - Matt Hirst

Program Manager
(Independent Arts) -
Jason Marsiglia

Sales & Events Coordinator
(Common Rooms) - Jade Smith

Senior Publicist - Adam Valentine

Ticketing Manager -
Rachel Hanley

Venue Operations Manager -
Abbie Potter

Volunteers Coordinator -
Katy Barron

STEPPING STONES TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Melbourne Fringe supports its staff in developing their careers as arts workers.

Our Stepping Stones program is a professional development initiative for core staff that creates pathways to progress emerging arts workers in experience, confidence and career planning towards becoming our future arts leaders.

In 2023, three Melbourne Fringe staff members were funded to embark on self-devised upskilling programs that

connected them with mentors and activities to help build their professional experience.

Stepping Stones programs are driven by our Creative Director Simon Abrahams' 14 Cs of Professional Development framework, which encourages a holistic approach to career development.

In addition to the Stepping Stones program, Melbourne Fringe staff undertook disability awareness training, cultural awareness training, and anti-racism training delivered by Stage a Change.

AWARD WINNERS

Special Awards

Access & Inclusion Award
I Am (Not) This Body

Best Work By An Emerging Artist
The Coconuts – Brown on the Outside, White on the Inside

Director's Choice Award
Zaffé

Industry Trivia All-Star Champion Award
Melbourne Theatre Company

Melbourne Fringe Living Legend
Moira Finucane

People's Choice Award
Mechorstra

Sound and Technical Excellence Award, supported by FOHP (Front of House Productions)
~~~~~ "...derelict in uncharted space..."

**Venue of the Year**  
*Abbotsford Convent*

**Spirit of the Fringe**  
*Burnout Paradise*

## Artist Development Awards

**Innovation in Circus supported by Theatre Network Australia**  
*Le Freak*

**Innovation in Dance supported by Theatre Network Australia**  
~~~~~ "...derelict in uncharted space..."

Innovation in Theatre supported by Theatre Network Australia
A Dodgeball Named Desire

Best Emerging Producer supported by MILKE
Olly Lawrence - Le Freak, T4T, An Evening with JK

Best Emerging Indigenous Artist supported by the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts & Cultural Development (VCA & MCM)
Amelia O'Leary - STAUNCH ASF

Comedy New Work Award supported by Melbourne International Comedy Festival
Success in Everything

Emerging Company Incubator Award supported by Monash's Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music and Performance
Full Cream

Headroom Award supported by RISING
Burnout Paradise

Market Ready Award supported by Regional Arts Victoria
NIUSIA

Touring Awards

The SA Tour Ready Award supported by Adelaide Fringe
Hot Fat Crazy

The QLD Tour Ready Award supported by Brisbane Comedy Festival
Am I the Drama?

The WA Tour Ready Award supported by FRINGE WORLD Festival
Le Freak

The NSW Tour Ready Award supported by Sydney Fringe
A Dodgeball Named Desire

The New Zealand Tour Ready Award supported by New Zealand Fringe
Sam Kissajukian: 300 Paintings

Best in Category

Best Visual Arts & Film
Sky Symphony

Best Words and Ideas
Yalinguth LIVE by the Birrarung

Best Kids *The Listies present ROFL - Final Season!*

Best Music *Walking Songs*

Best Dance & Physical Theatre
LUSH

Best Experimental *Enemies of Grooviness Eat Sh!t*

Best Circus *In Common*

Best Cabaret *Spunk Daddy*

Best Comedy *Stickybeak*

Best Theatre *Someday We'll Find It*



CASE STUDY

WAKE by THE RABBLE

Nominee: Best Theatre, Melbourne Fringe Awards 2023

In the evocative Italian Social Club Altona, the powerhouse team of THE RABBLE brought to life WAKE, a captivating new performance installation on ageing and the body, crafted from the lived experiences of eight older women from Melbourne's West.

"We were saying to the performers, 'your life is interesting and your voice is important'. That took a long time for them to accept – that it wasn't boring, and that people would want to come and see a show about them. You can feel that they have discovered or reignited a power in themselves, which is incredibly hopeful and powerful. It's really hard to make a hopeful piece when we're in crisis and we managed it because we found hope in people we were working with who showed us something we wanted to showcase." — Emma Valente, Co-Founder of THE RABBLE, Talking Pulse: The Future of Form, Melbourne Fringe 2023

Employing THE RABBLE's trademark bold theatrical images amidst the other-worldly setting of the Club's reception room, WAKE is built from verbatim conversations between the ensemble and their personal reflections on getting older, death and dying, parenting, aged care, the changing body and survival. Part party, part surreal vaudeville show, part conversation and part town hall meeting, the critically lauded WAKE asked audiences to consider the difficult and taboo discussions around ageing while also celebrating the subtle power of eight spectacular older women.

"WAKE is a startling achievement and the perfect evolution of THE RABBLE's technical skills and creative ethos as a company. With dazzling theatricality, it affords these extraordinary women the opportunity to not only be heard but to be celebrated."

—Limelight Magazine, 2023

OUR BFFs

CHAMPION \$25,000+

Daniel Besen
Michael Kantor
Craig Semple

CHEERLEADER \$10,000+

Debbie Dadon AM
Vallejo Gantner
Phlyssa Koshland
Monica Lim and Konfir
Kabo
Anonymous (2)

COMPANION \$5,000+

Monica and Sam
Abrahams
The Cowen family
David Hanrahan
Jim Hart of the Hart Line
Fund, a sub-fund of the
Australian Communities
Foundation
Dr Jenepher Martin
Penny Miles
Paul Wheelton AM KSJ and
Angela Wheelton OAM
DSJ

CONSPIRATOR \$2,500+

Susanne Dahn, a giving
fund in the APS Foundation
Adrian Healy and Luke
Exell
Rupert Myer AO
Ricci Swart
Rosemary Walls
Pinky Watson
Anonymous (2)

COLLABORATOR \$1,000+

John and Lorraine Bates
Simon Bedford
Sally Browne Fund, a
sub-fund of the Australian
Communities Foundation
Jason Craig
Ron and Margaret Dobell
Foundation
Rosemary Forbes and Ian
Hocking
Kerry Gardner AM and
Andrew Myer AM
Cr Jamal Hakim
Natalie Hickey
Damian Hodgkinson
Michael Jankie
Maggie Maquire OAM
af MOGGS, a sub-fund
of Australian Communities
Foundation
Fiona McGauchie and
James Penlidis
Melissa McShane
Promotix Pty Ltd
Christopher Reed
Anne Runhardt and Glen
Reindel
Lucy Schnall

CONFIDANTE \$500+

Dennis Altman AM
Meghan Bourke
Lee Casey
Eloise Curry
Paul Duldig
Graeme Gherashe
Paul Gonzalez
Stephanie Hamilton
Felicia Jong
Jenny and Peter Levi
Virginia Lovett and Rose
Hiscock
Heather Martin
Kaylene O'Neill
Mary Parker
Juanita Pope and Declan
Fay
Jacky and Rupert
Sherwood
Lynne Sherwood
Fiona Sweet and Paul
Newcombe

COMRADE \$200+

Julia Adams
Frankie Airey
Nicole Beyer
Nicole and Nick Birrell
Mark and Tamara Boldiston
Elizabeth Bradlow
The Camm family
Greg Castle
Richard Chambers
Yulin Chin
Melinda Clarke
Helen Donnard
Milan Filipovic
Helen and Matt Franzi
Wilma Giles-Corti
Rinske Ginsberg
Ian Greer
Jane Hansen AO
Emer Harrington
Jerry Hodgins
Stacy Holman Jones
Mike Hyde
Robyn Lansdowne
Daniel Leighton
Pete Manasantivongs
Sam McMillan
Caitlin McNaughton
Georgie Meyer
Felix Moon
Jason Murphy
Sharon Nathani
Nichole O'Duffy
Julian Pocock
Bertha Rubin and Ron Elisha
Clive Scott AM
Kristy Shields
Andrea Stahel
Tim Stitz and Petra Kalive
Christopher Thomas
Fiona Wahr
Claire Wilcock
Anonymous (1)

FRINGE COMMUNITY \$200

We would also
like to thank all
of our wonderful
community of
donors that give so
generously. Thanks
for your ongoing
support. You're all
legends.

FRINGE INNER CIRCLE

We would like to
thank members of
our Fringe Inner
Circle including
Daniel Besen,
Michael Kantor and
Craig Semple.

PULSE GIVING CIRCLE

We would like to
thank members of
our Pulse Giving
Circle including the
Cowen family, Dr
Jenepher Martin,
Fiona McGauchie
and James Penlidis,
Melissa McShane,
Christopher Reed,
Rosemary Walls,
Pinky Watson.

DEAD FRINGERS' SOCIETY

Thank you to
Mark and Tamara
Boldiston, and
Melissa McShane
for their generous
bequests to
Melbourne Fringe.

OUR PARTNERS

Major Government Partners



Major Partner



Government Partners



Local Government Partners



International Government Partners



Philanthropic Partners



Program Partners



Venue Partners



Supporting Partners



Production and Supply Partners



Media Partners





MELBOURNE
GRIN
E