‘I couldn’t remember the last time I left a piece of theatre feeling so mentally provoked, but when I reflected on this it seems Ganesh was the last time, and Food Court the time before that … and, well, I guess that means you guys are really doing something right. It feels like a great privilege every time I get to see what you do, so, thank you.’

Hell House Audience Member, August 2012
REPORT FROM CHAIR & EXECUTIVE

Peter Bridges, CHAIR
Bruce Gladwin, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Alice Nash, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

In 2012, Back to Back celebrated its 25th birthday. It was a vast, demanding and rewarding year.

In 2012, we toured four works in repertoire: GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH, FOOD COURT, SMALL METAL OBJECTS and THE DEMOCRATIC SET. We presented HELL HOUSE and THEATRE OF SPEED presented MERMAID. We began work in earnest on our major new work for 2013, LASER BEAK MAN. We continued to host emerging artists and provide advice, mentorship and sectoral leadership to artists and peers.

Critical acclaim flew thick and fast in 2012, including several accolades for GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH: three Green Room Awards and a Helpmann Award for Best Australian Play. We were also honoured with the Australian National Disability Enterprise Award for Excellence.

We have a great deal to show for our work behind the scenes in 2012, not least the accomplishment of a decisive shift in the way we operate. For a good chunk of the year, we were sailing off the edges of our known map. Given that Back to Back has a long and solid history, it seems ludicrous to suggest that we discovered anew how much more there is to know, but that’s what happened.

It was a year of changes. In March, Ally Harvey joined us as Company Manager (later Associate Producer). In July, Marcia Ferguson, Artistic Associate, left the company to become Artistic Director at Big West Festival. In August we welcomed Tamara Searle to the role of Artistic Associate, then in September General Manager Jaclyn Booton left us to fly with trapezes at Circus Oz. In December, we bid adieu to long-time Back to Back ensemble member, Nicki Holland, who joined the company in 1996. We thank all – incoming and outgoing and those who steered the ship through all – for their incredible passion, skill and grit.

We send our heartfelt thanks to all those who travelled with us – audiences, community participants, creative collaborators and technical geniuses, volunteers, students, researchers, presenting and pro-bono partners, funders, trusts and foundations, private donors, peers, colleagues, friends, families and carers.

...as they go about demonstrating doubt, disillusion and painfully fierce conflict, they bizarrely and quite brilliantly manage to keep me smiling for most of their imperfect show. The key to their success is communicating when the joke’s over and Back to Back are experts at creating that shift that occurs when we have to stop laughing and start asking questions. For me, their brilliance is in their blatancy and if you know what a ‘gulab jamun’ is you’re in for a few extra special treats.”

Naima Khan, on GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH SPOONFED, London International Festival of Theatre, June 2012
2012 ACTIVITIES IN BRIEF
Throughout the year we strove to reach our artistic and business goals with steely determination.

GOAL 1  To build and present a body of exceptional work that challenges theatrical, social and political convention

GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH – GREEN ROOM AWARDS for Best Ensemble Performance: Alternative & Hybrid Performance, Best Director: Theatre, Best Production: Theatre
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH – HELPMANN AWARD for Best Australian Play
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH (Spotlight) Australian Performing Arts Market, Adelaide
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH Vienna Festival, Austria
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) with The Barbican at Stratford Circus, London, UK
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH Keuze – Rotterdam Schouwburg, Rotterdam, Netherlands
FOOD COURT Philadelphia Live Arts Festival, Philadelphia, USA
THE DEMOCRATIC SET Mobile States Australian National Tour to Darwin, Tennant Creek, Goolwa, Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Launceston, Perth and Mandurah
THE DEMOCRATIC SET Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney
THE DEMOCRATIC SET Microsite launched
SMALL METAL OBJECTS Unity Festival with The Sherman and Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, UK
THEATRE OF SPEED’s MERMAID Back to Back Theatre Studio, Geelong
LASER BEAK MAN Creative Developments, Back to Back Theatre Studio, Geelong.

GOAL 2  To provide leadership to support the arts practice of others

Secondments / Observers / Visitors / Attachments – Hosting a wide range of individual practitioners, with a focus on young and emerging artists
Networks & Industry Events – Committee membership and active leadership within: Theatre Network Victoria (TNV); Arts & Disability Access Network (ADAN) of Victoria; and Disability Arts Network Geelong (DANG)
Research, Advocacy & Advice – Active support to organisational peers and individuals with a focus on Victorian artists with disabilities and high level responsiveness to research projects in arts and disability sectors.

GOAL 3  To secure the resources to sustain our vision and scale of activity

Continued Diversified Financial Base – Via earned income, public and private support
Nurturing Relationships – As a feature of all our work, across all areas of operation
Capacity Building – Including the introduction of a new staff structure; the launch of our fond but sometimes tormenting friend Marvin (our database); preparations for the quiet launch of a private giving program in 2013; and a focus on Board development.
ABOUT BACK TO BACK THEATRE

Back to Back Theatre is an outstanding regional Australian theatre company of national and international significance. The company is driven by an ensemble of six actors perceived to have intellectual disabilities.

We contend our operation as a theatre company is beyond expectation of possibility. Our record of success, or even existence, could not have been dreamt of in the recent past. In its emerging actuality Back to Back Theatre has ridden a wave of social reformation placing Australian theatre at the forefront of artistic expression and dynamic political change.

We make work locally and tour globally. We are one of Australia’s best-known theatre exports commanding the respect of audiences, critics and peers worldwide. The company’s existence contributes to the richness and diversity of Australian life. The company palpably projects Australia as an innovative, sophisticated and tolerant nation.

We are committed to excellence in artistic practice, management and governance. We want to make great theatre and be a great organisation, a leader in our field and a guide for others. The company has demonstrated that investment in its activities returns in artistic, social and economic spheres.

Philosophically, our company is managed with an ethos of mutual participation. We foster our collective imagination and invite all staff to participate in developing our creative intention. We recognise the relatedness of our staff’s respective processes. We encourage our staff to function beyond a mechanical response to a duty statement: creativity is not restricted to the rehearsal studio. We acknowledge the greatest threat to our artistic vibrancy as a theatre company is not external forces or pressures, but the frittering of internal creative impulse.

PURPOSE
Back To Back Theatre creates new forms of contemporary theatre imagined from the minds and experiences of a unique ensemble of actors with a disability, giving voice to social and political issues that speak to all people.

2012 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2012 Back to Back undertook 45 performances, held 6 creative developments for 2 new works. We performed 5 different works in 5 countries and 19 venues. We embarked on 4 national and 4 international tours. 8004 audience members saw our shows. 1728 participants were involved in 109 community workshops. We employed a team of 16 (mostly part-time) core staff, 5 ensemble members, and casual and contract staff including 67 technical crew and guest artists.
FROM THE ENSEMBLE

We are the Back to Back Theatre ensemble. We play with intention. Some days we work at headquarters in Geelong, and some days you will find us on tour.

Brian is our pop culture specialist. He’s pretty strong as an actor and as a person; he is likely to lift you off the floor. Simon is an enigma, and the rightful Captain of Quizzes. Scott is like an arrow; he is straight up like an arrow fired from a bow. Sarah is our courage. Mark is a free spirited type of person, he’s King of Comedy. He likes birds. Some of us identify with being outsiders. Some of us don’t. We wonder: what would we be outside of? We give everything, and everyone a go. We hope you will feel intoxicated by our shows, that our shows will entertain you, that our shows will make you question things.

“
GUEST ARTISTS & COLLABORATORS

Alexander Dick
Alice Fleming
Alice Spring
Amy Rudder
Andrew Livingston
Angela O’Donnell
Anne Rafferty
Anthony Noareck
Antony Hamilton
Augustin Mileson
Bec Reid
Becky Hilton
Bernadette Sweeney
Bluebottle3
Bryce Foggett
Byron Scullin
Cameron Birch
Caroline Lee
Cate Blanchett
Chris Abrahams
Chris Hansen
Clare Bowditch
Clinton Gerard
Dan Giovanni
Daniel Rickman
Danielle Kirby
Darcy Whitsed
David Franzke
David Woods
Deanna Smart
Desmond Cahill
Dr. Andrew Singleton
Dr. Benjamin Myers
Dr. Leslie Cannold
Dr. Rachael Kohn
Emily Barrie
Emma Anderson
Fiona Hiscock
Genevieve Trace
Georgia Fowler
Goyce Taychu Ping
Greg Nicholl
Hugh Covill
Ian Moorehead
Ian Pidd
James Franzke
James Pratt
Jarred Claydon
Jason Maling
Jaspa Wood
Jeff Busby
Jen Hector
Jim Russell
Jo Leishman
Jo Pike
Joanna Crutchley
Joanna Fishman
Jodee Mundy
Jonathon Leahy
Josephine Lange
Josh Smart
Joyce Tracy
Judy Sharp
Kate Sullivan
Katherine Brach
Kellie Clifford
Lachlan Carrick
Laura Berrisford
Leanne Stein
Liam
Lin Tobias
Lloyd Swanton
Lucy Jones
Luke George
Luke Ryan
M. Butterfield
Madeleine Flynn
Malene Zaibak
Marco Cher-Gibard
Mark Beasley
Mark Cuthbertson
Marline Zaibak
Max Ford
Meagan Hazlet
Miklos Janek
Miles Thomas
Noel Jordan
Ollie Black
Patrick Scadon
Paul Tibbles
Penny Campton
Pete Farnan
Peter Aslin
Peter Lovell
Peter Mares
Peter Sherlock
Peter Worland
Phil Brocket
Polly Munday
Polly Rowe
Rahni Allan
Rebecca Hilton
Reina Coles
Rev. John Depuche
Rhian Hinkley
Robyn McLean
Rudely Interrupted
Sally Smith
Sam James
Samara Hersch
Sandra Parker
Sarah Greentree
Scott Stephens
Sera Davies
Shio Otani
Sonia Teuben
Sophie Kitson
Stacey Baldwin
Stephanie Kabanya
Students at Gordon TAFE
Susan Wright
Tamsin Sharp
The Hacketts
The Necks
Tim Humphreys
Tirese Ballard
Tom
Toni Davis
Tony Buck
Veronica Bolzon
Waleed Aly

THANK YOU

Alice Gerlach
Amanda Browne
Austin Paterson
Brad Spolding
Cameron McNaughton
Catherine Jones
Chris Hartigan
Chris Wooton
Collete Brennan
Councilor Barbara Apley
Councilor Cameron Grainger
David Everist
David Smith
Debra Jeffries
Duncan Esler
Ellen Owyer
Greg Andrews
Helena Grehan
Jennifer Jones
Jill Smith
John Burlase
John Preston
Judith Sears
Julie Cotter
Kaz Paton
Kirsty Ellem
Kylie Cirak
Lainie Kluska
Lesley Lightfoot
Liam Morrissey
Lilian Dikmans
The Hon. Lisa Neville
Luis van Slageren
Lyn Wallis
Margaret Bourke
Mark Beasley
Melody McDonald
Neville Taft
Noel Bradbury
Paul Noonan
Peter Eckersall
Phillip Keir
Richard Gough
Rose Hiscock
Shaun Cannon
Simon Abrahams
Sophie Travers
Stefanie Carp
Stephen Armstrong
Steve Whittle
Tanya Bennett
Teresa Zolnierkiewicz
Tim Orton
Vittoria de Stefano
Wendy Smith
# FUNDERS, SPONSORS & PARTNERS

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- Tantrum Theatre
- Theatre of the Winged Unicorn
- Torquay Theatre Troupe
- University of Newcastle
- WA Roller Derby

## DONORS

Richard Wentworth Ping /
Wentworth People
Back to Back Theatre presented a 25 minute excerpt of GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH at a Spotlight Presentation at the 2012 Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM). It was a resounding success with the company subsequently approached by a myriad of Australian national colleagues and presenters, all keen to say how wonderful the excerpted performance was, expressing their hope and desire to see or present the full production in Australia or abroad.

DIRECTOR Bruce Gladwin
PERFORMERS Mark Deans, Simon Laherty, Scott Price, Brian Tilley & David Woods
PRODUCTION MANAGER Van Locker
STAGE MANAGER / AV OPERATOR Emma Anderson
SOUND DESIGN & MIX Marco Cher-Gibard
LIGHTING DESIGNER & OPERATOR Andrew Livingston
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Alice Nash
GENERAL MANAGER / ENSEMBLE SUPPORT Jaclyn Booton

With thanks to Ian Scobie and Lee-Anne Donnolley of Arts Projects Australia.
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH, VIENNA
24 – 27 May 2012
Vienna Festival, Austria

Back to Back staged four performances of GANESH in Halle G for the Wiener Festwochen [Vienna Festival]. The European premiere of this work, the season also included an artist talk on 19 May with Stefanie Carp, Artistic Director of the Vienna Festival.

“Last night we finished here in Vienna. It appears we are the toast of the town! We have had several great reviews – none of which we can read – but all of which, we are told, are marvellous, from the most conservative to the most progressive publications. We are waiting on the ‘big’ one from some important paper to come out on Tuesday... the Festival will send all to us and I think translate them too. One of the reviews apparently said that the show will probably be the best show of the Festival. I say ‘will’ because the Vienna Festival, one of the largest in Europe, is seven weeks long, and yesterday was the middle day of the Festival.

Last night was our final performance. As I sat and watched, all the audience directly in front of me were leaning forward, with their arms wrapped around their torsos. The applause at the end of the show was magnificent. An audience member approached me weeping afterwards.

The cast and crew have been amazing. Vienna is an elegant city, an epic former empire with a great love for theatre and music. We feel blessed.” Alice Nash, Executive Producer

DIRECTOR, DEVISOR & DESIGN Bruce Gladwin
PERFORMERS Mark Deans, Simon Laherty, Scott Price, Brian Tilley & David Woods
STAGE MANAGER Alice Fleming
SOUND DESIGN & MIX Lachlan Carrick
LIGHTING DESIGNER & OPERATOR Andrew Livingston
PRODUCTION MANGER Van Locker
SOUND OPERATOR Marco Cher-Gibard
ENSEMBLE SUPPORT Jo Leishman
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Alice Nash

With special thanks to Stefanie Carp, Elisabeth Schack and Martina Foster of Vienna Festival.

“You are on the front page of Theater der Zeit, one of the two biggest theatre magazines in the German speaking countries! And then inside there is a big review of Wiener Festwochen and your play is described as the big, big surprise in the beginning of the article: congratulations!” Viennese fan via email. June 2012

“Perfect timing, and an aesthetic incisiveness and narrative density in which to frame it, make Ganesh Versus the Third Reich the real kind of theatrical perfection. It is a far cry from dull, impenetrable and seamless perfection, proving instead that liveliness and truthfulness are the real elements of flawless theatre.”
Kai Krösche NACHT KRITIK, Vienna Festival May 2012
Back to Back presented seven performances of SMALL METAL OBJECTS outside the gorgeous Wales Millennium Centre.

“It was nice to do SMO again. It is a really nice show to put together. It is great working outside in open spaces rather than in a theatre. Cardiff is a lot like Geelong, strangely. Very, very similar.”
Van Locker, Production Manager

“Artists are explorers. Who better to show us the city anew? Artists can take us to a far-flung part of the city that we haven’t explored, or they can take us into that building that we pass every day but we never went into.

An artist, I think, can really show us people that we might overlook in our lives. Back to Back is an Australian company of people with intellectual disabilities. I saw their amazing show [SMALL METAL OBJECTS] in New York at the Staten Island Ferry terminal at rush hour. We, the audience, were given headsets and seated on one side of the terminal. The actors were right there in front of us, right there among the commuters, and we could hear them, but we might not have otherwise seen them. So Back to Back takes site-specific theatre and uses it to gently remind us about who and what we choose to edit out of our daily lives.”
David Binder, “The arts festival revolution” – on TEDGlobal June 2012

SHOW DIRECTOR Kate Sulan
PERFORMERS Simon Laherty, Sonia Teuben, Caroline Lee, Jim Russell
STAGE MANAGER Alice Fleming
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER Jo Leishman
PRODUCTION MANAGER Van Locker
SOUND ENGINEER & MIX Marco Cher-Gibard

With special thanks to Ben Pettit-Wade of Unity Festival.
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH, LONDON
27 June – 1 July 2012
London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) with The Barbican at Stratford Circus, London

Back to Back staged four performances of GANESH for the London International Festival of Theatre. GANESH was included in The Guardian’s – Best Theatre List of 2012. It landed at #7 with the following description:
“Back to Back’s tale of the elephant-headed deity journeying into Nazi Germany to reclaim the swastika made for unmissable viewing.

An argument is brewing in the rehearsal room. Scott wants Mark – a performer with Down’s syndrome – thrown out of the cast. “He doesn’t understand what is fiction and what is not,” Scott says. But maybe Mark isn’t the only one. Maybe even the audience cannot say with any certainty what, in this heated meta-theatrical debate, is fiction and what is not. In that ambiguity, the assumed intellectual superiority that places Mark beneath the “normal” people watching him quietly collapses.

Ganesh Versus the Third Reich wasn’t the most high-profile production in this year’s London International Festival of Theatre – that honour went to the West End run of Gatz, a mesmerising eight-hour rendition of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby – but it may have been the most challenging and subversive.

Devised and performed by Australian company Back to Back Theatre, an ensemble of actors with physical and learning disabilities led by director Bruce Gladwin, it fearlessly interrogated prejudice and abuses of power by questioning its own right to represent a Hindu god and the Holocaust on stage. That makes it sound worthy: it wasn’t. It was often very funny – bubbling with joyful absurdity – but the humour prickled at your conscience. Gladwin and his cast never shied away from verbalising the things liberal sensibilities deem morally wrong. Things such as: that actor has the mind of a goldfish, or the audience are gorging on “freak porn”. The laughter, increasingly uncomfortable, finally dies when the show’s fictionalised director, meticulously played by David Woods of British performance duo Ridiculusmus, loses his politically correct composure and physically attacks the cast. This might be fiction – but Woods at this moment is wearing an SS uniform, and the attacks carried out by Nazi Germany on people with disabilities are brutally factual. The SS uniform comes from the other half of Ganesh Versus the Third Reich: a romantic myth in which the Hindu god of obstacles travels to Hitler’s Germany to retrieve the Sanskrit symbol of well-being, transformed by the Nazis into the swastika.

Using little more than a few plastic curtains, some looming silhouettes and misty lighting, Back to Back conjure up a train journey through Europe, a home in India, even the shimmering immensity of the cosmos. The beauty of the images and the intensity of the arguments give Ganesh Versus the Third Reich its remarkable strength.” Maddy Costa, The Guardian, 13 December 2012

DIRECTOR, DEVISOR & DESIGN Bruce Gladwin
PERFORMERS Mark Deans, Simon Laherty, Scott Price, Brian Tilley & David Woods
LIGHTING DESIGNER / OPERATOR Andrew Livingston
PRODUCTION MANAGER Van Locker
SOUND ENGINEER & MIX Marco Cher-Gibard
STAGE MANAGER Alice Fleming
ENSEMBLE SUPPORT Jo Leishman
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Alice Nash

With special thanks to Mark Ball, Erica Campayne and Kate Ward of LIFT and to Toni Rocklin and Louise Jeffreys of the Barbican.

“I waited six months to see Ganesh Versus the Third Reich and it left me speechless. A truly stunning and brave must see.”

Audience Member, London International Festival of Theatre, May 2012
Back to Back staged three performances of *FOOD COURT* for the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and also held two post-show discussions with the cast. The company also led an extended performance workshop at the Live Arts Studio in Philadelphia.

“A.D. Amorosi: What is most crucial about the idea of having The Necks compose (or is it improvisational?) a new score for every Food Court performance? Urgency? Potency?

Bruce Gladwin: As a director I love the tension between control and chaos. For me great theatre work sits in neither camp but is poised between both poles. The Necks represent what cannot be controlled, the random and the chaos; the soundtrack to each performance is different every night. The music drives the actors and the actors drive the musicians, each spurring the other on. It feels incredibly live.

ADA: How is all the portent portrayed on stage? There is so much that is shadowy and ominous about Food Court that sounds/seems as much of a light show as a theatrical with actors/movement artists on stage.

BG: The dialogue is minimal, it is economical but critical. Visually the work is like a painting that morphs in front of your eyes. The sound is immersive as if you are being lulled by another heartbeat and brainwave pattern.

ADA: Is there a trajectory to your oeuvre – a line of thought and deed that runs through all of your works that the audience doesn’t necessarily know about?

BG: That is one of the best questions I’ve had for some time. And I’m struggling with answering it, perhaps because each new work is an act of discovery, that the link or thought/s are always elusive and we are in pursuit. I like theatre’s inherent fragility, localised nature and slow awkward illusionary power. It feels human. I like to emphasise the human element. Theatre is like us, it has the capacity to be vulnerable, to collapse, to fall apart, to fail to deliver. Our aim is to reveal the audience to themselves.” Interview with A.D. Amorosi from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and Bruce Gladwin

**FOOD COURT, PHILADELPHIA**

20 – 21 September 2012
Philadelphia Live Arts Festival, USA

DIRECTOR Bruce Gladwin
ENSEMBLE /PERFORMERS
Mark Deans, Nicki Holland, Sarah Mainwaring, Scott Price, Sonia Teuben
MUSIC The Necks: Chris Abrahams (piano), Tony Buck (drums), Lloyd Swanton (bass)
PRODUCTION MANAGER Van Locker
SOUND OPERATOR Byron Scullin
LIGHTING OPERATOR Andrew Livingston, Bluebottle
STAGE MANAGER Alice Fleming
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER / ENSEMBLE SUPPORT Jo Leishman
ADDITIONAL ENSEMBLE SUPPORT Brenna Markey & Lee Squire
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Alice Nash

With special thanks to Nick Stuccio and Carolyn Schlecker of Philly Live Arts.
GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH, ROTTERDAM
26 – 28 September 2012
Presented by International Keuze, Rotterdamse Schouwburg, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Back to Back staged three performances of GANESH at Rotterdamse Schouwburg’s International Keuze.

“GANESH opened last night and received a fantastic response. The audience reaction was incredible and deservedly so – the cast performed brilliantly, and the show looked stunning. The audience were all on their feet from the top of the curtain call. Three returns later, I think certain members of the cast were almost overwhelmed and others lapped it up: you can probably guess who! A TV crew grabbed a small section of the show and gathered vid-pops in the foyer afterwards. I think Mr Price took the opportunity to take part too! This will be aired a few times during the day and promote the season. The marketing team have been great – really jumped on to the Helpmann Award via social media channels. They have also sent a letter box drop of a promotional flier with a personal message from Jan Zoet, Director of Rotterdamse Schouwburg, encouraging people to come and see Back to Back.

We have (allegedly) received a couple of great reviews (still needs translating) where the show has been awarded four stars – apparently a pretty rare credit from the local theatre reviewers.

Will be in touch again soon. That’s all for now from the Jet Lag diaries.” Ally Harvey, Associate Producer

SHOW DIRECTOR, Kate Sulan
PERFORMERS Mark Deans, Simon Laherty, Scott Price, Brian Tilley & David Woods
PRODUCTION MANAGER Van Locker
STAGE MANAGER Alice Fleming
SOUND OPERATION Marco Cher-Gibard
ENSEMBLE SUPPORT Jo Leishman
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER Ally Harvey

With special thanks to Jan Zoet, Mark Yeoman and Maaike van Langen of Rotterdamse Schouwburg.

“The festival ‘De Keuze’ has finished yesterday. It was a great festival for me and for the five young actresses who I accompanied the whole festival. Ganesh Versus the Third Reich was really one of the highlights if not the highlight of the festival. And I am sure it will have influenced my own artistic work and it reactivated my reflection about symbols and stigmas. Thank you for that and for the workshop.”

Rotterdam audience member and workshop participant.

“I did see Ganesh in Rotterdam last fall... drove especially from Belgium over there since a friend of mine told me I HAD to see the performance. She was more than right! I still think about all of you a lot.” Sofie via Facebook
LASER BEAK MAN, CREATIVE DEVELOPMENTS, GEELONG

October – December 2012
Back to Back Studio, Geelong

LASER BEAK MAN is a major new work, initiated by Sydney Theatre Company’s co-Artistic Director, Cate Blanchett and inspired by the drawings of visual artist Tim Sharp.
LASER BEAK MAN is a co-production with Sydney Theatre Company and The Malthouse Theatre, premiering in late 2013.

Artist Tim Sharp is 23 years old and has autism. His invention of comic character Laser Beak Man at age 11 has proven to be the way out of isolation and into inclusion in mainstream society for Tim. His drawings of Laser Beak Man and the world that this merry superhero inhabits are in great demand. They now form the basis of an eight episode animation series screened on ABC3TV, Cartoon Network Asia, New Zealand and Australia. Tim’s artwork is widely sought by outsider art collectors.

During the creative developments, Tim Sharp the creator of Laser Beak Man, was a lively presence in the rehearsal room. He spent quite a bit of time on the floor, improvising. At this stage we think the story deals with identity, mortality and relationships in a self-reflexive manner. The thematic draws a link between the audience, disability, superheroes, alternate realities and eagerly auditioning actors. Some of the highlights from the creative developments included a scene of Scott and Simon telling Tim his work wasn’t very good and not at all funny and that unfortunately they would have to let him go.

We dedicated some time trying to find a world for placing Laser Beak Man on stage. LASER BEAK MAN is emerging somewhat like Freud’s description of ‘the id’ – impulsive, instinctive.

For the technical development we explored ideas about the ‘world’ of LASER BEAK MAN, placing the auditioning performers inside a film set, against projections of Tim’s drawings.

To sustain a full length stage presentation there needs to be something of drama or conflict, moral or psychological dilemma; something for not only the characters on stage to wrestle with but for the audience themselves to wrestle with. To find this we are going to need to spread our wings further than what Tim has put down on paper or what has been created in the animated series.

DIRECTOR Bruce Gladwin
DEVISORS / PERFORMERS Mark Deans, Simon Laherty, Scott Price, Sarah Mainwaring, Tim Sharp, Brian Tilley
GUEST PERFORMERS David Woods, Antony Hamilton
COSTUME Shio Otani
ARTIST SUPPORT Judy Sharp

With special thanks to Rachael Azzorpardi and Ben White at STC and Jo Porter at The Malthouse.
Back to Back Theatre staged three evenings of *HELL HOUSE*, as a promenade piece written by American evangelical Pastor, Keenan Roberts. After each performance, the audience was invited to attend a forum hosted by the company with guest facilitators and panelists.

**PROVOCATION – August 3**  
Facilitated by Scott Stephens  
Panelists: Clare Bowditch, Dr. Benjamin Myers, Waleed Aly

**BELIEF – August 4**  
Facilitated by Dr. Rachael Kohn  
Panelists: Dr. Andrew Singleton, Danielle Kirby, Desmond Cahill

**MORALITY – August 5**  
Facilitated by Peter Mares  
Panelists: Dr. Leslie Cannold, Rev. John Depuche, Peter Sherlock

Early in the year we advertised for local Geelong volunteer actors, no experience necessary, to collaborate with Back to Back on a work to be presented in Melbourne. An explanation of the nature of the performance, forums and process was articulated at an information night where we attracted 35 individuals. In the coming two months this number grew to a cast of 56.

Over subsequent workshops and rehearsals the cast were led through explorative exercises and incitements to elicit responses and thoughts to the thematic of morality, belief and provocation. In presenting a text associated with fundamentalists we asked ourselves what are we, as individuals and as a community, fundamental about? What is a core belief we cannot be moved from? Can we give ‘belief’ form? We also talked about the inherent problems of us as a Geelong community representing a particular faith-based community from the USA.

This project was never going to be the refinement of an artistic kernel but a throw-up of a broad and crude sketch. Our rehearsal period was 4 weeks x 11 hours per week. The cast were enthusiastic, the experience fast but joyful, playful, a process of discovery and at times revelation.

The cast was made up of those who had worked within the community theatre companies of Geelong and the Victorian south coast, individuals with no affiliations who were involving themselves with theatre for the first time, three THEATRE OF SPEED members, three ensemble members and a group of recent migrants who came to us via Diversitat.

It was ambitious to take a large group on a journey of moral and ethical complexity but was genuinely appreciated by the cast. We suspect in terms of relationships within our local community *HELL HOUSE* may be one of the company’s most successful Geelong-based projects despite not being presented in our hometown.

“It’s been fantastic. It’s been a really interesting process just working with the community of people who have become involved in the project. They’re coming from all walks of life and all over the place. There are people who have done theatre before and some who haven’t. You’ve got a real range coming through and that’s been a really inclusive experience, which I expected it to be anyway working with Back to Back... an open, inclusive, safe way of working. I was really blown away...” *HELL HOUSE* participant
AUTHOR Pastor Keenan Roberts
DIRECTOR Bruce Gladwin
ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE (Development) Marcia Ferguson
PROJECT COORDINATOR Nikki Watson
PRODUCTION MANAGER Andrew Livingston, Bluebottle
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Miles Thomas, Bluebottle
LIGHTING DESIGN & OPERATION Jen Hector
SET DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION Mark Cuthbertson
COSTUME DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION Emily Barrie
SOUND David Franzke
STAGE MANAGER Anthony Noeck
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER Jo Leishman
FORUM ROOM COORDINATOR Kelly Clifford
COMMUNITY SUPPORT Leanne Stein
SECONDMENTS Katherine Brach, Darcy Whitsed, Cameron Birch, Augustin Mileson
USHERS Malene Zaibak, Joyce Tracy, Amy Rudder, Tirese Ballard,
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER (VOLUNTEER) Samara Hersch

PROJECT PARTNERS
Diversitat, Barwon Health Stores, Geelong Lyric Theatre, Geelong Repertory Theatre,
Anglesea Performing Arts, Torquay Theatre Troupe, Theatre of the Winged Unicorn, Drysdale Coach Services, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Swinburne University, Geelong Hospital Stores

PARTICIPANTS
Allan V. Watt, Amanda Rector, Ben Mitchell, Brian Tilley, Bronwyn Beard, Catherine Larcey,
Ceridwyn Gordon, Charlotte Hukvari, Cherie Mills, Chris Hansen, Dan O’Keefe, Daniel Franks,
Dav Jefferies, Genevieve Roberts, Grant Stringer, Iris Walshe-Howling, James Lewis,
Janine McKenzie, Jess Dune, Jessica Lesosky, Jordy Machnyk, Kat Cain, Kerri Bayley, Kerry Viner,
Kirstin Honey, Leah Day, Lina Libraperto, Lisa Berry, Liz Gustus, Madeleine (Maddie) Field,
Margaret Anderson, Max Sutherland, Melinda Chapman, Min Bramwell, Nel Da Salva, Pep Upton,
Phillip Besconson, Phoebe Baker, Ray Hay, Rob Phillips, Robyn Martinez, Rod Day,
Sarah Mainwaring, Sean Sexton, Shane Lee, Simon Laherty, Steve Howell, Steven Georgiadis,
Sue Broberg, Terry Roseburgh, Wendy Armstrong, Taw Reh, Hussain Haidari, Marietha Sadic,
Aliyabo Desire, Mae Jor

With special thanks to Angharad Wynne-Jones of Arts House.

PHOTO: Nikki Watson
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, MOBILE STATES NATIONAL TOUR – 10 CITIES ACROSS AUSTRALIA

PRODUCER Sarah Greentree, Performing Lines
PRODUCTION Berni Sweeney, Performing Lines
PRODUCTION Van Locker, Back to Back Theatre
"The Premier and Deputy Premier came along to open the redeveloped Courthouse Arts [Building]. This is a great arts and cultural facility for young people in the Geelong area and also home to the world-renowned Back to Back Theatre."


In March, the Premier, Ted Baillieu, with Deputy Premier Peter Ryan MP in attendance, officially opened the Old Courthouse Building redevelopment. As part of this process, they were filmed participating in THE DEMOCRATIC SET. Other community collaborators (in no particular order) included a potted red gerbera, some chickens, a companion dog, the architects who designed the new studio, a group of protesting nurses, members of THEATRE OF SPEED wielding umbrellas, with a few picnicking babies and dancing primary school children from Nelson Park School thrown in for good measure.

Back to Back coordinated a free program of live music in Police Lane by our favourite bands, The Hacketts and Rudely Interrupted. The lane outside our new home became a stage, with deck chairs and sausages for all to enjoy. THEATRE OF SPEED roamed the crowd with mikes and recording equipment, capturing the vibe through vox pops.

COMMUNITY LIASON / DIRECTOR Marcia Ferguson
PRODUCTION MANAGER Van Locker
VIDEOGRAPHER Miklos Janek
DOLLY OPERATOR / LIGHTING Genevieve Trace
MUSIC The Hacketts & Rudely Interrupted
VOX POPS Madeleine Flynn & Tim Humphries

VIDEO PORTRAITS & PERFORMERS

VOX POPS
THEATRE OF SPEED Phoebe Baker, Laura Berrisford, Robert Croft, Mark Deans, Chris Hansen, Nicki Holland, Simon Laherty, James Lewis, Sarah Mainwaring, Polly Munday, Scott Price, Tamika Simpson, Brian Tilley, Jessica Walker

With special thanks to Kaz Paton, Duncan Elser & Ally Harvey of City of Greater Geelong.
**THE DEMOCRATIC SET, DARWIN**

**14 - 18 May 2012**
Nightcliff Greek Community Hall

“Walking around in Darwin is like walking around in a very hot steamy bathroom with the heat lamps on full. We have very nice accommodation with a pool. Yesterday we drove to Litchfield National Park, famous for its magnetic termite mounds, and beautiful water holes.”
Mark Cuthberton, Production Manager

DIRECTOR Marcia Ferguson
ENSEMBLE Sarah Mainwaring
PRODUCTION MANAGER Mark Cuthbertson
CINEMATOGRAPHER/EDITOR Miklos Janek
COMMUNITY LIASON Robyn McLean & Penny Campton
WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT Tom

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring, Arts Access Darwin, Darwin Community Arts

*With special thanks to Rhian Hinkley, Stacey Baldwin, Louise Partos, Bon Ramilo, Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, Dorian McLean, Josh Campton, Julie Blyth, Leanne Waterhouse, Rachel Cotton, Will Tinapple and Dorian Aberasturi.*
GEELONG
21 March 2012

TENNANT CREEK
22 – 26 May 2012

NEWCASTLE
24 – 26 July 2012

LAUNCESTON
21 – 23 August 2012
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, TENNANT CREEK

22 – 26 May 2012
Tennant Creek Civic Hall

DIRECTOR Sera Davies
ENSEMBLE Sarah Mainwaring
PRODUCTION MANAGER Mark Cuthbertson
CINEMATOGRAPHER/EDITOR Miklos Janek
COMMUNITY LIASON Robyn McLean, Penny Campton, Susan Wright
PRODUCER ARTBACK NT Angela O’Donnell, Robyn McLean

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Barkly Regional Arts, Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring, Nyinkka Nyunyu Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre, Arts Access Darwin

With special thanks to Joshua Campton, Penny Campton, Justin De Leeuw, Jacqueline Diaz, Ktima Heathcote, Emma Newman, Adrian McNamara, Alan Murn, Australia Council – JUMP Mentorship program.
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, GOOLWA

30 May – 1 June 2012
Centenary Hall, Goolwa

18 – 20 October 2012
Public screening and presentation at Kumuwuki / Big Wave Regional Arts Australia National Conference, Goolwa

In addition to the creation of our Goolwa DEM SET in May / June, Tamara Searle, Bruce Gladwin and Sarah Mainwaring travelled to Goolwa in October to present a series of talks about THE DEMOCRATIC SET process, and disability and technology, at the Regional Arts Conference held in Goolwa.

DIRECTOR / EDITOR / SOUND DESIGN Miklos Janek
ENSEMBLE Sarah Mainwaring
PRODUCTION & LIGHTING Mark Cuthbertson, Josh Smart
CINEMATOGRAPHER / ASSISTANT EDITOR Sera Davies
COMMUNITY LIASON Anne Rafferty
TECHNICAL SUPPORT Josh Smart
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Jo Pike, Just Add Water Goolwa Arts 2012
PROJECT OFFICER Ollie Black, Just Add Water Goolwa Arts 2012

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Country Arts SA, Regional Arts Australia National Conference 2012, Government of South Australia, Alexandrina Council

With special thanks to Steven Mayhew of Country Arts SA.
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, NEWCASTLE

24 – 26 July 2012
Newcastle Community Arts Centre

28 July 2012
Public Screening

DIRECTOR Luke George
ENSEMBLE Scott Price
PRODUCTION MANAGER Jonnie Leahy
VIDEOGRAPHER Sam James
PRODUCER FOR LIVE!SITES Paul Tibbles
COMMUNITY LIASON Meagan Hazlet
TECHNICIAN / OPERATOR Bryce Foggett

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Newcastle Community Arts Centre, Newcastle Improvised Music Association, Nefertiti of the Hunter, Tantrum Theatre, Novatones Harmony Chorus, Newcastle Women’s Group, University of Newcastle, The City of Newcastle
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, SYDNEY

31 July – 2 August 2012
Performance Space, Carriage Works, Sydney

Saturday 4 August
Public Screening

DIRECTOR Luke George
ENSEMBLE Scott Price
PRODUCTION MANAGER Jonnie Leahy
VIDEOGRAPHER Sam James
TECHNICAL SUPPORT Greg Nicholl
COMMUNITY LIASON Sophie Kitson
PRODUCER Joanna Fishman, Performance Space

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Performance Space, CarriageWorks
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, MELBOURNE

7 – 9 August 2012
North Melbourne Town Hall, Arts House

Saturday 22 September
Public Screening, Other Film Festival at Arts House

DIRECTORS Bruce Gladwin & Rhian Hinkley
ENSEMBLE Brian Tilley
VIDEOGRAPHER Rhian Hinkley
PRODUCTION & LIGHTING Jen Hector
COMMUNITY LIASON Bec Reid, City of Melbourne, Community Arts Projects Participation Program
PRODUCER Deanna Smart for Arts House

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Arts House, City of Melbourne

With special thanks to Angharad Wynne-Jones of Arts House.
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, HOBART

14 – 16 August 2012
Hobart College, Mt Nelson, Salamanca Arts Centre

Saturday 18 August
Public Screening

DIRECTOR Becky Hilton
ENSEMBLE Simon Laherty
PRODUCTION MANAGER Mark Cuthbertson
PRODUCTION & LIGHTING Jarred Claydon, Rahni Allan, Max Ford, Georgia Fowler
VIDEOGRAPHER Sera Davies
COMMUNITY LIASON Jaspa Wood

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Hobart College Mount Nelson, Salamanca Arts Centre
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, LAUNCESTON

21 – 23 August 2012
Launceston College, Launceston

Saturday 25 August
Public Screening, Junk Tent, Junction Festival, Launceston

DIRECTOR Becky Hilton
ENSEMBLE Simon Laherty
PRODUCTION MANAGER Mark Cuthbertson
PRODUCTION & LIGHTING Lauren Schwabe, Peter Aslin
VIDEOGRAPHER Sera Davies
COMMUNITY LIASON Jaspa Wood, Ian Pidd
TECHNICAL SUPPORT Liam (Junction Festival)

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Launceston College, Junction Festival

With special thanks to Ian Pidd of Junction Festival.
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, PERTH

28 – 30 August 2012
Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth

DIRECTOR Becky Hilton
ENSEMBLE Sarah Mainwaring
PRODUCTION MANAGER Anthony Noack
VIDEOGRAPHER Sera Davies
COMMUNITY LIASON OFFICER Renae Coles
TECHNICIAN & LIGHTING Phil Brocket

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS
Jackson Eaton, Sarah Mainwaring, Michaela Willoughby, Clayton Lin, George Tsadilas,
Danielle Gilson, Steve Carpener, Jacqueline Craig, Bronte Sore-Arse, Scourge of Quad,
Laura Gravity, Acute Terror, Saoirse van Hall, Hans-Willem can Hall, Nick Pinnock, Anu Marttinen,
Soozy Slugworth, Jennifer Blenrehassett, Poise ‘N’ die Zee, Dayzee A’Dare, Aaron Peet, Lola Peet,
Leigh Vegas, Dirge, Duckie, Sassa Nator, Diemond Bite, Chris Williams, Sarah Wilkinson,
Elizabeth Hesler, Rebecca Howard, Joanne Hayward, Pauline Miles, Christie Strauss,
Bethsaida Tapsall, Danni McGrath, Raylene Chin, Marnie Orr, Jacqui Otago, Hellen Russo,
Janette McGinty, Phoenix McGinty-Evans, Emma Fishwick, Jessica Bell, Jo Pickup, Sarah Nelson,
Amelie Scurfield, Rhianna Hall, Danica Rickard, Felicity Bott, Woolf Wakelam, Paul Wakelam,
Sete Tele, Sari Bennett, Robyn Gibson, Margot Edwards, Lee Lok Yin, Mason Tate, Heng Su Hsien,
Talen Herzig, Joe Lui, Kashif Javed, Bahador Arabinezhad, Alexandra Wallish, Glen Hallissy,
Julia Hales, Sam Kerr-Phillips, Matthew Morris, Phillip Morris, Shirley Morris, Chantelle Mitchell,
Rachel Arianno Ogle, Agatha Snowball, Neuro, Rachel Charles, Tara Daniel, Kes Doney, Steve Bull,
Kelli McClusky, ‘Ofa Fotu, Renae Coles, Kate Nelson, pvi collective, Jarrad Seng, Joel Krause

PARTNERS
DADAA, STRUT, Murdoch University, PVI Collective, Perth Roller Derby & WA Roller Derby

With special thanks to Justin Mannolini from Gresham Advisory Partners, Lisa Schrieber and Paola Anselmi from the City of Perth.
"On behalf of MPAC and our staff I would like to comment that the experience with DEM SET in Mandurah was ... just ... wonderful! The level of engagement we achieved with our community, in particular the disability sector, through the work of our Community Liaison Officer Toni Davis was outstanding. The work of the team was inspirational - making a coherent range of silk purses out of our enthusiastic community practitioners, engaging with the public nature of our set here, and then incorporating all the opportunities that we and the weather threw at them. The end result was light and upbeat ...[with] a moving broodiness as the storm came through... Please pass on my sincere thanks to the team at Back to Back. In my view the Democratic Set should go to every regional performing arts centre in Australia!”

Guy Boyce Mandurah Performing Arts Centre
THE DEMOCRATIC SET, CASULA

22 – 26 October 2012
Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Casula, Sydney

26 October 2012
Public Screening

Casula is an extremely culturally diverse area of Sydney. Residents include Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanese, and Serbian newly arrived immigrants and significant islander and Vietnamese populations. The Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre is removed from the main area of town and this presents a big challenge in engaging the local community.

It was a real pleasure to collaborate with participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds. THE DEMOCRATIC SET, Casula had a focus on democracy, which reflected that Casula is home to so many communities who have experienced oppression.

DIRECTOR Tamara Searle
ENSEMBLE Sarah Mainwaring
PRODUCTION & LIGHTING Van Locker
VIDEOGRAPHER Peter Worland
MUSIC Mitch Sullivan, Leigh Perrett
COMMUNITY LIASON Claudia Chidiac, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Theatre Producer
TECHNICAL MANAGER Stephen Hawker, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre

PERFORMANCE GROUP COLLABORATORS and VIDEO PORTRAITS

PARTNERS
Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre

ADDITIONAL FILM SCREENINGS
THE DEMOCRATIC SET community residency process culminates in a public screening of the short film made by community members. Several DEMOCRATIC SET films were screened outside their community of origin in 2012:

THE DEMOCRATIC SET films from Perth, Darwin, Basel, Newcastle, Bristol & Geelong were screened in the Main Gallery of Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA) from 8 September to 21 October 2012

THE DEMOCRATIC SET films from Tennant Creek & Darwin were screened at The Deckchair Cinema in Darwin on 6 September 2012

THE DEMOCRATIC SET Leuven, Darwin & Horsham films were screened by le Manège de Reims, Scène Nationale in Reims, France on 14 September 2012

THE DEMOCRATIC SET Castlemaine film was screened at the 2012 Australian Business Arts Foundation’s National Awards Ceremony on 23 October 2012

THE DEMOCRATIC SET Tennant Creek and Darwin films were profiled on ABC Arts Online

THE DEMOCRATIC SET Melbourne film was screened 22 September at the Other Film Festival at Arts House in North Melbourne
THE DEMOCRATIC SET has evolved into an ideal form of intensive community engagement. Its parameters are tightly defined and accessible. Participants are invited to offer a short 10-second performance, which is captured on video on a minimal film set. The collected portraits and performance are then edited to create a constant flow of short performance, a portrait of a community, made in collaboration with Back to Back Theatre.

In 2012, Back to Back launched THE DEMOCRATIC SET microsite – a map of the world with a link to every DEMOCRATIC SET film that has been made to date (with more coming for the future). From Aarhus in Denmark, to Tennant Creek in Australia, the films are both widely divergent and universal glimpses of the communities we worked with to create them.

“THE DEMOCRATIC SET in Hobart was somehow about politics and language. In Launceston it was about body and movement and Perth, artists and objects. Each was, in its way, a most perfect reflection of a particular time, space and place on earth. From concept, through process to product, DEM SET is a perfectly calibrated container for all of our good / bad, pretty / ugly, right / wrong, big / small, sad / happy, slight / deep ideas and ways and moments and histories and subjectivities and objectivities. It can absolutely and profoundly contain all of us. A rare and splendid beast.” Becky Hilton, one of the DEMOCRATIC SET National Tour Directors
THEATRE OF SPEED, GEELONG

19 January – 14 December 2012
Back to Back Theatre Studio, Geelong

Public Showings

RECORD HOLDER Jason Maling, Sandra Parker, Madeleine Flynn & Tim Humphries
MERMAID James Pratt

THEATRE OF SPEED has a focus on contemporary theatrical exploration and THEATRE OF SPEED members (many of whom have worked together for more than five years) are highly skilled in improvisation, devising and performance.

In 2012, 14 actors worked with guest artists renowned for their experimental practice, for one to eight weeks. The laboratory style format provided participants with the skills to explore multiple art forms, and offered guest artists space, performers and the opportunity to explore an idea.

The program was curated and managed by Artistic Associate Marcia Ferguson, then Tamara Searle with support from Leanne Stein.

THEATRE OF SPEED PROGRAM 2012

25 January Directing with Marcia Ferguson
1 February Technical Elements with Marcia Ferguson & Van Locker
8–22 February RECORD HOLDER with Jason Maling
7–21 March Listening (Sound) with Madeleine Flynn & Tim Humphries
28 March–18 April Choreography with Sandra Parker
2–9 May Movement with Jodee Mundy
16–23 May Urban Stories with Jodee Mundy
30 May Movement with Jodee Mundy
6–13 June Listening (Sound) with Madeleine Flynn & Tim Humphries
27 June–4 July Dan Giovanni
18 July–12 September MERMAID with James Pratt
26 September Open workshop with Tamara Searle
10 October–5 December MERMAID with James Pratt
12 December Dreaming session with Tamara Searle

PHOTO: Marcia Ferguson
Working with Director James Pratt over a 14-week period, the THEATRE OF SPEED ensemble devised scenes based on the original narrative of Hans Christian Anderson’s *THE LITTLE MERMAID*. These scenes were then moulded into a coherent narrative arch that was made into the final 60 minute showing on 5 December.

Anderson’s *THE LITTLE MERMAID* is a complex story with themes about family, siblings and personal development just to name a few. It was a challenge to focus on one theme without excluding the others. James deliberately chose a simple form of theatrical expression to tell this involved story.

THEATRE OF SPEEDers were once again skillful and dedicated in the devising of the material that eventually became the show. Their commitment to remembering a quite complex theatrical structure was amazing. One of the challenges of having such a large ensemble, was providing enough time and space for everyone to create and then perform what they had made.

**DIRECTOR** James Pratt  
**COMPOSER** Josephine Lange  
**COSTUME** Shio Otani  
**LIGHTING** Pat Scadon  
**COMMUNITY SUPPORT** Leanne Stein

**THEATRE OF SPEED Participants**  
Phoebe Baker, Laura Berrisford, Robert Croft, Mark Deans, Chris Hansen, Nicki Holland, Simon Laherty, James Lewis, Sarah Mainwaring, Polly Munday, Scott Price, Tamika Simpson, Brian Tilley, Jessica Walker

THEATRE OF SPEED also opened its doors to actors with disabilities new to working in contemporary theatre practice. John, Corey Britten and Kristen Gled from Karingal attended the workshop as well as observer Mark Pettet, who works at the Christie Centre in Ballarat.

*With special thanks to Luke Gleeson of Courthouse Arts.*

“I dream of plays where I play strong characters, super-heroes, like with Jodee Mundee.” Phoebe

“I have worked on shows that are like messages to other people, tell stories.” Sarah

“Mirror, look at me, look back. Theatre is a mirror to look at things. I like doing characters.” Laura

“Theatre of Speed is like a gay party. I like sharing things with my friends here, like cake. Celebrate your family.” James

“It’s been a magical year. I have enjoyed every moment of it.” Chris
In its 25-year history, Back to Back has forged its own unique relationship to theatre, developing an original, distinctive artistic voice and a working process that supports its ensemble of actors with intellectual disabilities as its creative core. We highlight the unique use of technology that evolves and extends theatrical form as a means to connect with new audiences. This aesthetic positions us as an ambassador for contemporary and experimental Australian theatre, and substantially re-thinks the experience of theatre in the contemporary world.

The company extends support to the arts and disability sectors in a number of ways. In 2012, as ever, Back to Back opened our doors to secondments from secondary schools, visitors, researchers and mentored several artists throughout the course of the year.

Advice
Back to Back Theatre receives weekly requests for advice – in the areas of service, artistic practice, management, marketing, administration, touring and strategic planning – and seeks to actively respond to all such requests for support. Inquiries come from members of our community, from people with disabilities, from their family members and carers, and from peer arts and disability organisations.

Secondments / Attachments / Observers
Each year Back to Back opens our door to a wide variety of artists and students from a range of disciplines.

Katherine Brach, Darcy Whitsed, Cameron Birch, Augustin Mileson joined us on **HELL HOUSE** on secondment from the Diploma of Theatre Arts at Swinburne University of Technology.

Emerging choreographer Leah Laudau observed the work of the company during the creative development of **LASER BEAK MAN**.

“During the secondment, I was able to sit in on rehearsals and contribute to the improvisations and exercises that the ensemble was doing during the creative development of **LASER BEAK MAN**. The cartoonist, Tim Sharp and his mother Judy were also in the rehearsal space. I was struck by how close the ensemble was – many good friends, some tensions, some romantic relationships – and how this was all used by Bruce in the making of the work. It was highly valuable to me, as a maker, to have such open access. The ensemble is unique because of their abilities, disabilities, personalities and histories. All of this was taken into account – respected, openly discussed and used to make **LASER BEAK MAN**.

I highly enjoyed my time at Back to Back and look forward to being involved with future developments and **THEATRE OF SPEED**. Finally – more than once, I talked with the ensemble members about times they had been treated badly by society. Stories of bullying, abuse, discrimination and neglect. In these times, they often came straight to the theatre space, seeking a safe, trusted environment where they know they are valued and respected. In this sense, I realised how vital a space like B2B is. More than a job, more than making theatre, more than making art: it is home.”

Leah Laudau
Research
Each year Back to Back participates, is respondent to, and the subject of academic research and sectoral enquiry. In 2012 this included:
Theron Schmidt, King’s College, London “Acting, disabled: Back to Back Theatre and the politics of appearance”
Josephine Machon “Bruce Gladwin of Back To Back Theatre: the intimate (im)mediacy of sound” from “Immersive Theatres”, published by Palgrave Macmillan
Dr Caroline Ellison, “Creating a Life” Disability and Community Inclusion Unit, Flinders University
George Catsis, PhD candidate “Spreading the Word” – (performance tools and techniques of persuasion of Christian Fundamentalists. Creative Practices, Creative Economy (CPCE), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), University of Technology Sydney (UTS)
Paul Murnane and Stephen Penny - “Research on Operational Funding Models in the NFP Sector”
Good Foundations
Judy Morton, Arts Victoria “Economic Impact of Victorian Cultural Sector”
Kalissa Anna Alexeyeff, McArthur Research Fellow, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne
Deborah Pollard, PhD candidate, University of Wollongong
Matt Hargrave, PhD candidate, Senior Lecturer, Drama & Applied Theatre, Department of Arts, University of Northumbria, Newcastle UK

Networks & Industry Events
Back to Back takes responsibility for developing ‘culture’ more broadly. We do this by being active participants in our sector. This includes:
Theatre Network Victoria Executive Producer Alice Nash, served as Deputy Chair
Disability Access Network of Geelong (DANG) Development Manager Pauline Cady, co-convened with Melinda Flood of Department of Human Services, Geelong Region
Arts & Disability Access Network (ADAN) General Manager Jaclyn Booton, attended throughout the year.

We also connected with peers and networks via:
Cranlana Leadership Colloquium Artistic Director Bruce Gladwin, attended 12 – 16 November 2012 at Cranlana House, Melbourne. Cranlana is a joint initiative of The Myer Foundation and John Curtin University
Greening Our Performance Marketing Manager Ebony Bott, attended 18 July 2012, Melbourne
Informal European Theatre Meeting (IETM) Spring Plenary – Alice Nash attended 29 – 31 March 2012, Copenhagen
G21 Leaders for Geelong – Bruce Gladwin presented to emerging leaders in Geelong on 19 April 2012 as part of their annual Arts Leaders session
Performance Studies International Annual Conference – Alice Nash presented “Back to Back Theatre’s GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH: politics, representation and response” 30 June 2012 with Richard Gough (Centre for Performance Research, Wales) Helena Grehan (Murdoch University, Perth) (in absentia) and Peter Eckersall (University of Melbourne) in Leeds, UK
Practice in Motion – 11 September - 12 December 2012 – showcased the contribution and creative processes of emerging and established Australian artists with disability, both solo artists and collectives working across a variety of art forms including dance, theatre, music, visual arts and interdisciplinary practices. The exhibition was produced by the Australia Council for the Arts in partnership with Accessible Arts and curated by Jennifer Stockins. Exhibiting artists include Georgia Cranko, Peter Hughes, Huw Lewis, Joceline Lee, Back to Back Theatre, Restless Dance Theatre, Amplified Elephants and Rudely Interrupted
Storylab Workshop – a six-day laboratory with leading Australian arts practitioners and thinkers, explored cross-cultural and cross-art form storytelling practices. Its aim was to introduce different processes of making to artists and to introduce different voices to Griffin Theatre Company. The workshop was held at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. Bruce Gladwin led an extended workshop on 7 November 2012.

The 7arakat Conference was held over two days in November. Presented by La Trobe University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the conference explored practice, research and advocacy in the performing arts with a particular focus on Palestinian Theatre, Arab/Australian Theatre, and Applied Theatre with refugee / migrant groups. Bruce Gladwin, Scott Price and Brian Tilley spoke about THE DEMOCRATIC SET process, (including a screening of THE DEMOCRATIC SET, Melbourne) in the ‘Performance Provocations’ segment on 2 November 2012.

SUSTAINABILITY

Archive
The Geelong Heritage Centre, another jewel in the Geelong Arts Precinct, is finally slated for redevelopment. Consequently, Back to Back will not be transferring any more of our collection to the Centre until after the building works are complete. Efforts on the archive in 2012 have been concentrated on sorting, indexing and cataloguing our Photographic Collection. We intend to apply for funds in 2013 to digitise our most important photographic images and films on video.

Back to Back Studio
The company has settled comfortably into our new rehearsal and office space. We note with gratitude what a difference having our own space made to staging such a large-scale community project as HELL HOUSE. Already our new space is profoundly influencing the capacity and output of the company.

Back to Back Book
Work is beginning in earnest on the Back to Back Book, to be published by the Centre for Performance Research, Wales. The book is being edited by Peter Eckersall, University of Melbourne and Helena Grehan, Curtin University and is slated to be launched coinciding with the Malthouse premiere of LASER BEAK MAN in late 2013.

Board Review & Board Charter
A Board Charter was developed in 2012. It includes governance responsibilities, stewardship philosophy and approach. The Board engages in annual self review. The focus for the Board in 2014 – 2016 is centred around establishing connections to the Geelong business community, launching our Private Giving program and expanding our political influence.
Capacity Building
Throughout the year, Back to Back Theatre continued to work on increasing its long-term capacity. In 2012, Back to Back Theatre achieved a significant increase in our core funding for 2013 - 2015 from the Australia Council; an ongoing in-kind agreement for rental subsidy with the City of Greater Geelong; implementation of a CRM database; first draft of an integrated development plan which includes a Private Giving plan (to be rolled out mid 2013); and an organisational structure review – ongoing throughout 2013.

Back to Back began to understand how to make the most of change and its challenges, and confidently used an organisational structure review to revise our existing staff structure into a dynamic matrix of four interlinking teams.

The company has put ANZ Strategic Impact Project (SIP) funds to good use, successfully leveraging this funding to achieve some important goals. Most importantly the support from ANZ has amply demonstrated to government that an increased investment will deliver returns and that the three new positions that SIP funds have supported have proven invaluable in all areas of our work.

Company profile continues to increase: assisted in 2012 by winning the Australian Disability Enterprise Excellence Award, three Green Room Awards and a Helpmann Award for Best Australian Play for GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH.

Back to Back Theatre is grateful for the support of ANZ Trustess – via the Truby and Florence Williams Charitable Trust – for its Strategic Impact Project (SIP) funding, an incredible intervention in the life of the company 2011 – 2012.

Environmental Sustainability
Back to Back Theatre is keenly aware that climate change will have a direct impact on our planet and our industry and that we need to respond appropriately. In 2012, to cover carbon emissions from national and international flights, Back to Back invested in a program in Cambodia that builds cookstoves.

Back to Back Theatre encourages staff and artists collaborating to catch the train from Melbourne rather than driving. Melbourne staff commute via public transport almost 100% of the time.
FAREWELL

At the end of 2012 we farewelled Nicki Holland who retired from the ensemble after 15 years with Back to Back.

Nicki joined us in 1997 having worked previously with the Break of Day Players in Warrnambool. PETER PAN (with Arena Theatre Company) was her debut production with Back to Back Theatre. She performed in MR SEPTEMBER, BOOMTOWN, DRAG RACERS IN LOVE, MENTAL, DOG FARM, FISH MAN, INSIDE THE ANGEL HOUSE, MINOTAUR, POD in Geelong, Disability Maintenance Investment, FOOD COURT and FRANKENSTEIN. Nicki was a collaborator on THE DEMOCRATIC SET, FOOD COURT and GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD REICH. We miss her creativity, lovely energy and warm hugs at the Back to Back studio and offices, and say a big thank you for her immense contribution to the company.

HELP US PUNCH ABOVE OUR WEIGHT

Back to Back Theatre’s ensemble forms the creative backbone of our company. New works are created from the hearts and minds of this unique group of people who are perceived to have intellectual disabilities.

It takes time to make a new show and we invest heavily in artists and artistic process. Collectively we forge an inclusive path that allows all of the ensemble members to travel together with creative dignity. Our shows remain in repertoire for many years delivering enduring artistic and social influence.

Earned income from touring productions, support from philanthropic trusts and foundations, and government funding are vital to the company’s long-term sustainability, but as a registered charity Back to Back Theatre’s work would not be possible without the commitment of individuals whose collective donations are channeled directly towards new commissions and supporting our ensemble of actors.

Back to Back has been called Australia’s most important independent theatre company. If you would like to help us continue to punch above our weight, contact Alice Nash, Executive Producer by email pg@backtobacktheatre.com, call +61 3 5221 2029, or make a secure donation online at backtobacktheatre.com/donate.