

'21

ST MARTINS YOUTH

ARTS CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT





ST MARTINS

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St Martins acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Lands on which we work and live, The Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung Peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging as well as all First Nations Peoples of Australia and Torres Strait Islands.

We acknowledge that Sovereignty was never ceded and stand in solidarity with the First Peoples.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.



ST MARTINS

COMPANY VISION

♦

VISION

St Martins invests in artists, new ideas and beautiful artistic outcomes created in collaboration with children, presenting a rich and diverse program that expands its reach and audience whilst investing in local talents and stories.

As one of Australia's leading companies working with children, we produce **bold and disruptive theatre** made with children and teenagers for adult audiences. We run a unique inclusive performance **workshop program** that supports children aged 5–18 to develop their own creative worldview. Our performances and workshops ensure that children are equal owners of the creative process and are recognised as artists in their own right. Our **venue** continues to support the arts sector, nurturing young people and supporting both emerging artists, producers and companies, alongside established practitioners.

Over the past seven years, St Martins has implemented an ambitious artistic production strategy producing two or more new works per year that have achieved public and critical acclaim.

Within a disrupted world, we choose to lean into our artistry and bravery, ongoingly proposing new creations, new presentations and new concept tours for this era: a program of collaborations, partnerships and ventures. With works at various stages of life, St Martins fortifies its position within Victoria's arts ecology, proving its resilience, adaptability and necessity within these times.

We strive to be inclusive, civically minded and socially engaged, and to embody these tenets through all the actions of our company.

Photo top

*Hatched '21
Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé*



Photo bottom

*Escape Velocity 3
Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé*

Across the entire organisation we are driven by the values of:

- Children's Agency - Children are equal owners of the creative process and are recognised as artists in their own right.
- Questioning of Hierarchies - Our work examines power structures and turns them on their head.
- Inquiry - Our work exposes and challenges social assumptions, hypocrisies, taboos and inequalities.
- Quality - Our work is of world class standard and professionalism.

Our works have been presented in collaboration with Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Festival, Melbourne Fringe, Arts House, THE RABBLE, Abbotsford Convent, The Substation, Dark MoFo, Darwin Festival, Dance Massive, Junction Arts Festival, BIFEM, Minus18, Worawa Aboriginal College, TheatreWorks, and Castlemaine State Festival.

St Martins' *For The Ones Who Walk Away* was the winner of the 2017 Melbourne Fringe Best Live Art Award and 2018 Green Room Award for Design across four disciplines: lighting, set and costume, sound and video in the Contemporary and Experimental Category. In addition, our 2019 production *Balit Liwurruk: Strong Girl* received six Green Room Award nominations in the Independent Theatre Category, winning for Ensemble and Direction.



ST MARTINS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Elise Margow

Our initial hope that 2021 would be relatively free of COVID impacts was sorely tested throughout the year with multiple and lengthy lockdowns and restrictions that affected the arts sector in Victoria particularly severely.

St Martins was not immune from stifling COVID tentacles. Our team had to navigate their way through continued online workshops providing a light to young people experiencing mental stress while at the same time dealing with their own COVID-imposed work stresses and multiple disappointments. These disappointments included: keeping the venue dark but serviceable during lockdowns; lacking face-to-face interactions which impacted artistic input; and finally, towards the end of the year, being forced to postpone *Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again* to late 2022.

Despite the difficulty and stress, the resilient team at St Martins forged ahead through stormy waters.

Our Associate Director, Katrina Cornwell, worked her way around live theatre restrictions by conceiving and directing *Us* as an online production performed live online each night from the homes of the performers. This seamless production captured the magic of live performance through digital platforms and demonstrated the flexibility of the St Martins team to adapt quickly and flexibly when required.

Julie Blyth, our Venue and Operations Manager, worked continuously to keep the venue COVID-safe and accessible despite lockdowns.

We welcomed Thomas Caldwell as General Manager and Hayley Haynes as Workshop & Office Coordinator, both of whom accepted the various challenges facing the organisation, foreseen and unforeseen, and then forged full steam ahead. We were also

fortunate to have the steadying hand of Kirsty Ellem towards the latter part of 2021 assisting both the team and the Board reshape the St Martins strategy going forward.

A special note of thanks goes to Nadja Kostich whose exemplary leadership, loyalty and focus steered the St Martins ship away from numerous potential icebergs towards solid ground.

On the revenue front St Martins managed to steer reasonably well through COVID stormy waters thanks to the re-imagined digital workshops and the generous COVID-related grants from Creative Victoria. We also were fortunate to receive philanthropic support from generous donors and Councils.

In 2021 we farewelled Meaghan Bare from the Board.

On behalf of the Board, I thank the St Martins team and our workshop and inclusion artists who have weathered the COVID storm in an inspirational manner despite personal and professional hardships that were a daily part of 2021. Your resilience and loyalty have ensured the continued onward trajectory of St Martins.

While the loss of Federal government funding from 2020 is still a matter of grave concern, the positive and inspirational work of the St Martins team during 2021 has placed us in a strong position to deal with and overcome these impediments by continuing to build a strong company, providing a creative voice for children and teenagers in a sadly depleted youth arts environment.



ELISE MARGOW
Chair

EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORT

From Year 2020

FROM THE CEO AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In our 2020 Annual Report, I ended with deepest thanks to our staff, artists and funders but this year, this is how I must begin. We could not have dreamed that there existed a more challenging year than 2020, but here we are on the other side of 2021, having learned new skills, drawn on strengths we never knew we had, and invented new ways through, around and beyond a next-level breed of challenge! I am so proud of our team, who may be small in number, but colossal in stamina, heart, open mindedness, inclusivity, creativity, humour and the sheer art of human kindness. Much was achieved with these qualities at the core, which were also evident in our deepening relationships with our funders, supporters, our Board and of course the young people. Children and teenagers who had been through it, traversing massive uncertainties about their future, showed up in person when permitted, and online otherwise – staunch, raw, unassailably themselves. They brought tears of admiration to my eyes many times in their handling of adversity and their willingness to play, laugh and be truthful. Thank you to each young person and the parents and carers who stood behind them.

I want to name three areas where we excelled company-wide: **Artistic endeavour, innovation in reach, and dynamic recovery and advocacy** across the company and on behalf of youth arts.

Artistic endeavour integrated with inclusion seamlessly in *Escape Velocity*, our epic film and live performance project with trans and gender nonconforming young people and in partnership with Minus18. *Escape Velocity* culminated in grand style via the fulfilment of several key milestones in 2021: Filming and postproduction of *Phase 3*, a 4-minute celebratory film, that crowned the suite of seven already made in the previous three years. It was scripted, filmed, styled and composed in concert and collaboration with TGDNB (trans, gender diverse, non-binary) professional artists and our young *Escape Velocity* cohort, who had been growing and developing as artist collaborators throughout the project. We are proud to

have screened the entire suite of works on the big screen at Melbourne Queer Film Festival, as well as having sneak peeks at *Midsumma* earlier in the year.

Our beautiful work, *Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again* was postponed until 2022. Despite tremendous obstacles placed in our way by lockdowns and restrictions that prevented rehearsals and the intended performance of *Gene Tree* in 2021, the young people and our teams kept putting one foot in front of the other to valiantly create an extraordinary blueprint for our 2022 rehearsal and season. The excellence of this script, design and creative and logistic preparation now offers an inspiring foundation and springboard to reach for even greater artistic nuance, inclusion refinement, and logistic detail in order to bring the public a shining new work from St Martins in 2022.

Innovation in reach was exemplified by our celebrated digital performance *Us*, built on the immense learnings from our rapid mobilisation in reconfiguring our workshops program to digital in 2020, and also the successful presentation our *40th Birthday Performance* online in that year. *Us* was intentionally developed in 2020 for a 2021 digital season. Not as a substitute or default for a live performance, but as a bright and never-before-seen use of the Zoom technology. St Martins presented a deeply moving work that audiences could not experience live and made something bespoke for that medium, as directed by our Associate Director, Katrina Cornwell. We look forward to extending the opportunity to experience this work to national and international audiences.

Dynamic recovery, or in other words, turbo-charged resilience, was as much about our perseverance in facing the ongoing impacts of COVID across our three core ventures: of artworks, workshops and venue, as it was about activating and mobilising within the youth arts sector to urgently advocate for national championing of young people at this critical juncture. In the current environment, advocacy and the development of individual giving at St Martins look set to be embedded as

ongoing ventures for the company. Our venue also, usually host to back-to-back hires, felt the impact of being required to close its doors and then, once open, felt the anxiety, confusion, staffing loss and reduced funds of the sector. Creative Victoria ran a suite of workshops with us to look into the best use of our site and venue. Whilst they have not been able to fund a feasibility study for upgrade and renovation, we continue to improve the theatres within our means, in order to welcome and embrace independent artists, arts companies and emerging practitioners at a vulnerable time.

This array of achievements is all the more significant in that, concurrently, the impacts of lockdowns, the ramifications of the current devaluing of the arts, especially youth arts, and the nature of remote work, caused significant wellbeing staff challenges that saw some members leave the organisation. To that end, we warmly welcomed Thomas Caldwell as our General Manager, Hayley Haynes as our full-time Workshops and Office Coordinator and Kirsty Ellem, as our consulting Executive Strategist. The team that now forges ahead is clear, forward thinking and excited about the future.

We look forward to hosting you at our performances, workshops and venues in 2022.

NADJA KOSTICH

CEO and Artistic Director



Photo top

Us

*Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé*



Photo bottom

Hatched '21

*Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé*

ST MARTINS PEOPLE

St Martins acknowledges its intrepid, skilled, hard-working team and thanks each and every one of them for their contribution to the company. We have mentioned those we have welcomed in the Chair and Executive reports, and we also stand in gratitude to those that have moved on from the company in 2021: Paulius Andriuškevičius, Alex Matsoukas, Kerry O'Sullivan and Tom Middleditch. St Martins is stronger, wiser and more capable with all of your contributions.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ELISE MARGOW*Chairperson***STEVE BRADBY***Chair, Finance, Audit and Risk
Committee***NICOLE BUTLER***Chair, Governance and Nominations
Committee***ROBYNNE BERG***Chair, Marketing and Fundraising
Committee***KATH PAPAS****MEAGHAN BARE****ANNA PIDGEON****DANIEL TOBIAS**

STAFF

NADJA KOSTICH*Artistic Director & CEO***ALEX MATSOUKAS***Workshop & Office Coordinator
(Outgoing September 2021)***KIRSTY ELLEM***Interim Executive Consultant (Incoming
October 2021)***TOM MIDDLEDITCH***Inclusion Coordinator (Outgoing
December 2021)***KERRY O'SULLIVAN***Executive Director & Co-CEO (Outgoing
October 2021)***JASON CHEETHAM***Marketing Coordinator***THOMAS CALDWELL***General Manager***LAURA DU VÉ***Photographer***JULIE BLYTH***Venue and Operations Manager***PAULIUS ANDRIUŠKEVIČIUS***Fundraising and Philanthropy Coordinator
(Outgoing April 2021)***KATRINA CORNWELL***Associate Director***AIDA INNOCENTE***Bookkeeper***HAYLEY HAYNES***Workshop & Office Coordinator
(Incoming October 2021)*

ST MARTINS PEOPLE

WORKSHOP ARTISTS

FABIO MOTTA

JOANA PIRES

NICOLETTE FORTE

PHILIP PANDONGAN

ANYUOP DAU

RICHIE HALLAL

SEBASTIAN FOWLER

AMELIA DUCKER

ALICE QIN

OLIVIA BISHOP

BELLA OCTIGAN

DANIEL NEWELL

AHMARNYA PRICE

BROOKE MURRAY

AMARACHI OKOROM

AKWAL MAGEK

MARIA THEODORAKIS

MIRANDA MIDDLETON

ST MARTINS PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTERS

Philanthropy and Support

We acknowledge and thank all our funders across federal, state, and local governments, philanthropic supporters, and our private donors who in 2021 enabled our small yet mighty arts company to continue delivering high-quality art performances and services to the ones who need it the most: our children and young people. With the COVID-19 restrictions and numerous lockdowns, the year was awash with postponements, cancellations and rescheduling. Our funders and supporters have been extraordinary, understanding, patient and encouraging. We are grateful for every conversation and email that has not only allowed us to continue with each project, but also given rise to deeper bonds with our stakeholders.

In late 2021 we had an additional six months of funding approved by Creative Victoria, until they confirmed whether we would be successful in our submission for their new Creative Enterprise Program, which would fund our core operations for the next four years. We are immensely grateful for the support of Creative Victoria in 2021, specifically their Strategic Investment Plan, which assisted our organisation to continue operations and re-open, in between lockdowns and which mitigated some of the more severe impacts on us and our sector.

Sadly, 2021 was the final year of funding by the Australia Council for the Arts four-year program. We thank Australia Council for the Arts for the past four years, which has enabled us to fund our core operations and keep our incredible team employed in making beautiful, award-winning art, collaborating with children and teens across our workshop program and running our venue to support independent artists and companies. We are adamant about transforming this loss into a growth opportunity and have connected nationwide with sister youth arts companies to passionately advocate for our sector; are visioning new funding and donation pathways that champion the benefit of the arts for children; and reaffirm daily, our commitment to young people in the dreaming up of art with them, full of heart. *Escape Velocity*, one of St Martins' most ambitious projects to date, was supported by Creative Victoria's Future Makers for Change initiative. In addition, the Robert Salzer Foundation stepped in at a crucial time. Although the filming was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the grant enabled us to employ a gender nonconforming composer for the project. In 2021, the Phase 3 film of *Escape Velocity* was completed, reaching our diverse audiences across Australia, and for that, we thank the Foundation, which in the past six years has supported our work on four separate occasions.

ST MARTINS PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTERS

Philanthropy and Support (contd.)

St Martins' Outreach Workshops Program in Dandenong, St Albans and Prahran continued to be successfully run thanks to the funding we received. For the Dandenong and St Albans workshops we continued to receive triennial funding from the Crown Resorts and Packer Family Foundations Arts Education Initiative, and in addition we also received money from the Angior Family Foundation for both locations. We also received money from the William Angliss Charitable Fund for the Outreach Workshops program at both locations for 2021. We are joyful to have received our second triennial local government grant from the City of Stonnington funded St Martins @The Hub in Prahran. We have been bringing art to kids at risk there for nearly a decade now. The financial sustainability of these programs is crucial, and we are fortunate to be able to continue to provide our services to the vulnerable kids and young people in these three communities.

And although we were required to postpone our major production to 2022, we have multiple acknowledgements to our funders' flexibility regarding the rescheduling of our interdisciplinary project *Gene Tree. Listen. Now. Again*, which began development in 2020. We thank the Australia Council of the Arts, the City of Melbourne, the Thyne Reid Foundation, and the Besen Family Foundation, as well as the Robert Salzer Foundation for their flexibility and understanding.

We must mention our extraordinary partners: Minus18 for *Escape Velocity* and the Royal Botanic Gardens for *Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again*. We cannot say enough about the both of you. Each of your teams has been exemplary in your collaboration, your dedication to the project, the generous sharing of your expertise, your great humour in trying times, your friendship and your upholding of our mission to listen to, include and collaborate with young people. You are amazing!

Finally, we would not be able to be where we are without the generous support from the people who donate to our company every year through our fundraising campaigns, St Martins Village, and one-off donations. You are what keeps us going forward, exploring new frontiers, challenging ourselves, and bringing the highest quality arts experiences to our performers and audiences.

Not only has the philanthropic support throughout 2021 provided much-needed resources for the successful running of our programs and productions, but it sustained us with trust, strength, and hope during an extraordinary and challenging time. For that St Martins Youth Arts Centre and the wonderful children and young people that we serve day after day are extremely grateful. Thank you!



ST MARTINS ARTWORKS

In 2021, St Martins committed whole-heartedly to our collaborations with diverse young people, placing them in rehearsals rooms (online and in person) with professional artists to create robust, dynamic and forward-thinking artworks. In times of great upheaval, our creative practice remained a guiding light for the organisation, galvanising the company's energy around the stories and undiminishable creativity of children, young people and their families.

Across 2021 St Martins presented the final phase of our 3-year program *Escape Velocity*, the premiere of our live digital production *Us* and laid strong foundations for our large-scale immersive and site-specific work *Gene Tree. Listen. Now. Again.*





ST MARTINS ARTWORKS

Productions

ESCAPE VELOCITY



St Martins, in partnership with Minus18, funded by Creative Victoria's Future Makers for Change initiative, has created a multidisciplinary large-scale project, that has received more than 1.4 million views online to date. This art project takes a social justice lens to a series of provocative micro videos that promote the visibility and understanding of young people who are transgender and gender nonconforming.

The third and final phase of *Escape Velocity, We Are Who We Are*, saw trans and gender nonconforming artists work across the creative team. Nevo Zisin, Seth Geryon Suds, Alex Xand, Kian Hall and the entire TGDNB cohort collaborated to make the work as spectacular as it is.



Our extensive *Escape Velocity Impact Report* further details the excellence, rigour, cultural competency, community collaboration and successful partnership with Minus18 that St Martins nurtured and achieved throughout the years of this project.

***"Find where you're safe to be yourself and be free.
To laugh your funky laugh and let your voice ring loud.
Eventually, it will become your truth.
I choose to be
as openly queer and myself as possible,
explore expression shamelessly.
Sometimes you can only find yourself through expressing."***
- *We Are Who We Are, Phase 3, Escape Velocity, 2021*

We are thrilled that the *Escape Velocity* project completed its third and final phase with the making of a celebratory 4-minute short film. This was the eighth film in the suite. We were fortunate to offer a sneak peek of that film in a screening of the entire project for Midsumma at a large event in the Immigration Museum, hosted by Nevo Zisin. We also showed the final film in the Pride March Broadcast. Finally, we screened the full *Escape Velocity* work at the Melbourne Queer Film Festival, where our young cohort hosted a panel discussion for the audience. We are so proud of this stunning achievement, our young cohort's sheer talent and bravery in adverse circumstances and we hope for the longevity and ongoing sharing of these films across advocacy, education and artistic sectors.

Project Milestones and Achievements

Phase and Dates	Major Activities and Achievements	Key Outputs
Phase 1 November 2018 – August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of 3 short dramatic narrative films - Launch in person at the Mechanics Institute with panel and Q and A discussion and online via the Escape Velocity website and Escape Velocity Instagram and Facebook social media platforms - Nationwide broadcast on Channel 10s Morning Show with Kerry Anne Kennerley promoting the project and showing clips from the films 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 Short Films Created - 13 Transgender youth participants involved in creation of films - 1 Public Screening and Online Launch event - 18 volunteers assisted or performed in the productions - 55 paid artists contributed to the creation of the films - 100 Audience members at Live launch event - Online audience of 1 million at Launch event - 50,000 viewers during the Channel 10 broadcast
Phase 2 August 2019 – October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of four 3 min short documentary films with participants speaking to camera about lived experience - Interactive live performance of <i>Escape Velocity Walks the City</i> with lead GNC artist Rosana Cade for Future Echoes Festival at Arts Centre Melbourne with screening of films at performances and stand alone at ACM and on The Big Screen, Fed Square 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 short films created - 12 Transgender youth participants involved in creation of films - 12 volunteers assisted in the productions - 23 paid artists contributed to the creation of the films - 1 Live immersive, participatory performance - 2 Public Screenings and Online Launch events - 394 Audience members at Live events and launches - Online audience of 400,000 at online launches
Phase 3 February 2020 – November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interactive community participation event for Midsumma at Arts Centre Melbourne with (14 x 1 min) filmed interviews with GNC young people and their parents - Screening Escape Velocity films created in Phases 1 and 2 in an online Stonnington Youth event with panel and Q and A discussion - Nomination of Escape Velocity project in the GLOBE awards for Outstanding Community Advocacy - Creation of one 4 min short music video style film - Pre-launch of Phase 3 (1 x 4 min) in a sneak preview with looped screening of all Escape Velocity films for Midsumma at the Immigration Museum at large scale youth event - Screening and full launch of all films created through all three Phases of Escape Velocity at Melbourne Queer Film Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 short film created - 14 community films co-created with audience - 11 Transgender youth participants involved in creation of films - 21 paid artists contributed to the creation of the films - 1 public participatory live event and community films - 4 Public Screenings and 2 Online Launch events - 500 Audience members at Live events and launches - Online audience of 4700 at online launches

Escape Velocity Theory of Change



Project Strengths

- Innovation of the project premise and artistic excellence:** St Martins, in partnership with Minus18, created a two-year multidisciplinary large-scale project that promoted the visibility and worldview of young trans and gender non-conforming people. The videos have been shown in Federation Square, Arts Centre Melbourne on national television and beyond. Escape Velocity aimed to positively impact the mental well-being of trans young people by promoting pride and positive identification, and concurrently inviting empathy and alliance from the general public. Public space has been shown to provoke severe anxiety in trans young people, where they frequently experience micro and macro-aggressions.
- Impact of Social and traditional Media messaging and reach:** The project provoked robust dialogue as evidenced by comments, views and online statistics and was featured on radio, in newspapers and online. Project team were guests on national television, Studio 10, being interviewed on the 10 Network and our films shown.
- Community building and the Ethos of Inclusion and Respect:** A great deal of consideration went into creating a process that had non trans and trans people working together. We had a trans or gender non-conforming adult or youth worker from Minus18 present throughout. As the young people participating in the workshop continued to be consulted, listened to, invited into creative collaboration and discussion, the group began to take more ownership and contribute more ideas. They responded positively also to the inclusion of professional non-binary artists, such as Rosana Cade and Nevo Zisin, stating that the project has been one where they have felt deeply valued.
- Agile and flexible artistic and project leadership:** In adopting the ethos to listen, consult with and represent the voices of the young trans community, we equally had to remain open, flexible and agile in the structure of the project. We went into the work with an idea and an open mind and every workshop subsequently, every meeting and consultation then shaped the work from the ground up. We would not have done it any other way, although it was sometimes daunting to be so open. It meant letting go of rigid expectations in favour of community connection. It meant that artistic 'goals' needed to be superseded by the artistry that arose from the specific experiences of the young participants. It meant on a planning and budgeting level that the team had to respond to the emerging artistic direction and that deadlines and budget targets needed to be 'softer.' We are thrilled with the results of this way of working.

“I really think it feels like you didn’t tell our stories. You supported us to tell our stories. And that is a huge difference and really hard to actually achieve that.”

- Participant

“It is one of the most progressive things I’ve ever been a part of. I’m extremely thankful to, to St Martins and Minus 18 for allowing me to be a part of this process. I’ve seen the youth put all they have into this project.”

- Youth worker on Escape Velocity

“Actually really listening and understanding when we were ok with things and weren’t... the level of empathy that I have never received in any professional environment, ever. It was just amazing.”

- Participant



Photo right

Us
Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé



“I really loved getting to do my first show with daddy. I feel like mine and daddy's relationship got closer. Also learning more about my ancestors and things like that. I got to show everyone my shark necklace. I got to be myself and learn more about my culture and ancestors, and about how lucky I am to be a part of that culture.”

- Raelah, Us Participant, 8 years old.



Photo top

Us
Image Credit:
Pia Johnson

Photo bottom

Us
Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé



Productions

US.

Us was conceived of during the lockdown of 2020 as a bespoke live, digital performance that pushed the boundaries of online performance, using the emergent technology of Zoom. With computers, phones and selfie sticks the work was performed live online each night by four different families across Melbourne in living rooms, bathrooms and bunk beds.

Us invited audience members from around the world into the everyday relationship of parent and child, capturing the beautiful, frustrating, messy, ridiculous, loving moments that usually go unseen and are left out of grand narratives. Whilst going about their evening cooking, playing or cleaning out a sock drawer, each pair told their personal history, tracing the exact moments that led them to being in a shared moment across cyberspace with the audience. Moment of theatrical magic erupted from within the family home as the inner world, hopes and fears of performers were revealed.



Us was a celebration of the mundane and a love-letter to all the small moments made large through our memory. Scripted by playwright Morgan Rose in collaboration with the performers and directed by Associate Director Katrina Cornwell, *Us* was well received by the industry and recognised as leading the field of digital performance.

"Skilfully designed, scripted and directed with online audiences in mind."

★★★★★ Theatre People

"*Us* reminds us that every one of us - as ordinary and small as we might feel (especially in lockdowns) - is an important part of the history and future and story of the world. It reminds us too, that we need to keep our stories and the stories of the people around us alive so that we know where and when and who we are in our darkest and most alone moments."

★★★★★ What Did She Think

After a successful premiere season in 2021, this digital production is ready to tour to audiences nationally and internationally.

Photo top

Us
Image Credit:
Pia Johnson

POSTPONED PRODUCTION DUE TO COVID RESTRICTIONS – GENE TREE: LISTEN. NOW. AGAIN

Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again is being made with and in the Royal Botanic Gardens. In development for four years, this work of immense richness speaks to the way our collaborating young people address a macro global issue in a small, beautiful and achievable way. Beyond climate activism, the young people seek to unearth their own and audiences' relationships with nature and the earth. They seek to go to a root cause of inaction - humans' disconnect with nature - and speak to that simply, and directly.

“Did you know every place has a sound?

This evening, we invite you to listen to the sound of this place.

When I listen I like to be very quiet and peaceful and disappear.

When I listen I like to use my whole body. My feet, my fingers, my eyes and of course my ears.

We invite you to embrace silence.

Silence isn't the absence of something but the presence of everything.

Silence isn't empty, it's full of sound you just haven't heard yet.”

- Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again, 2021 Draft Script Excerpt

With a completed draft of the script and design concept, St Martins is poised to bring this beautiful concept to life for audiences in November 2022.



Photo bottom

*Gene Tree: Listen.
Now. Again
Image Credit:
Michael Carmody*



“

St Martins teaches you that everything can be turned into something beautiful. It's a place where you are not pressured to be anything but yourself. You're not even pressured to be a conventional actor, despite the fact it is a youth theatre. St Martins overall, teaches you to be you, and that it's okay being you.

Participant

Theatre Workshops by St Martins

Photo

**Congress
Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé**

WORKSHOPS PROGRAM

Theatre Workshops by St Martins

TERM PROGRAMS

In 2021 our workshop program continued to bend and flex as we navigated the complex COVID landscape, shifting from on site, to online and back on site again. The theme of the 'Child and the System' was examined throughout the year, with young people of all ages asked to identify, explore and subvert the system of power in their lives. This theme offered opportunities for creating new worlds and finding parody within their own, with some memorable comedic characterisations of school teachers for our end of term showings!

In Term 1, young people and workshop artists alike were thrilled to be back in person together. With COVID safety guidelines in place, we returned to our South Yarra home and northside base at Northcote High School where we were able to complete an uninterrupted term.

From May onwards, with the surge in COVID cases, workshops moved between in-person and digital, in line with Government regulations. Despite the unpredictability of the time, St Martins remained committed to delivering regular, weekly workshops which were often the highlight of our young peoples' week.

In Term 3, workshops continued to remain online for a sustained period of time due to Lockdown 6. This proved to be the most challenging term for young people and their mental health, resulting in a decline in participation. This flowed on into Term 4, where we commenced the term online with a 20% drop-off in enrolments. Whilst grateful for the digital offering, many fatigued participants opted to wait for a return to site.

Term 4 ended with a return to in-person workshops, just in time for our end-of year showings. For our teens, Cross-Age and Congress ensembles, this involved devising towards our end of year showcase *Hatched*.

We are so grateful to our team of dedicated artists whose unparalleled support for our young people during this time provided our program with the energy, creativity and comfort that was so needed. We are extremely proud that we could adapt our workshops and continue to provide an engaging and dynamic creative escape for our community.

"We can't thank you enough for these incredibly important workshops"

- Parent, Theatre Workshops by St Martins

"Thank you for giving our children a chance to sense and feel themselves in a safe, respectful, creative and inclusive environment. It DOES make a difference to their life. And to mine."

- Parent, Theatre Workshops by St Martins

WORKSHOPS PROGRAM

Theatre Workshops by St Martins

HATCHED - END OF YEAR OUTCOME FOR TEENS

Each year the workshop program culminates with *Hatched*, a suite of devised performances by the teen workshops, Cross-Age and Congress. On Saturday the 11th of December, *Hatched* took over the nooks and crannies of the St Martins site, presenting a promenade, outdoor and COVID-safe performance for family and friends. Young people, artists, parents and guardians were all delighted to end the year with an in-person performance.

CONGRESS

Congress is St Martins' **incubator ensemble**: a group of young people who exemplify St Martins' ethos of bravery, inclusivity, curiosity and kindness. Aged between 11 & 17, the group meets weekly to dive deep into conversation about the world and their place within it before moving their exploration onto the workshop floor. Built on a foundation of listening to what young people have to say, Congress is a think-tank for the company, a sounding board for thematic and formal ideas. At Congress everything is on the table: politics, world-events, sci-fi, feminism, myths, science, pop-culture and philosophy.

Congress is led by the company's Associate Director Katrina Cornwell, whose devising practice is driven by storytelling, verbatim text and ensemble-based movement. In Congress young people work in groups, pairs, trios and solos to discuss, debate, improvise, write, experiment wildly and create performances that reflect their ideas and opinions. Even when working as individuals there is always a feeling of being supported by the group and contributing to something being made together.

In 2021 Congress formed half of the core ensemble for our company work *Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again*. Congress rehearsed in the Royal Botanic Gardens and worked alongside Gene Tree artists Nadja Kostich, musician Elissa Goodrich and AV designer Michael Carmody to develop the work. Whilst in lockdown the group continued to rehearse online, refining and unpacking the script.

As part of *Hatched 2021*, Congress devised and performed, *Slow Growth*, which responded to cycles of nature, to honour their dedication to *Gene Tree* throughout the year.

Congress will resume rehearsals for *Gene Tree* in 2022.



Photo

Hatched '21
Image Credit:
Laura Du Vé

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Dandenong Primary School

St Martins' Dandenong Primary School Outreach Workshops program supported the children in traversing online workshops and *Gene Tree* rehearsals, along with unwavering support from their Principal and lead teacher. There was enthusiastic engagement from the young people who accessed the workshops online and skilled and inclusive artistic facilitation by the St Martins team.

Unfortunately, despite best efforts by the school, a number of families were not able to support their child to participate in either our workshops or online learning at all. Remote learning due to lockdowns highlighted the immense vulnerabilities in this demographic, with many unable to provide wifi, data, computers or a private room for their young person. In addition, the postponement of *Gene Tree* hit hard, as some of the children will move on to high school in 2022.

However, the children's exuberance won the day and those that able to attend until the end of term were in a good space and able to acknowledge their achievements in the challenging year.

St Albans North Primary School

In 2021 St Martins artists returned to St Albans to deliver afterschool workshops to children in Grades 4 to 6. We were met with renewed enthusiasm from the young people, with double the number of places offered signing up for the workshops! These were interrupted by COVID-19 in Term 2 and, due to a lack of technical resources at the school, workshops were not able to continue online. We are eager to return in person in 2022 and look forward to a time of consistent engagement that can best support the development of the children.

These much-loved workshops at St Albans are made possible with the support of The Crown Resorts and Packer Family Foundations Arts Education Initiative, The Angior Family Foundation and the William Angliss Charitable Trust.

St Martins at The Hub

St Martins has been running a weekly program at the Horace Petty Estate supported by a team of Youth Workers from Stonnington Youth Services since 2013 in an on-site venue called The Hub.

Every Tuesday afternoon, St Martins artists lead fun and creative workshops in a variety of artforms and activities including: theatre, music, dance, visual arts, puppet-making, body percussion, beatboxing, writing and storytelling. St Martins at The Hub is a safe space for young people from the Stonnington Housing Estate to express themselves, make friends and develop their confidence through collaboration and positive feedback.

In 2021, we bid farewell to artists Penny Harpham and Tariro Mavondo and welcomed long-time "Hubster" Phily Pandongan into the lead artist role. Supported by emerging playwright Amarachi Omokrom and actor Anyuop Dau the workshops resumed in person workshop through Term 1 and well into Term 2. As they were preparing for their first performance of the year, the workshops were again moved online due to government restrictions.

The team of artists, which expanded to include Richie Hallal and Seb Fowler, continued to offer online Zoom workshops throughout Terms 3 and 4. Whilst attendance was lower than in-person, many young people who were previously quieter, were able to shine in this online format, finding new confidence within the safety of their home space.

In Term 4, as restrictions eased, the team transformed their online improvisations to an in-person performance. The Hub ended the year with a performance of 'Hub News' that featured interviews with many surprising characters!

The Hub continues to be a beloved program at St Martins that supports young people to reclaim and re-imagine their space, step into the unknown

with growing confidence, try something creative and learn to work together in groups. We are blown away by the creativity and overflowing personality of these young people.



Photos

*The Hub
Image Credit:
Jason Cheetham*

WORKSHOP INITIATIVES

INCLUSION AND ACCESS PROGRAM

We continued to offer our Inclusion Scholarship program throughout 2021 to financially assist young people who face barriers to accessing the arts to participate in our workshops. Across the year 14 young people were supported to find connection, creativity and confidence in our programs.

According to one scholarship parent St Martins gives their child:

“The opportunity to develop ideas and experiences beyond the confines of his family’s experiences and a wonderful opportunity to show us, his parents, a deeper part of himself than he would normally choose not to share as he is a VERY private soul. Thank you for the opportunity, development and safe environment for [my child] to be who he really is.”

As with 2020, inclusion strategies focussed on supporting the mental health of young people as they navigated moving in and out of lockdown. Across our cohort we witnessed increased levels of anxiety around returning to in person workshops, especially whilst strict social distancing measures were in place, and increased instances of depression and apathy whilst in prolonged periods of isolation.

Inclusion Coordinator Tom Middleditch began work with Artistic Director Nadja Kostich on the inclusion plan for *Gene Tree. Listen. Now. Again.* This work will resume in 2022 to ensure that *Gene Tree* is accessible for diverse audiences.

St Martins farewelled Tom Middleditch in December 2021, who has taken positions with other prominent Melbourne organisations. We thank Tom for his dedication to the company and our young people over the past two years. His wisdom and inclusion expertise have left a lasting mark on the organisation and our community of young people and their parents and guardians.

Photo back

The Randall
Image Credit:
St Martins

ST MARTINS THE VENUE

Venue Hire and Usage

VENUE

Operating our multiple venue spaces for hire in 2021 continued to bring challenges to St Martins and Venue and Operations Manager, Julie Blyth, whose role involved overseeing COVID-19 OHS safety in and out of the four lockdowns during the year.

Across the Irene Mitchell Studio, Millswyn Street Hall and our Rehearsal Room, hirers remained cautious even when we came out of lockdowns, as density limits and the spectre of possible cancellations and postponements were prohibitive in an already stretched and fatigued independent sector. Companies also had in mind audiences' reduced appetite to venture into theatres.

On a positive note, we managed to improve a number of our spaces with the support of Creative Victoria COVID Strategic Investment Fund and feel proud of what we were able to achieve in this arena during the time we were shut down. Cleaning up, painting and making our venue, safer, refreshed and more inviting for future hirers and users was a productive use of what could have been a fallow time.

The Board and St Martins team worked with Creative Victoria in the latter part of the year to consider the development of options for the future. St Martins is currently running at reduced capacity on the site as the Randall Theatre requires significant investment to operate fully. This requires a significant partnership with the State Government, the owner of the St Martins site, to look at how to invest and realise the benefit of these dedicated theatre infrastructure resources for the performing arts and youth arts sectors particularly. We look forward to continuing these conversations with the Government in 2022.

ST MARTINS MARKETING

Imagining new futures

In 2021 the St Martins team conducted a deep dive into our core identity and messaging across Artworks, Workshops and Venues.

In working our way through the funding and COVID crisis terrains, we began looking into the ways we may be changing as a company, how we want to grow, what we want to say and how we tell that story.

Over the coming year, we hope to bring that messaging into all our communication tools, from our website, to our socials, through to our campaigns and the marketing of our productions. We are conscious of wanting to develop and grow our community of friends and supporters and are implementing the structures and processes company-wide in order to achieve that.

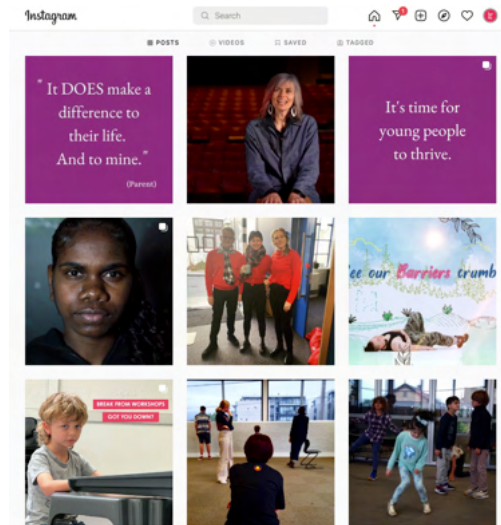
St Martins faces ongoing resourcing challenges in the marketing and content creation realms, so a lot of attention was paid during these discussions to imagining new, innovative approaches to content creation and marketing demands with limited resources.

As a result, the Marketing Coordinator position description has been re-imagined and will commence in a new and exciting capacity in early FY22.

These deep-dive discussions were all-of-company encompassing, involving all members of staff at different points throughout the process, the Board, and feedback from young people via Congress.

We are grateful to the dedication the team has shown throughout the process, thankful for everyone's insightful inputs, and thrilled about the outcomes.

We believe the world needs the voices of young people more than ever, and are committed to amplifying those voices far and wide.



ST MARTINS

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

While 2021 began promisingly, the ongoing COVID lockdowns throughout most of the year in Victoria adversely affected all income streams for St Martins. Venue hire and workshop fees income were significantly down, and our major theatrical production had to be rescheduled to 2022. We ended the year with a cautious and realistic – yet hopeful – eye on the future as we explore new funding opportunities and approaches in 2022 with the long-term goal of returning to pre-pandemic income levels.

STATEMENT OF SURPLUS OR DEFICIT AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
REVENUE		
Grant Income:		
Government	577,397	483,086
Philanthropic Trusts	47,750	30,000
Private Donations	5,032	14,923
Total Grant Income	630,179	528,009
Other Income	234,166	362,950
Maintenance Subsidy – Creative Victoria	56,110	70,378
Total Revenue	920,455	961,337
EXPENSES		
Administration	557,377	529,150
Production	250,480	200,164
Marketing and Sponsorship	24,292	22,279
Venue Expenses	43,648	27,888
Maintenance Expenses	94,667	71,057
	970,464	850,538
Surplus (deficit) for the year	(50,009)	110,799
Other comprehensive income:		
Net gain on revaluation of financial assets	-	-
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(50,009)	110,799
Total comprehensive income attributable to the members of the entity	(50,009)	110,799

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	414,654	518,608
Trade and Receivables	19,325	76,070
Other Current Assets	22,254	13,149
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	456,233	607,827
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	44,901	30,659
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	44,901	30,659
TOTAL ASSETS	501,134	638,486
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	100,904	71,782
Provisions	28,151	39,297
Other Liabilities	168,612	272,378
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	297,667	383,457
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	7,715	9,268
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	7,715	9,268
TOTAL LIABILITIES	305,382	392,725
NET ASSETS	195,752	245,761
EQUITY		
Retained earnings	195,752	245,761
TOTAL EQUITY	195,752	245,761

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

	Retained earnings	Total
	\$	\$
Balance as at 1 January 2020	134,962	134,962
Plus surplus attributable to members	110,799	110,799
Balance as at 31 December 2020	<u>245,761</u>	<u>245,761</u>
Less deficit attributable to members	(50,009)	(50,009)
Balance as at 31 December 2021	<u><u>195,752</u></u>	<u><u>195,752</u></u>

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from customers	946,731	1,036,498
Payment to suppliers and employees	(1,028,454)	(888,422)
Interest received	537	1,338
Net cash provided for operating activities	<u>(81,186)</u>	<u>149,414</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Payment for plant and equipment	(22,768)	(14,455)
Net cash provided for investing activities	<u>(22,768)</u>	<u>(14,455)</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	(103,954)	134,959
Cash at beginning of financial year	518,608	383,649
Cash at end of financial year	<u><u>414,654</u></u>	<u><u>518,608</u></u>

ST MARTINS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Partners and Funders

CORE FUNDING PARTNERS



Australian Government



Australia Council for the Arts



Creative Victoria

PROJECT PARTNERS

Escape Velocity:



Minus18



The Robert Salzer Foundation



Escape Velocity is supported by Creative Victoria's Future Maker's for Chane Initiative



Arts Centre Melbourne



Midsumma Festival

OUTREACH WORKSHOPS PROGRAM FUNDERS

Horace Petty Housing Estate:



City of Stonnington

Dandenong & St Albans:



Angior Family Foundation



Crown Resorts Foundation



Packer Family Foundation



The William Angliss Charitable Fund

ST MARTINS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Partners and Funders

DONORS

Throughout 2021 we were lucky enough to garner donations from generous individuals. Their names are:

SIMON BRADFORD

SHARON HAREGREAVES

K. BARETT

DAVID NGUYEN

KIM DURBAN

NARDA SHANLEY

HELEN O'SULLIVAN

BEN BEATH

MICHELLE LEE

ELLIE HOCART

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JAMES BUICK

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EMILY POTTER

BETH DOLAN

DIANA AKKERMAN



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