



**ST
MARTINS
YOUTH
ARTS
CENTRE**

**2023
ANNUAL
REPORT**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

St Martins acknowledges the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and create. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, as well as all First Nations people.

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COMPANY VISION

Established in 1980, St Martins' mission is to invest in artists, new ideas and beautiful artistic outcomes created in collaboration with children.

Through the presentation of a rich and diverse program of performance works, the delivery of inclusive workshops for young people, and by providing an exciting place to explore creativity for young people, presenters, and audiences.

St Martins has an integral role in the Victorian artistic sector in training, supporting, and collaborating with young artists who go on to emerge as professional artists and arts workers in the industry. In addition, participation in our workshops and productions provides a creative framework that shapes current and future audiences and lovers of the arts, and inspires creative thinkers, leaders, and innovators in any field.

St Martins is an award-winning company. Our last three major public works have all won premier industry awards.

In the next period we are seeking to build key relationships that consolidate the company, allow us to invest in our people and the strength of the company to generate the impact through growing our relationships. Our strength in inclusive practice has made us a haven for young people during and post the pandemic.

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

OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:



CREATIVE PROGRAM:

Making exceptional artworks in a collaboration between young people and professional artists for adult and intergenerational audiences.



PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE HUB:

Operating an economically sustainable hub for independent arts and community with our gathering, rehearsal, and performance spaces.



WORKSHOPS PROGRAM:

Providing inspirational creative workshops for 5-18-year-old young people across multiple sites in Melbourne that offer them a safe, inclusive place from which to imagine, grow, make art, and perform.





What amazing and beautiful work this is. Moving, poetic, immersive, thoughtful, funny and visually stunning.

- Senior arts worker

ARTISTIC VISION

St Martins works with young people as artistic collaborators, bringing them together with exceptional artists to look both deep within and without. Sometimes boldly, sometimes delicately, our work teases out new narratives, new directions, and new forms, from being on the ground with our navigators, the young people, who take us into uncharted territories.

Our projects have shown young people's voices act as a barometer for global issues, reflecting dreams, anxieties, hopes and fears. Our young people open up a common ground for dialogues with multigenerational audiences, to bring fresh perspectives to terrains traditionally riddled with assumptions and misconceptions.

Our major works over the past eight years show an extraordinary depth and bravery in both theme and form. They share the achievement of some 16 award nominations, receiving five Green Room Awards and one Melbourne Fringe Live Art Award between them.

St Martins now embarks on the next year and beyond at the intersection of unfathomable global change, technological advancement and the death and birth of social and political systems – a seeming upending of how we have lived and known ourselves. At this junction, young people are charged with creating a new world, with its opposing tensions and rapid shifts, and as we deepen our inquiry into what it is to be a child, we also embolden our company to support young people's navigation.

St Martins is dedicated to learn, grow, adapt, and evolve so we can be a trusted place where our young people can safely express and guide us through their valleys and spirals of loss, anger, and grief, into reflection, action, and discovery, to reveal unexplored vistas and new landscapes. Ones that truly arise from them.

We are so proud to listen, to stand strong and tall with our young people, and to act with courage as required. They have proven their sophistication, their ability to articulate, their bravery, boldness, and vulnerability.

We trust our relationship with them. We are excited by their voices and our position to shine a light on their inner worlds. St Martins is putting its roots deeper down, right here while at the same time reaching to the sky.

MESSAGE FROM CHAIR

// Our dedicated team lift St Martins to new heights in 2023. This can be observed by the expansion of our reach in workshop programs and venue hire while still producing professional original works in collaboration with children and teenagers.

Throughout the year St Martins team together with the Board also worked tirelessly to improve our ability to raise funds to finance St Martins activities, continually looking to the future for new opportunities and growth while consolidating what we do best.

- **Elise Margow**, Chair.

LOOKING FORWARD

St Martins has the spirit, resilience and focus to progress towards our financial targets with our new fundraising strategies.

We ask you to join us on the journey as your continued loyalty and belief in us motivates the team to move onwards and upwards.

AWARDS

1

Best Live Art Award Melbourne Fringe

5

Green Room Awards

11

Green Room Award nominations

1

GLOBE Award nomination for Outstanding Community Advocacy

Workshops

The success of St Martins artistic productions is underpinned by our world class workshop programs that welcome children and teenagers from diverse backgrounds. In 2023 the number of workshop participants increased. Thanks to Hayley Haynes and Alice Qin for ensuring the growth and development of these workshops.

Venues

Our venues, expertly managed by Julie Blyth, exceeded projections when it came to venue hire. New equipment has been installed in the Irene Mitchell studio in 2023 which is a welcome addition to improving the venue hirer experience. We welcomed over 17,000 people through our doors during 2023.

Funding

Unfortunately, despite St Martins exceptional work and outcomes, we are battling financially without Federal Arts funding. While we are very grateful to Creative Victoria to have been included in the 2022-2025 Creative Enterprises Funding Program, this cannot make up the gap left by the lack of Federal funding.

St Martins has been working round the clock trying to make up this gap and has introduced new and innovative ways of fundraising. This has already resulted in a major increase in donor giving over 2023. We are grateful to our long-term donors who have stepped up to the plate as well as newly loyal members to our donor family. While we had budgeted for a deficit for 2023, thanks to the stellar work of Nadja Kostich and Thomas Caldwell the deficit was less than projected and was adequately covered by our reserves. Due to their work we have budgeted for a small surplus in 2024.

Art

During 2023 our award-winning artistic team nurtured an original production, The Word, which will be premiered in May 2024 at Abbotsford Convent. Uniquely St Martins develops new works by using the ideas and concepts created by our workshop participants to inform the final professional work. This enables the production team to give voice to the ideas of children and teenagers while still creating professional outcomes admired by audiences and critics alike.

The team have also been working on a national tour of Gene Tree and potentially other St Martins works. We look forward to a future where audiences outside of Melbourne can enjoy St Martins' productions.

Hellos, Goodbyes and Thanks

In 2023 we farewelled James Dipnall from the role of Presenter Services Coordinator and warmly welcomed Shayne Cummin as our new Presenter Services Coordinator. We sincerely thank James for making his mark on the company and we are delighted he has continued to come back to St Martins to do the occasional front of house shift as part of our venues team.

Thank you to the St Martins team who have proven that no matter the stormy waters they will put their shoulder to wheel and keep an even keel regardless of the tides.

Thank you, Thomas Caldwell who stepped up to the plate in difficult times and worked to transform St Martins' finances and budgets while at the same time focussing on the future and management of St Martins.

A special note of thanks goes to Nadja Kostich for her continued exemplary leadership, loyalty, focus and willingness to take on so many responsibilities not usually associated with Artistic Directors.

EXECUTIVE REPORT

St Martins is a humming, thriving, living entity. It is overflowing with the creative ideas and excited voices of young people, whirring with the energy of the core team fulfilling our mission and flying from task to task, it is trembling with the anticipation of the many shows independent artists stage here and bursting with growth as artists shape our new works alongside children.

- **Nadja Kostich**,
Artistic Director and CEO.

Over this year thousands have passed through our doors, theatres, and beloved spaces. Some are new friends; some are well-known ones. We welcome you all.

I have never been prouder of our team, our creations, our young people, our artists, and our community than in this past most challenging year. St Martins' people dissolved obstacles, leapt over barriers, and rose to challenges to cap 2023 in triumph.

We developed The Word, our most ambitious project yet. The scope of theme, creative vision, methodology and diversity of team combined has been an immense and electrifying artistic challenge. Successfully performing the development showing at Abbotsford Convent in September 2023 was the springboard into rehearsals of this, St Martins major production, to be performed in May 2024.

We nurtured the creativity of hundreds of children and young people across more than 17 workshops every week totalling almost 900 workshop experiences across the year.

Our inboxes are burgeoning with heartfelt testimonials about the positive impacts St Martins children and their families receive which further fuels our artists and team to learn, improve and be at our best.

We grew our philanthropic support exponentially and now gratefully include the Betty Amsden Foundation and The Gailey Lazarus Trust amongst our supporters. What a joy it has been to connect with such generosity.

We planted a garden led by the Heart Gardening Project so we can become part of the Melbourne Pollinator Corridor, with dozens of amazing volunteers transforming our backyard. Come and visit us, eat your lunch under Irene Mitchell's peppercorn tree, feed the birds and watch the bees land in the 'bee hotels' nestled in the garden.

We connected to our neighbours and our donors, building our relationships with locals throughout the year, and especially when we hosted our 'thank you' afternoon tea, sharing creative passions and hatching ideas for St Martins' future.

We sowed artistic ideas, relationships and conversations with new artists, partners, and organisations, which we will sift through for those that will bear fruit in the coming years. Watch this space, exciting projects are in the works.

We received two Green Room Awards and had the honour of performing at the 2023 Ceremony. Our three nominations converted into the Best Production and Best Composition awards. It is hard to describe our joy, especially when two young people stepped up to make speeches to adult artists and received thunderous applause. The confidence, growth, sense of belonging and achievement this has brought our young people is immeasurable.

We released a Case for Support. With the support of Besen and our new partner, The Phil Taylor Foundation, we produced this long awaited, shiny brochure that outlines for future supporters all the reasons to ensure St Martins' future. We are now putting the finishing touches on a re-crafted strategic plan that will usher St Martins into that future, taking into account these complex times.

We oversaw the new Young Changemakers program and welcomed a new school, the wonderful Stevensville, farewelling our beautiful young people at St Alban's North. We defeated our budget deficit, turning it around to forecast a surplus in 2024! An amazing feat. We welcomed new staff member Shayne Cummin and farewelled James Dipnall in our venue team.

In the final days of the 2023 working year, we were momentarily stopped in our tracks by the news that this monumental string of achievements was not enough to receive four-year support from Creative Australia. It shocked us, especially in the context of the paucity of organisations across Victoria who are federally funded to support young people to make theatre. Never has there been a more critical time to get behind children and teenagers in the arts, to listen to what they have to say, how they say it, what is important to them and glean new perspectives on our world. Arguably, our various governments and its agencies failed its children in recent years, and it is the young people who are paying for it now. We are seeing it firsthand in our workshops. We have never dealt with as much anxiety and overwhelm, starting so early. Inclusion requirements have sharply risen. Children need all the support to develop now. The role of the arts is widely documented as building, not just creativity, but social and emotional literacies, confidence, and connection. Now is the time to not only support St Martins but to make sure there are many more companies like ours nurturing future generations of artists, arts lovers, audiences and creative thinkers and leaders in our society.

Deepest thanks to all our supporters, families, artists, staff, community and most importantly, always, our young people.



ST MARTINS PEOPLE

St Martins acknowledges its bold, talented, dedicated team and thanks all of them for their contribution to the company.

Our Board

Elise Margow – Chairperson

Steve Bradby – Deputy chairperson;
Chair, Finance, Audit and Risk
Committee

Kath Papas

Arjun Ravi

Kudzai Mhishi

Our Staff

Nadja Kostich – Artistic Director / CEO

Thomas Caldwell – General Manager

Julie Blyth – Venue and
Operations Manager

Hayley Haynes – Workshops and
Engagement Coordinator

Alice Qin – Artistic Associate

Agnieszka Majer – Marketing and
Development Coordinator

James Dipnall – Presenter Services
Coordinator (outgoing May 2023)

Shayne Cummin – Presenter Services
Coordinator (incoming May 2023)

Aida Innocente – Finance Officer

Kirsty Ellem – Strategic Consultant
(outgoing December 2023)

Our Workshop Artists

Fabio Motta

Joana Pires

Nicolette Forte

Richie Hallal

Sebastian Fowler

Amelia Ducker

Ahmarnya Price

Brooke Murray

Olivia Bishop

Ibo Halil Halocoglu

Ben Goss

Sarah Fitzgerald

Tsungirai Wachenuka

Lyndsay Marsden

Carol Smith



“WHEN WE GET TOGETHER WE COME UP WITH BIG IDEAS.”

YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS PARTICIPANT
9 YEARS OLD

PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTERS

St Martins' output is exceptional and substantial, and we have major ambitions to do even more.

But we cannot do it alone. To achieve our goals, we will require the help and support of our community and corporate donors.

Our Goal

Our Goal is to provide more than 14,000 workshop experiences for young people each year.

14,000

With 1,000 workshops annually, across South Yarra and our partner sites across Melbourne.

1,000

Moving Forwards

We continue to consolidate and grow our core infrastructure to remain robust over the medium to long term while increasing our capacity to hold events. In 2023 we held over 1,200 events with almost 20,000 attending or participating at our South Yarra site. This demonstrates our significance for independent arts and young practitioners.

Thank You

Thank you to our partners in government and philanthropy who are already on board and continue to support us with their generosity. And thank you to the extraordinary people who have already responded to our giving requests, whether making one-off donations or committing to ongoing financial gifts. The young people, our artists and our staff give you our most heartfelt thanks for sharing our values and commitment to our community.

Your Support

Your support can ensure delivery of 20 annual scholarship programs to offer equitable access to our programs, supporting the company's specialist strength in inclusive practice. It can also allow us to deliver St Martins' vital Young Changemakers programs in three specific communities where kids face greater access needs.

20 Scholarships
each year.

ARTWORKS

After the success of *Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again* in late 2022, 2023 was an important year of artistic development for St Martins

Our Methodology

St Martins' methodology of creating its celebrated artworks is to engage over a protracted period in a consultative and collaborative creative approach. And so it is with our forthcoming work *The Word*, which was born over the past three years when St Martins teens and children across Melbourne expressed they were wrestling within a system they felt lost in. This system used words to lure, trap and control and finding personal agency within it eluded them. We worked unrelentingly with them, listening, witnessing, and offering creative prompts that might transform their experiences and raw emotions into creative outcomes.

'The child wrestling with the system' led to the proposal of a year-long project that offered the participants the most creative agency of any St Martins work thus far. *The Word* provided deep and ongoing opportunities for a cohort of First Nations and culturally diverse young people, including from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to reclaim their ancestry, languages, and words as a powerful currency for life. For the better part of 2023, a deep and intensive creative investigation took place within the rehearsal spaces at St Martins and on-site at the Abbotsford Convent between the young cast, interns and professional artists, the fruits of which were shared in a potent development showing as described in the next section.

In addition, this year, we were invigorated by the success of *Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again* at the 2023 Green Room Awards where in the Independent Theatre category, it was nominated for Best Ensemble and it won for Best Sound Design and Composition, and most thrillingly, for Best Production. Seeing members of the cast, aged as young as 11, from diverse backgrounds, demonstrating leadership and confidence by speaking to an adult audience at the awards ceremony was a significant triumph and achievement for all and allowed the arts sector to witness St Martins' powerful methodology at work.



DEVELOPMENT

THE WORD

In 2023 St Martins continued to develop its next major project, which began development in 2022 and will be realised in May 2024 at the Abbotsford Convent.

The Performance

The Word will be a site-specific, immersive performance, fusing vocal, physical, and video scores with text, inside the imposing architecture and symbology of the Abbotsford Convent. Once the site of heavy child labour, our project aims to shed new light on the child within a system, wrestling with control of the narrative to reclaim and rewrite new future trajectories. The collaboration between diverse young people and established artists has emerged out of an organic process of young people digging for light inside recent dark years via creative endeavour and artistic expression. Reaching across epochs, The Word climbs inside the human urge to know, name, possess, proclaim, and control. The young people will explore words as vessels of power, magic, truth and lies, and the way they have been used and misused to invoke people to feel, think, believe, and act.

The Ensemble

The ensemble includes 13 to 20-year-olds who have been brought together from St Martins' Young Changemakers program and past projects, and come from diverse cultural backgrounds, diverse socio-economic backgrounds, identify as LGBTIQ+ or gender non-confirming, and identify as disabled or neurodiverse. They are working with a cohort of diverse established practitioners including:

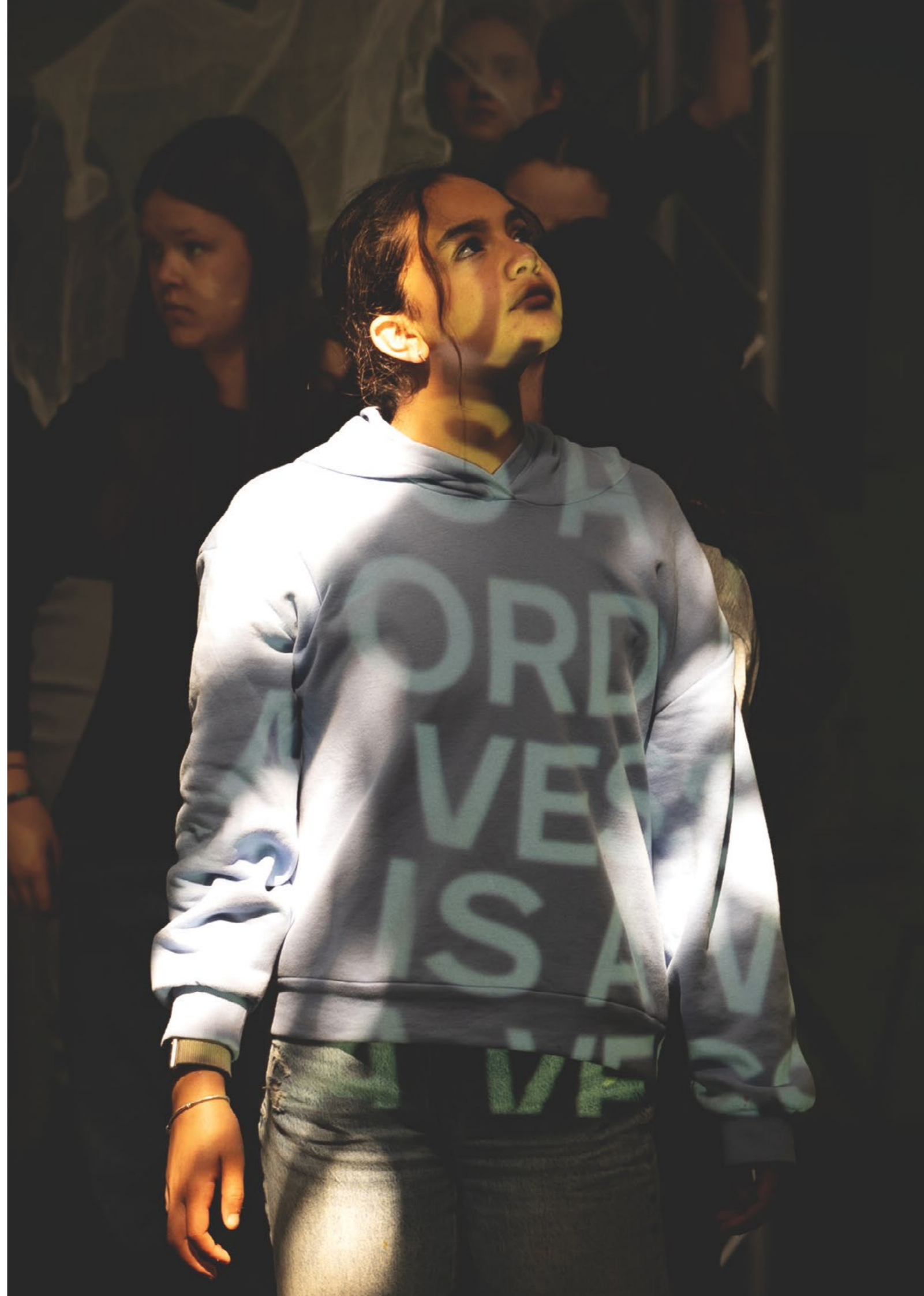
- **writer,**
Michele Lee
- **composer/musician,**
Allara Briggs-Pattison
- **choreography artist,**
Bridget Fiske
- **set/costume designer,**
Matilda Woodroffe,
- **video designer,**
Michael Carmody
- **lighting designer,**
Richard Vabre.

Abbotsford Convent

A private work in progress showing at Abbotsford Convent on 22 September 2023 was an enormous success as not only did it provide a valuable opportunity to get feedback from invitees, but it demonstrated to all the creatives involved that the project was going to be something special that would resonate with audiences. It was an emboldening and celebratory moment for the journey of The Word from concept to realisation.



Scan the code
and find out more
about *The Word*.





DEVELOPMENT

GENE TREE DARWIN

Following the success of our award-winning 2022 premiere season of Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, St Martins is now collaborating with Corrugated Iron in the Northern Territory to develop and present a new, local iteration of Gene Tree with 40 young people in Darwin.

The Performance

Gene Tree is an interactive performance adventure, created with and performed by young people in a place of nature. The original Melbourne production was the result of four years of creative development, with almost 100 children and teenagers from 40 cultures contributing words, stories, melodies, rhythms, and ideas.

The Darwin production, which will be presented in 2025, will reshape the project based on the contributions of a new cohort of young people from a different part of Australia. It allows St Martins to refine a residency touring model to enable young people around Australia to adapt and evolve Gene Tree with their own stories and questions about change, and to share it with their own communities in their own places of nature.



Scan the code and find out more about *Gene Tree*.



WORKSHOPS PROGRAM SOUTH YARRA & NORTHCOTE

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to share the highlights and accomplishments of our inclusive workshop program.

Inspiring creativity

In 2023, we continued to inspire creativity, foster connection, and empower young minds across our multiple sites.

At the beginning of Terms 1 and 2, we again offered a free trial day for new participants to discover the program. This evolved into a two-week fully refundable trial period in Terms 3 and 4. This trial period provides a better experience for potential participants, is more cost effective for the company and has reduced administrative burdens.

We are pleased to report a 10% increase in overall workshop participation at South Yarra and Northcote compared to 2022, demonstrating the growing demand for the program. Due to this increase, we opened an additional two workshops in 2023: a second 5-8s workshop at South Yarra and a third 9-12s workshop at Northcote.

We extended a warm welcome back to workshop artists Lyndsay Marsden and Carol Smith, whose expertise and passion continue to enrich our program. New artists Sarah Fitzgerald and Tsungirai Wachenuka had their own workshops, and Ben Goss who has previously been an inclusion artist is now a lead artist with a group of 9-12s.

Workshops across ages

Throughout the year, our workshops explored themes that reflect the complexities of our time. In Terms 1 and 2, we delved into 'Disruptions' and 'Cross-roads' encouraging young people to embrace change and uncertainty as opportunities for growth. In Terms 3 and 4, our focus shifted to 'Liminal Spaces,' those ambiguous realms between binaries, where new possibilities emerge.

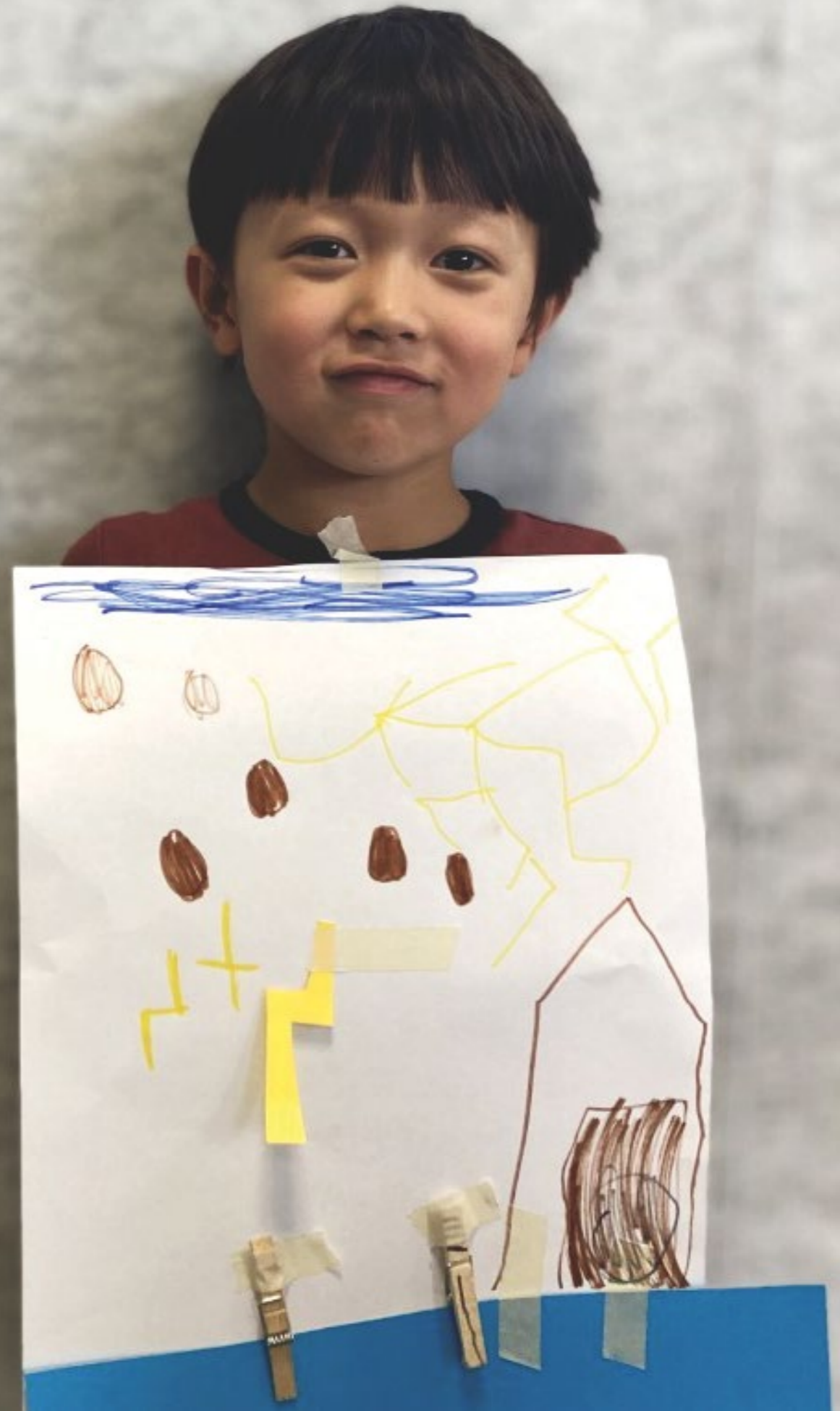
The results of this exploration were presented by our Cross Age and Teens workshops in their annual end of year showcase, Hatched.

In Term 3, we introduced a slight fee adjustment to ensure the sustainability and quality of our program. This adjustment enables us to maintain high standards while continuing to offer enriching experiences to our students.

In 2023, we ran a workshop for a group of high school students traveling from Queensland. Nerang State High School reached out to us about absorbing as much Melbourne culture as possible, and our artists Daniel Newall and Miranda Middleton delivered! Around 40 students participated and gave us glowing reviews.

St Martins collaborated with National Gallery of Victoria with their Melbourne Now exhibit. We ran a pop-up workshop inside the exhibit where members of the public joined artists Lyndsay Marsden and Tsungirai Wachenuka on some fun drama games. It was the first time our workshops were delivered in a space where the whole family joined in, which was fascinating to watch unfold and to see it open new possibilities as a public offering.

Another avenue for us to investigate as part of our workshop program is the continued demand for an 18+ program, reflecting the ongoing need for creative outlets and professional development opportunities for young adults. As our teenage workshops conclude for participants when they turn 18 or finish Year 12, they are feeling a lack in the industry for a place where they can continue to devise, experiment, and prepare themselves for the professional world. We are committed to developing the capacity for this.



THE LOVE FOR HATCHED 2023 WAS WIDELY FELT:

'I wanted to congratulate you all on last night's fantastic show. We are so grateful for the opportunity our son had to participate this year, and we couldn't be more proud of him. The inclusive and creative environment at St. Martin's has allowed him to flourish in all aspects of his life.'

- Hatched Parent

'I found the Hatched experience to be a very exciting and special time for me. It had a special buzz and everyone was so encouraging and supportive of each other which is something to be very proud of and something that I treasured while rehearsing, being backstage, and on stage. It was marvellous!'

- Hatched Young Performer

'It was the most accomplished end-of-year show I've seen since my son started with the company some 8-9 years ago. Each group's work was so thoughtful and well-crafted and the performances were outstanding. Compelling, funny, emotional - what a talented bunch of kids you have nurtured and brought out the best in! It was a brilliant night of theatre that each one of them could be so proud of. I also liked that every child got their moment to shine. Thank you for giving them this opportunity.'

- Hatched Parent



HATCHED

Each year, our end-of-year showcase, Hatched is the culmination of our young people's hard work and creative investigations.

After two sold-out performances in 2022, we hosted three performances over two days in our Irene Mitchell Theatre in December. St Martins Teens and Cross Age groups infused the space with a buzz like no other. They presented their most imaginative devised works exploring the theme of Liminal Spaces in front of friends and family, transporting their audiences through airport lounges, and courtrooms, waiting rooms and dreamscapes.

Hatched not only highlights the artistic growth and accomplishments of our workshop participants but also fosters a beautiful sense of pride and connection among our young people, artists, families, and friends. It also offers a fantastic opportunity for our young people to further experience our iconic venue which holds an important space in the industry landscape.

We are thrilled to continue this tradition and look forward to another inspiring showcase in 2024.



Our Aims

- Free, weekly workshops
- To create a deep foundational training ground for young artists and future leaders
- Improve well-being, life skills and increase literacies, confidence, and creative capacity.



YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

Young Changemakers is a suite of inclusive, free, and integrated pathway programs offered over multiple years and across multiple sites to create a deep foundational training ground for young artists and future leaders.

As well as drama and performance training, the program addresses essential well-being and life skills, increases the children's multiple literacies, confidence, and creative capacity.

DANDENONG:

The core component of Young Changemakers is the free, weekly, two-hour creative workshops during school term times at three locations in Melbourne, including Dandenong Primary School. The children who take part in the workshops are aged 9-12, from Dandenong Primary School and many come from vulnerable communities and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are recent migrants and refugees, children from culturally diverse backgrounds or children dealing with family violence and neglect.

We welcomed a new workshop artist, Sarah Fitzgerald, to join the St Martins team at Dandenong, which also included Nicolette Forte.

An early highlight of the year was the 14 Dandenong Primary School children from our 2022 production of Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again attending the 40th Green Room Awards and joining the rest of the show's creative team onstage in front of a packed audience at the Capitol Theatre to accept the award for Independent Theatre – Best Production.

The focus for the rest of the year was encouraging the children to work together collaboratively to present their work to the rest of the school at the end of the year, which for 2023 was a presentation of short films the children made with puppets. This screening was an important moment for the school community to come together in support and celebration of the children.

ST ALBANS:

Another site for the Young Changemakers program in 2023 was St Albans North Primary School where workshop artists Richie Hallal and Sebastian Fowler returned to continue working with children aged 9-12 who come from similarly vulnerable background as the children from Dandenong.

Throughout the year the Richie and Seb guided the children through developing a presentation to share with their peers, allowing the young people to dream big, and then slowly bringing it down closer to what is achievable and having them being part of the problem solving so they are fully entrenched in the creation every step of the way. As they built a rapport with the students, they witnessed an increase of confidence and engagement throughout the year as the young people discovered they had the space to express themselves and try out new things.

After a long and rewarding partnership with the school, 2023 was the final year of Young Changemakers being held at St Albans North Primary School, and we express our gratitude and appreciation to all the staff, students, and parents for hosting us and allowing us to work with such a wonderful group of year people. In 2024 Young Changemakers: St Albans will be held at Stevensville Primary School.

YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS THE HUB:

What Is 'The Hub'

Held at the Horace Petty Estate in Prahran, Young Changemakers: The Hub involves children and teenagers who live at the estate, aged 5-15, whom council youth workers have identified to us as coming from similarly vulnerable communities and lower socio-economic backgrounds to the children at the other two locations. Along with the support of City of Stonnington's Prahran Child and Youth Community Wellbeing Hub staff, St Martins provides three artists to work with the children each week and for 2023 we welcomed Tsungirai Wachenuka to the team to work alongside returning artists Nicolette Forte and Richie Hallal.

WORDS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS:

/// *Doing my cultural dance for the play was special. I was embarrassed to do it. And then while I was doing my dance, I felt good and strong.'*

- **Hub Participant**

/// *I loved speaking into the microphone. Being on stage with all The Hubsters and having the crowds there and using the microphone was the best!'*

- **Hub Participant**

/// *I loved being under the lights, playing music and performing!'*

- **Hub Participant**

How The Hub Works

Many of the children at the estate come from a background of severe trauma and hardship, and through community engagement, education, and self-expression, Young Changemakers: The Hub helps to work as a circuit breaker in the cycle of violence, vandalism, crime, and drug use. Having delivered the program for over a decade, St Martins has seen what a consistently delivered program such as ours can achieve in terms of high levels of retention among the young people who attend, improved self-confidence and self-value, and a strengthening of community and family bonds.

The major highlight of the year was the performance outcome held off-site in August at Chapel Off Chapel, titled Hubsters: Bubbles Vs Balls. It was a terrific event as the workshop participants experienced the excitement, growth and confidence that comes from performing in a theatre with good production values. Family members were invited, which made it a special event for the whole estate community.

The workshops made an enormous difference to the confidence and self-esteem of the participants to express themselves creatively and emotionally. For example, one participant had a fear of public speaking, and at school avoided speaking in front of others. However, they had a significant role in Hubsters: Bubbles Vs Balls where they narrated the play and conducted interviews with other performers, and not only did they give an excellent performance, they realised they can not only speak in public, but they are good at it, and it is something they enjoy.



YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS CONGRESS:

What Is Congress?

Another key part of Young Changemakers is Congress, which takes place throughout the year, as a free, weekly, two-hour workshop/creative think tank during school term times. We welcome a group of young people by invitation, from all our workshops, to be part of Congress and develop ideas to investigate, deepen and create St Martins' major artistic outcomes, which include the end of year showcase Hatched and major productions such as Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again.

Over time, older members of Congress become role models for the new younger members, and each year the Congress ensemble is renewed and refreshed as new personalities, ideas and abilities are brought into the group to shape and define St Martins' creative output.

How It Works

Congress participants work directly with St Martins' Artistic Director Nadja Kostich and Artistic Associate Alice Qin. Throughout 2023 the Congress ensemble was focused on devising, developing, and then rehearsing for St Martins' 2024 major production, The Word. Nadja and Alice worked closely with the young people to listen to and encourage the sharing of ideas and personal experiences that would become the text, or key themes for The Word. The artistic expression of Congress participants' experiences is translated directly into artworks, and as the adult professional artists harnessed these ideas, The Word began to emerge.

INCLUSION AND ACCESS

Throughout 2023 St Martins continued to deliver free drama workshops, provide scholarships, and create inclusive performances that allow and encourage children, who otherwise face barriers to participating in the arts, to take part.

Many children from disadvantaged backgrounds are denied participating in drama because their schools are remote or under resourced. Many also face limited options for extracurricular activities due to disability, neurodivergence, and learning challenges. Likewise, children who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are unable to access the same opportunities as their peers.

Our ongoing work with disadvantaged communities demonstrates that the children's creative development positively impacts their families, school, and extended communities. Community spirit has been testified to by teachers, family members and fellow students, as they galvanise around supporting our projects and taking pride in the accomplishment of the performers.

As part of the broader Young Changemakers program St Martins also offers over 20 free scholarships across our paid workshops that are valued at almost \$36,000. These provide children, whose families are affected by hardship due to economic or disability reasons, full access to our workshop program. St Martins' inclusion philosophy ensures we provide 'invisible' inclusion via two dedicated artists, in a meaningful, long-term, and safe environment for young people, who learn valuable life skills beyond the arts.

In 2023 23% of our South Yarra and Northcote participants were neurodivergent, and from those who responded to our cultural diversity survey, 32% identified as coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, where languages other than/ in addition to English are part of their cultural make up.

2023 IN NUMBERS

20

free scholarships were gifted

\$36,000

Valuation of scholarships

23%

of our South Yarra and Northcote participants were neurodivergent.

32%

identified as coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

FEEDBACK FROM OUR 2023 WORKSHOP SURVEYS, YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS ALL YEAR LEVELS EXPRESSED HOW IMPORTANT ST MARTINS IS TO THEM:

92%

said they felt supported to give new and unfamiliar things a go.

98%

said they felt their contributions matter.

92%

said they felt connected to other young people.

100%

said they feel they can be creative and expressive.

94%

said they felt proud of what they do and make.

FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN HAVE TAKEN PART IN OUR WORKSHOPS:

'The classes have been so exciting for him and have opened up a whole world of potential friendship and possibilities. The facilitation has been so impressive to us; the level of skill is so superior to what we have accessed before.'

'[She] is loving her time at St Martins, she looks forward to it each week. [She] tells me she has "found her people". We're so happy she has found something that has dragged her out of a very dark hole. We are very grateful for this opportunity.'

VENUE & MARKETING

As the live performance sector continues its recovery after a few difficult years, we see improvement in the St Martins managed venues.

Venue

The venue spaces at St Martins are experiencing growth in both hires and audience attendance. However, they are yet to reach pre-COVID levels of engagement. St Martins investment in staffing and the updated lighting and sound equipment in the Irene Mitchell Studio has further improved this growth, with even greater projections for 2024.

One of the precipitating factors in this growth is the investment in staffing and facilities. Improvements to the booking and venue management systems by Presenter Services Coordinator, James Dipnall, and his successor, Shayne Cummin, have meant faster turnarounds on quote requests and a smoother booking process. Additionally, these improvements have allowed for greater transparency for hirers and greater flexibility with hiring arrangements. This improved hiring experience has led to a greater number of bookings in both large- and small-scale hires, as well as an increase in repeat hires. This has had a direct effect of increased revenue throughout the year.

Venue and Operations Manager, Julie Blyth, has overseen the installation of the upgraded lighting and sound facilities in the Irene Mitchell Studio thanks to the Creative Neighbourhood Infrastructure Support Program grant from Creative Victoria. This has made the space much more inviting and marketable to professional hirers, making us much more competitive. The management and maintenance of the venues continues to present challenges.

Increased usage of the spaces means increased wear and tear, and greater management requirements for transitions between hires. Julie worked with Creative Victoria to replace the ladders in the Randall Theatre in May.

This allowed the Randall Stage to be reinstated in a limited capacity as a rehearsal space. It has attracted bookings throughout the year, but it is still unable to function as a performance space, leaving its 350-seat auditorium fallow.

COVID-19 continues to influence hires and attendance. Performances and rehearsals had to be rescheduled several times throughout the year related to infections. However, the overall effect is reduced from previous years.

The relationship between St Martins and JMC Academy has continued to grow with more performance bookings in the Irene Mitchell this year and many more scheduled for 2024. Regular hirers remained stable in 2023 providing a good back bone for the venues and a plethora of new hires made diverse use of the venue spaces throughout the year. Most notable among these was the first ever staging of Underneath Ms Archer presented by Peter Houghton and Louise Siversen. With a month-long season, an elaborate set and complex lighting and sound design, it really showed what the Irene Mitchell Studio can do.

Events, Income & Attendance Participation Reporting

	EVENTS	INCOME	ATTENDANCE	PARTICIPATION	TOTAL
OVERALL TOTAL	1345	\$89,466	4175	17545	21720

by PRESENTER	EVENTS	INCOME	ATTENDANCE	PARTICIPATION	TOTAL
St Martins Youth Arts Centre	412	-	425	5992	6417
South Yarra Ballet Studio	572	\$18,132	0	7449	7449
Other Presenters	361	\$71,334	3750	4104	7854

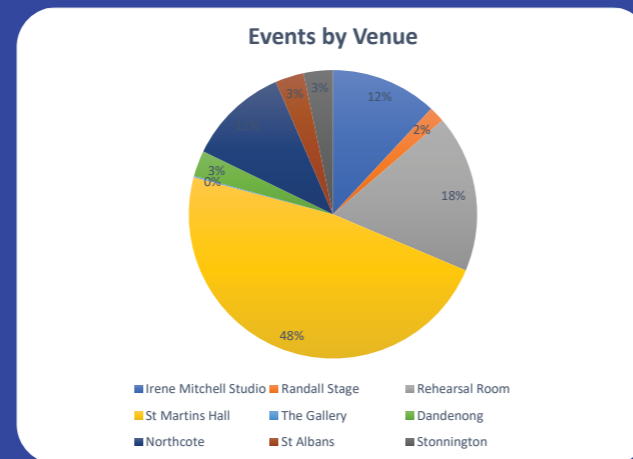
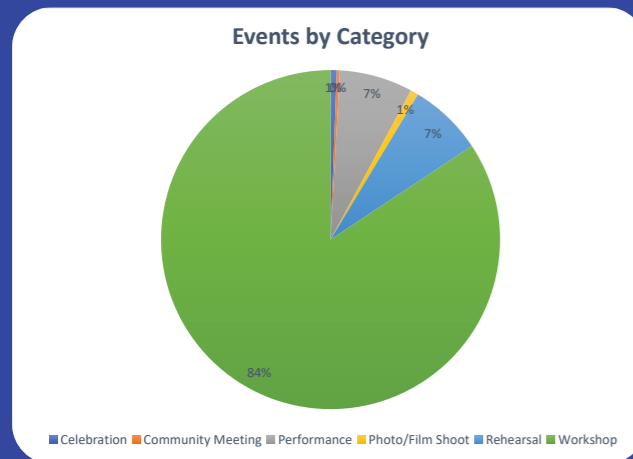
by CATEGORY	EVENTS	INCOME	ATTENDANCE	PARTICIPATION	TOTAL
Celebration	8	\$2,440	0	340	340
Community Meeting	4	\$2,940	62	59	121
Performance	94	\$23,348	3922	1296	5218
Photo/Film Shoot	10	\$3,466	0	88	88
Rehearsal	95	\$22,228	155	1077	1232
Workshop	1134	\$35,045	36	14685	14721

by CATEGORY	EVENTS	INCOME	ATTENDANCE	PARTICIPATION	TOTAL
Irene Mitchell Studio	160	\$48,060	3917	2157	6074
Randall Stage	24	\$3,345	0	147	147
Rehearsal Room	237	\$14,538	84	2497	2581
St Martins Hall	641	\$21,092	41	8406	8447
The Gallery	2	\$380	0	36	36

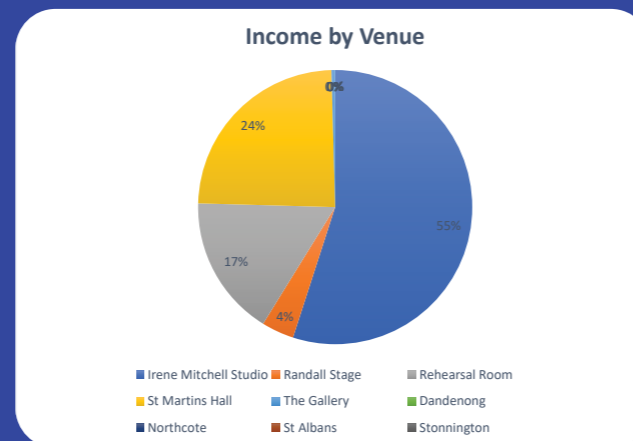
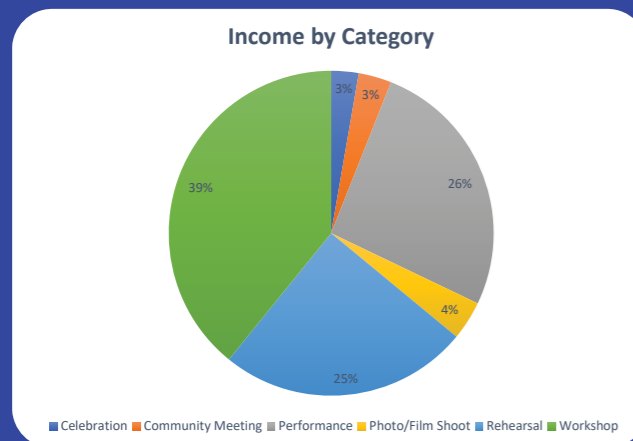
OFFSITE	EVENTS	INCOME	ATTENDANCE	PARTICIPATION	TOTAL
Dandenong	39	-	0	897	897
Northcote	152	-	53	1632	1685
St Albans	43	-	0	860	860
Stonnington	44	-	0	880	880
National Gallery of Victoria	1	-	30	30	60

Events, Income & Attendance Participation Reporting Continued

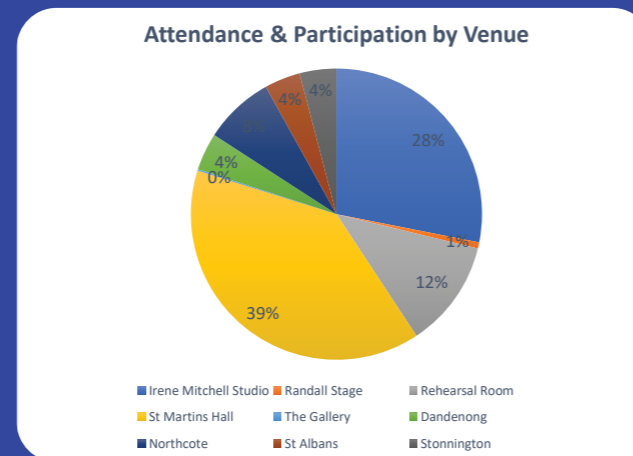
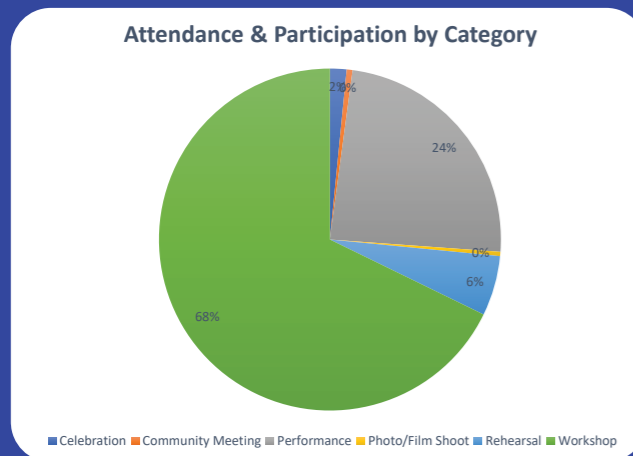
Events



Income



Attendance & Participation



Marketing

In 2023 our marketing efforts were redirected towards boosting engagement on our social media channels, fostering organic interactions with various St Martins' stakeholders, and continuing to enhance our capacity to provide marketing support for venue hirers.

With increased activity at the Irene Mitchell Studio, we worked towards increasing the satisfaction and loyalty of our venue hirers, making St Martins a sought-after destination for a variety of events. We are proud of the progress we have made and are committed to continuing to improve our offerings and support for the independent arts community.

FINANCIALS

The combined impacts of the pandemic and the loss of federal funding in 2020, meant that from 2021-2023 St Martins had to plan for annual deficits to meet our goals, and fulfil our obligations to audiences, staff, contractors, and the young participants who attend our workshops and take part in our productions.

Our strategy for 2023 was to carefully monitor and control expenditure and continue to increase revenue from donation income, workshop fees and venue hire. We also used 2023 to continue building strong relationships with key philanthropic organisations, seek out new philanthropic relationships and expand the company's fundraising reach and activities.

The importance of these activities was made more apparent when we missed out on four-year investment funding from the federal government for the second time in a row.

We recognise our responsibilities and the challenges that we face, and for 2024 we have a conservative and realistic recovery budget, which reflects our return to a surplus and positive net assets at the year-end.

2023 STRATEGY:

- monitor expenditure
- increase donation revenue
- increase workshop fees
- increase venue hire
- building philanthropic relationships
- seeking out new philanthropic relationships
- expanding fundraising

STATEMENT OF SURPLUS OR DEFICIT AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
REVENUE			
Grant Income:	2		
Government		335,570	381,046
Philanthropic Trusts		71,000	112,145
Private Donations		55,391	37,098
Total Grant Income		<u>461,961</u>	<u>530,289</u>
Other Income		376,540	353,831
Maintenance Subsidy – Creative Victoria		21,754	69,985
Total Revenue		<u>860,255</u>	<u>954,105</u>
EXPENSES			
3			
Administration		583,917	566,196
Production		293,152	403,303
Marketing and Sponsorship		10,948	16,156
Venue Expenses		71,172	34,674
Maintenance Expenses		21,755	35,983
		<u>980,944</u>	<u>1,056,312</u>
Surplus (deficit) for the year		<u>(120,689)</u>	<u>(102,207)</u>
Other comprehensive income:			
Net gain on revaluation of financial assets		-	-
Other comprehensive income for the year		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total comprehensive income for the year		<u>(120,689)</u>	<u>(102,207)</u>
Total comprehensive income attributable to the members of the entity		<u>(120,689)</u>	<u>(102,207)</u>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	4	279,151	225,393
Trade and Receivables	5	208,013	123,561
Other Current Assets	6	20,205	18,090
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>507,369</u>	<u>367,044</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	7	176,052	35,043
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		<u>176,052</u>	<u>35,043</u>
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>683,421</u>	<u>402,087</u>
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and Other Payables	8	73,999	59,909
Provisions	9	45,368	29,574
Other Liabilities	10	446,058	208,630
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>565,425</u>	<u>298,113</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Provisions	9	-	10,429
Capital Grants	11	145,140	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>145,140</u>	<u>10,429</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>710,565</u>	<u>308,542</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>(27,144)</u>	<u>93,545</u>
EQUITY			
Retained earnings (Accumulated losses)	12	(27,144)	93,545
TOTAL EQUITY		<u>(27,144)</u>	<u>93,545</u>



STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	Retained earnings \$	Total \$
	12		
Balance as at 1 January 2022		195,752	195,752
Plus deficit attributable to members		(102,207)	(102,207)
Balance as at 31 December 2022		93,545	93,545
Less deficit attributable to members		(120,689)	(120,689)
Balance as at 31 December 2023		(27,144)	(27,144)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from customers		1,129,827	965,490
Payment to suppliers and employees		(1,072,677)	(1,155,423)
Interest received		908	672
Net cash provided for operating activities	15	56,530	(189,261)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from Government (Capital Grant)		146,668	-
Payment for plant and equipment (Capital Grant)		(146,668)	-
Payment for plant and equipment	7	(2,772)	-
Net cash provided for investing activities		(2,772)	-
Net increase (decrease) in cash held		53,758	(189,261)
Cash at beginning of financial year		225,393	414,654
Cash at end of financial year	4	279,151	225,393

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Core Funding Partner



Irene Mitchell Studio Theatre Technical Upgrade Partner



Fundraising Partners



THE PHIL TAYLOR FOUNDATION

Young Changemakers Funders



Gailey Lazarus
Foundation



THE WILLIAM ANGLISS
CHARITABLE FUND

BETTY
AMSDEN
FOUNDATION

The Word Development Funder



Donors

Many generous individuals supported us during 2023 with donations. Their names are:

Simon Abrahams	Kath Fyffe	Wilson Lee	EnHui Sun
Emma Anderson	Sophie Gale	Maryclare Los	James Henry Syme
Nick Baker	Rinske Ginsberg	Elise Margow	Sally Thompson
Meaghan Bare	Jan Gishen	Karin McLean	Chris Thompson
Mark Barry	Elissa Goodrich	George Morstyn	Julie Turner
Simon Bedford	Dr Ronald Goodrich	Martina Murray	Ronnie van Hout & Catherine Plunkett
Luca Benes	Andrew Green	Sue Murray	Roslyn Varley
Fay Bock	Emma Hall	Vicki Murray	Emma Watton
Steven Bradby	Rick Hargreaves	Gregory Neal	Lesley Wesseik
Lynda Brest	Lynne Haultain	Telia Nevile	Janet Whiting AM
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Mark Cowell	Christine Hinton	Vivian Qin	The Crawley Clinic
Janette Desmier	Heather Howard	Alison Richards	Outer Urban Projects
Kirsty Ellem	Andrew Joseph	Jo-Anne Roberts	Anonymous (3)
Rob Fildes AM	Bev Joseph	Cat Sewell	
Ann Fuller	Michael Kantor	Julian Simmons	
	Anthony Lawlor	Nola Smith	



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