

ST
MARTINS
YOUTH
ARTS
CENTRE

a point in time

2024
ANNUAL
REPORT



**St Martins acknowledges the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the
Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we
work, gather and create.**

**We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and
to all First Peoples, and their enduring connections to
Country, knowledge and stories.**

**We embrace listening to, learning from and collaborating
with all First Nations people.**

CONTENTS

COMPANY MISSION	5
ARTISTIC MISSION	7
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR	8
EXECUTIVE REPORT	10
ST MARTINS PEOPLE	12
PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORTERS	14
ARTWORKS	16
Production, <i>The Word</i>	16
Development, <i>Gene Tree</i>	18
WORKSHOPS	19
South Yarra & Northcote	19
Dandenong Primary School	22
Stevensville Primary	24
The Hub (Horace Petty Housing Estate)	25
Congress	26
<i>Hatched</i>	26
INCLUSION & ACCESS	27
Young Changemakers	27
Inclusion Scholarships	29
Inclusive Process for <i>The Word</i>	31
VENUE	32
MARKETING	23
FINANCIALS	34
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	40



COMPANY MISSION

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.

OUR PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

CREATIVE PROGRAM

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

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.

PARTICIPATION & PERFORMANCE HUB

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

St Martins invests in its artists, children and all its stakeholders and people, emphasising a high-spirited, inclusive team culture. Our successful creative methodology of working with young people (5-18 years) in collaboration with exceptional artists in extensive, deep, collaborative processes is key to achieving astonishing public outcomes. We integrate inclusive practice for child and adult artists, which, combined, foster multigenerational teams full of trust and heart that enable an even deeper exploration to produce more daring art.

We have 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.

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.





ARTISTIC MISSION

We work 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.

St Martins' 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.

We have an extraordinary track record of artistic achievement for our public performances over the past decade. The bold artistry and originality in creative form and content of its major productions have garnered 16 Green Room nominations, won 5 Green Room awards (Best Production, Best Direction, Best Ensemble, Best Composition, Best Design) and won a Melbourne Fringe Best Live Art award. St Martins shines on a level playing ground with the best independent companies and artists in Victoria, and our accolades rival any small-to-medium organisation making performances with young people in Australia.

St Martins has built consultative, respectful and fruitful partnerships with diverse arts and non-arts organisations in the delivery of its projects, including Arts Centre Melbourne, Minus18, Abbotsford Convent, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Worawa Aboriginal College, Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, Melbourne Fringe, Malthouse Theatre, THE RABBLE, Rawcus Theatre, Melbourne Festival, Midsumma Festival, Dark Mofo and Darwin Festival.

St Martins has an undeniable and important role in the national and state artistic sector in our nurturing and emboldening of the next generations of artists. We are fierce advocates for our young people, the elevation of their voices in the community, and the potency and necessity of our organisation to accomplish these goals.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Despite financial constraints, our dedicated team managed to lift St Martins to new heights in 2024. This can be observed by the expansion of our reach in workshop program 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 while at the same time continually looking to the future for new opportunities and growth while consolidating what we do best

Art

During 2024 our award-winning artistic team premiered our original production *The Word* at Abbotsford Convent. This highly acclaimed unique work demonstrated yet again the phenomenal creativity and professionalism of the St Martins team.

I am thrilled that Nadja Kostich, St Martins' Artistic Director extraordinaire, has been deservedly nominated for a Green Room award for outstanding direction of *The Word*.

The team has also been working in collaboration with Corrugated Iron Youth Arts on recreating our award-winning production of *Gene Tree* in Darwin. This is the first time that St Martins will be showcasing one of its works outside of Victoria. This is an exciting development, and we look forward to seeing the fruition of this Darwin production in mid-2025.

Workshops

The success of St Martins artistic productions is underpinned by our world class workshop programs that welcome children and teenagers from diverse backgrounds. 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. Our venue hirers continually praise the St Martins team's professionalism and assistance. In 2024 we welcomed over 28,000 people through our doors during 2024.



Funding

Despite St Martins exceptional work and outcomes, it is no simple matter to secure funding to continue all our operations.

St Martins has been working round the clock trying to introduce new and innovative ways of fundraising. This has already resulted in a major increase in donor giving over 2024. 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. Thanks to Nadja Kostich and Thomas Caldwell's stellar work St Martins turned around a 2023 deficit into a small but significant surplus in 2024. We have budgeted for an increased surplus in 2025. As a result, we were able to promote Thomas Caldwell to Executive Director and Hayley Haynes to General Manager/Development.

Hellos, Goodbyes and Thanks

In 2024 we bade farewell to Kath Papas as director of the Board. Kath's contribution to St Martins is immeasurable and we thank her for her dedication and long-term support. We welcomed Fiona Symonds to the Board, and she has already started making a huge contribution.

Thank you to the St Martins team who continue to thrive through good times and bad. Your loyalty and ability are exceptional.

Thank you to Thomas Caldwell who stepped up to the plate in difficult times and worked to transform St Martins finances and budgets and whose pragmatic ideas and vision has helped to grow St Martins operationally.

A special note of thanks goes to Nadja Kostich for her continued exemplary artistic and general leadership that has driven St Martins onwards and upwards beyond expectations.

Looking Forward

St Martins has continued to grow exponentially its arts, workshop and venue businesses despite its small team and limited finances. It is exciting to watch the company's growth and development as we continue along our path of creating a unique exciting space for young people and children to revel in the artistic form, and for independent artists to have a thriving hub in which to gather.

Elise Margow
Chairperson



EXECUTIVE REPORT

St Martins shone in 2024!

A successful production

We celebrated *The Word*, presented at Abbotsford Convent which was a major success both artistically and as a developmental process for nurturing young artists. The production explored ideas about words and was deeply personal to the young people, who took the audience on an astonishing, entertaining and visually stunning experience. Our feedback from audiences, artists, and young people confirmed the depth of artistic and community impact *The Word* had.

Gene Tree Tour

Preparations for our 2025 concept tour included a trip to Darwin to set up all the relationships for this exciting new iteration of our award-winning work which was presented in the Royal Victorian Botanic Gardens in 2022. The original version was with 28 young people between 9 and 18 years old, half of whom were from our Young Changemakers Program in Dandenong. Our partners Corrugated Iron, Ludmilla Primary School and Darwin Symphony Orchestra are gathering a group of more than 50 young people from 9-18 for this version and we are so excited.

Strategic Plan

Each one of our grants and donations makes a big difference, but I must mention a key game changer this year. Betty Amsden Foundation is supporting us to re-imagine our strategic plan in 2025. Not only that but we have been assigned 5 days with their incredible CEO, Penny Miles, who will bring her expertise to St Martins to coach the executive and board through the process. We cannot wait!

Venues

Our venue team's hours were increased this year to match the growing demand and reward their great work in booking out and hosting all the spaces in our beloved performance hub. Increasingly, part of our role is to support young and emerging producers, independent artists and companies, which is fulfilling an important role in the arts sector. This is especially significant now more than ever as the post Covid lockdown drain in expertise continues to impact venues and hirers.



Workshops

St Martins' celebrated workshops continue to provide amazing opportunities to bring out the creator in participating children. Distinct from acting training, St Martins supports a deep and broad approach to train makers of theatre and performance. Our young people are excelling at this challenging task. Facilitated by our highly skilled artists, children are making something out of nothing in every workshop! We're really proud of every one of them.

We have in the meantime noticed that cost-of-living pressures and mental health are affecting families, young people and artists. We have sought more support from local councils and individual donors to provide additional sponsored places for families coping with financial stress and increasing our marketing efforts to attract new enrolments. In addition, we have been as flexible as possible in the support requirements of staff and contractors, many of whom may be balancing multiple jobs, which increases stress and fatigue. We remain committed to providing a supportive environment while maintaining a high level of professionalism.

Funding

St Martins experienced considerable financial recovery and growth during 2024, after three years of deficits, borne out of Covid and federal funding dropouts. On top of this we are thrilled with our successful application to Creative Australia's Two-Year Investment Pilot Program, which will cover core operational costs for 2025 and 2026. This was as a direct result of ongoing advocacy by St Martins and a large collegiate effort with many small to medium Victorian arts organisations. We are grateful for the listening of Minister Tony Burke and his team and for the pilot program set up by Creative Australia which is making a huge difference to 12 arts orgs in need around Australia, including St Martins. We continue to advocate for the pilot to become an ongoing opportunity. Concurrently we are active in advocacy for State arts funding to grow despite some of Victoria's budget challenges.

The federal boost has allowed us to finish the year by planning for the re-instatement of the Executive Director role which has remained vacant for 3 years. We aim to keep the General Manager role and focus it on company development, in this way ensuring St Martins keeps diversifying and growing its income streams.

Thank you

We cannot thank our stakeholders and collaborators enough: our wonderful core staff; our amazing artist and technical contractors who work directly with our young people and in our theatres; our incredible young people and their parents and carers; every talented project artist and crew member; our supportive neighbours and all our generous individual donors; our many dedicated funders and partners; our intrepid Board; our inspirational colleagues in the artistic sector and all the excellent agencies and organisations we work with whether daily or from time to time. It really does take (a very large) village to nurture the creativity of our young people. We are so proud of our collective efforts!

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 (outgoing April 2024)
Arjun Ravi
Kudzai Mhishi
Fiona Symonds (incoming September 2024)

OUR CORE 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
Shayne Cummin – Presenter Services Coordinator
Aida Innocente – Finance Officer

OUR WORKSHOP ARTISTS

Ahmarnya Price	Lyndsay Marsden
Amelia Ducker	Maria Theodorakis
Ben Ashby	Matthew McDonald
Ben Goss	Miranda Middleton
Brooke Murray	Nicolette Forte
Carol Smith	Olivia Bishop
Cassandra Fumi	Richie Hallal
Daniel Newell	Sarah Fitzgerald
Fabio Motta	Seb Fowler
Harriet Devlin	Sophia Derkenne
Ibo Halaçoğlu	Takudzwa Mbudzi
Joana Pires	Tsungirai Wachenuka
Katrina Cornwell	Zadie McCracken
Loukia Vassiliades	

OUR VENUE CASUAL STAFF

James Dipnall
Eli Elliott
Tamasin Mummery
Phoebe Greaves
Tyson Butler
Ellen Perriment



OUR COLLABORATORS

We also wish to acknowledge all the artists and contractors we have collaborated with to help deliver our creative productions, workshops and venue operations:

Alexander Nguyen	Jack Willis-Hall	Michael Carmody
Allara Pattison Briggs	Jason Cheetham	Michele Lee
Artemis Munoz	Julia Landberg	Natalya Bobenko
Basil Byrne	Justin Gardam	Oscar Munro
Bridget Fiske	Kofi Isaacs	Richard Vabre
Christian Schooneveldt-Reid	Lara Week	Shane Grant
Daniel Nieborski	Liam Jones	Shenae Louise Broadbent
Elissa Goodrich	Lindsay Templeton	Stephanie Young
Emily Van Dyk	Matilda Woodroffe	



PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORTERS

Support for St Martins from the private sector in 2024 was substantial. The amount we received in philanthropic funding (from foundations and individual giving) rose by 47.7% from the previous year, and on top of that we received matched funding from Creative Australia's Plus1 initiative.

We are incredibly grateful to all our government and private funders, whether it be multi-year grants to sustain the running of the company, one-off project grants, providing scholarships or individual gifts made throughout the year. It all contributes to the success and well-being of St Martins.

Looking ahead St Martins continues to diversify its income stream and plan even more ambitious projects. We need to invest further in the upkeep of our venues, we are looking for funding partners for EMBOLDEN, our new emerging artists program for 18-25-year-olds and we are continuing to meet the challenges of running our Young Changemakers suite of programs, which includes free offsite workshops delivered weekly to young people whose socioeconomic status prevents them from otherwise accessing the art.

All this and more, and we continue to build our much-needed ongoing support of the community and all our supporters.





ARTWORKS

This was a year of the presentation of a major production in May and the consolidation and continued development of another major work that will be toured interstate in 2025.

PRODUCTION: THE WORD

***The Word* was 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, the convent shed new light on the child within a system, wrestling with control of the narrative. The collaboration between diverse young people and established artists climbed inside words – written, spoken and dreamt – as vessels for the human urge to know, name, possess, proclaim and control. Reaching across epochs, examining the emergence of spoken word, ink on paper, typeface, and digital download through the eyes of young people, *The Word* was anchored by technologies through time, of sounds, languages, pen, printing press and digitisation. The young people explored 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 season ran from 17 - 26 May 2024 at the Abbotsford Convent and was a major success both artistically and as a developmental process for nurturing young artists. The production explored ideas deeply personal to the young people, and the audience was taken through a thought-provoking and visually stunning artistic experience. The technical and performance elements of the show were also of an impressively high quality. The responses were overwhelmingly positive with many audience members making mention of the deep reflection the show inspired and their own continuing conversations and contemplation for a lengthy period after the show. Feedback also mentioned the quality of the performances and how beautifully the space was used. Director Nadja Kostich has been nominated for an Outstanding Directing Award at the 2025 Green Room Awards, and ticket revenue expectations were exceeded by 60%.





DEVELOPMENT: GENE TREE

St Martins is collaborating with Corrugated Iron Youth Arts in the Northern Territory to develop and present a new iteration of *Gene Tree: Listen. Now. Again*; an interactive performance adventure, created and performed by young people during sunset in a place of nature.

Following the award-winning premiere season at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and four years of creative development, with almost 100 children and teenagers from 40 cultures contributing words, stories, melodies, rhythms and ideas; *Gene Tree* will be further adapted and evolved by more than 60 children in Darwin with their own stories about change, shared with their own communities in their own places of nature. More than 50% of the young people are First Nations.

Alongside local artists and production crew, St Martins will work with Corrugated Iron, Darwin Symphony Orchestra's Youth Ensemble and Ludmilla Primary School to adapt and evolve a unique local iteration of *Gene Tree* for the 2025 Darwin Fringe Festival in the George Brown Botanic Gardens. The process and resulting work will speak to the collaborating young people's questions, viewpoints, experiences, and relationships to nature and the place where they live.



WORKSHOPS

SOUTH YARRA & NORTHCOTE

Our flagship programs of workshops for children ranging from 5–18–years–old were again held throughout each week of school term at our own venues in South Yarra and at Northcote High School. The introduction of a two-week refundable trial period that was offered in 2023 has proven to be an effective way of allowing newcomers to experience our style of creative drama workshops and in most case resulted in those newcomers staying on to complete one or more terms of workshops. The format of having two professional artists running each workshop – one as the lead artist and one with a focus on inclusion – continued to be an effective format to ensure all participants felt included, supported and valued.

In total, we ran 14 workshops per term across both sites, resulting in 56 workshops per year. We had 608 enrolments over the whole year with overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents.

'I was so impressed with the end of year performance that my son was part of last weekend. Giving space to the children to be vulnerable and perform personal stories in a supportive environment seems to me to be exactly what St Martins is all about.'

Parent of workshop participant





**My son loved [the workshops]
and it is such a heartwarming,
enormous achievement for him.
Your whole team deserves
appreciation for creating the kind
of environment where a kid like
him can thrive!**



“

So proud of my child and all the young people who took to the stage over the weekend. Always blown away by their bravery and ideas, and how St Martins brings that out of them and brings it all together.

”

“

My daughter's confidence has grown so much since she started three years ago.

”



DANDENONG PRIMARY SCHOOL

We delivered a total of 39 drama workshops to 30 students aged 9–12, most of whom come from migrant and refugee communities, and many from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. During the workshops students developed skills to communicate ideas through voice, movement and expression. They made dramatic improvements in imaginative and creative thinking, public speaking and performing skills, self-esteem, and pride in their achievements. The students were taught about the ways different performance styles were useful for different forms of expression, and the effectiveness of different styles of preparation.

For the first time, the students worked with artists to devise and present *If I Could I Would...* a 30-minute performance that was presented at The Drum Theatre to the school community, parents and friends. Students devised the script, learned choreography and took part in creating a video for the performance. The students, principal, teachers and parents expressed high levels of achievement by the group.

The students showed immense progress in their abilities and working toward the performance in a professional theatre created healthy pressure that galvanised efficiency during each workshop. The joy they took in being centre stage, in being seen, in having an audience listen to them, was palpable. All the effort that went into the performance directly translated to the confidence, and a sense of fulfilment for these young people, both as individuals and collectively. Ultimately, we achieved our aim of offering an experience that shows the children that they too belong in our city's theatres and when they have something to say and express, people will come to listen.

The Drum Theatre reported that the 100 or so community members – families, friends and teachers – that attended was an immensely successful community building initiative for them. Many of the audience members had never been to The Drum before. One mother said, 'I've always wanted to go to The Drum and see what it was like inside. I am so happy that the first time I stepped in was to see my daughter perform on the big stage.'



I've always wanted to go to The Drum and see what it was like inside. I am so happy that the first time I stepped in was to see my daughter perform on the big stage.



STEVENSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

At Stevensville Primary School in St Albans, we also delivered 39 workshops to a cohort of students with similar backgrounds to the students from Dandenong. We selected workshop artists to lead this workshop, who could respond to the demographic of the young people and give them role models they can culturally identify with and build trust in. We also started involving the Health and Wellbeing officer of the school more collaboratively in recruitment. This resulted in a much more cohesive group dynamic towards the end of the year and has been proven successful so far. The goal of 2024 was to build trust and ensemble; in 2025 we aim to build on this foundation by layering on specific tools and skills of theatre making.

While there wasn't a public performance, the workshop artists reported an increase in confidence in how the students introduced new creative ideas, expressed themselves, and performed in front of their peers. Each child took several steps along their own individual line of progress in listening, following instructions, making creative offers, supporting their cohort and working together to perform a scene. The year was spent in building trust and cohesion within the group and creating solid structures that allowed students to begin making devising choices in performance, considering how to be a good audience and reflecting on clear communication to an audience.

This program is 'young' in comparison to Dandenong Primary School (began in 2016) and The Hub (began in 2013) and we are using our methodology and acquired learnings over these years to apply these to our work at Stevensville to build a positive culture for the children and with the school. We are very pleased with the signs and have the experience now that allows for patience in our approach.

THE HUB at the HORACE PETTY HOUSING ESTATE

The weekly creative workshops held at the Horace Petty Estate in Prahan are delivered in partnerships with the team from City of Stonnington's Prahan Child and Youth Community Wellbeing Hub. This free and integrated foundational creative workshop pathway program for 30 socioeconomically disadvantaged children aged 5-15 living at the estate addresses essential well-being and life skills that increase children's multiple literacies, confidence, and creative capacity, and includes performance outcomes for their families and local community. The program allows the young people to reclaim and reimagine their space, step into the unknown with growing confidence, participate in creative endeavour and learn to work together in groups. The artforms and activities they participate in include theatre, music, dance, visual arts, puppet-making, body percussion, beatboxing, writing and storytelling.

In 2024 we held a small mid-year public showing at the Hub titled *Hub Circus!* and a larger end-of-year performance outcome titled *Camp Hubster* that was held at The Space Dance and Arts Centre in Prahan where the children put on a small theatre production that was attended by their families, friends and local community.

Camp Hubster allowed the participants to perform in a formal theatre with good production values, which provides the children with an experience of themselves as valued and capable theatre-makers. It demonstrates that they matter, which is shown to encourage stepping up and into their own empowerment and self-confidence.



CONGRESS

Throughout the year we ran our weekly free two-hour workshop/creative think tank. Young people from across our workshops are invited to be part of Congress and develop ideas to investigate, deepen and create St Martins' major artistic outcomes, which include the end of year showcases *Hatched* and major productions such as *The Word*.

HATCHED

Hatched is held every term 4 in our Irene Mitchell Studio and is performed by the older students from across our entire workshop program (including Congress) with all younger workshop participants invited to attend. There were three performances of *Hatched* in 2024 and it was an opportunity for the participants to have the experience of being part of a collaboratively devised show that celebrated their creative achievements for the year and allowed for connections between many young people that don't ordinarily cross paths. *Hatched* is an annual creative highlight and community event at St Martins.



INCLUSION & ACCESS

Many children and vulnerable people face a range of barriers to accessing the arts because they come from a disadvantaged background. Many are denied participating in drama because their schools are 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. Being able to deliver free drama workshops, provide scholarships and create inclusive performances is how St Martins facilitates and encourages children, who otherwise face barriers, to take part.

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. Young Changemakers is a key strategy to deliver St Martins' mission of strengthening and empowering local communities.

The three core components of Young Changemakers are the free workshops held during school term time throughout the year at Dandenong Primary School, Stevensville Primary School in St Albans and the Horace Petty Estate in Prahan, along with the free St Martins creative think-tank, Congress, various on-site performance outcomes throughout the year, and the annual companywide showcase *Hatched*, performed at the end of each year.

The consistency and quality of the workshops and performances that are part of Young Changemakers are continuing to fulfil **our primary objectives:**

- 1. An increase in self-confidence, indicated by positive changes in how workshop participants express confidence in their own abilities and ideas.**
- 2. An increase in creative skills, indicated by positive changes in the originality of new ideas and the ability to express those ideas creatively.**
- 3. An increased sense of belonging, indicated by positive changes in how the participants identify with belonging to their community and peer groups.**

This format of regular workshops is also intended to provide a springboard for participation in more complex, ambitious arts projects, which was realised at the end of the year at the showcase performances.



INCLUSION SCHOLARSHIPS

St Martins provided a total of \$30,532 in scholarships in 2024 for children and young people to attend our workshops who otherwise would not be able to do so because of economic hardship. Not only do these young people and their families benefit from the scholarships, but so do the other workshop participants as it ensures that the workshops remain diverse and reflect a broad range of backgrounds and experiences.

All the Inclusion Scholarship recipients have expressed interest in continuing with the workshops, and we have received extremely positive responses from some of the parents, for example:



My child's time at St Martin's has boosted his confidence so much. He seems much more comfortable in his own skin. He still has severe anxiety, but he's not as anxious about the anxiety, if that makes sense. After his first term at St Martins, he had gained enough confidence to make the decision to go to school for the first time, in year 10, which he has loved. Thank you St Martins.

St Martins has shown my son that autism is not a disability, but simply a different way of viewing the world. And that his views – and voice – aren't just valued, but can often be an absolute gift.



Before he started at St Martins my son was very much about only doing things his way; he had trouble playing with other kids in a sharing and collaborative way ... St Martins has taught him to learn how to work collaboratively with people, how to take turns, and how to listen to and respect other people's opinions.





INCLUSIVE PROCESS FOR THE WORD

Throughout the intensive development, rehearsal, and performance period for *The Word*, many steps and approaches were undertaken to ensure the wellbeing of the participants, for both the young people, as well as the adult artists.

We were able to increase the hours of key personnel so that issues that might have otherwise gone unaddressed and just overcome in silence were able to be voiced. This additional investment in resourcing the creative team meant that our choreographer was able to work closer with the young people who needed adjustments to make the movements of the piece comfortable and sustainable to repeat through the performance season. This then freed up time for the Assistant Director to focus on other aspects of inclusion, which included ensuring neurodiverse participants were kept abreast of developments they might miss while having to absent themselves for self-regulation, as well as building trust within all the ensemble members.

With St Martins' culture of inclusive practice and respecting our young participant's thoughts and ideas, we were very successful in creating a safe space for everyone to flourish and be daring. One young participant said, ***'I felt like I can talk to any adult who was in the room, that they were all safe people to be with and that they would take me seriously.'***

We were also able to provide additional support for less-experienced members of the adult creative team by partnering them with more seasoned creatives, which had the effect of removing a lot of anxiety.

Providing meals, bringing in additional heating, and providing transport were also measures that were used to ensure nobody involved in the production would be disadvantaged or discomforted by not having the means to provide such things for themselves.

As one of the participants said in a feedback session: ***'It never got overly stressful; only in the sense of us wanting to do the best performance possible.'***

VENUE

St Martins' growing reputation for providing affordable live performance and rehearsal spaces that are managed by a supportive team with a passion for nurturing young and emerging artists, saw a considerable growth in venue hire activity in 2024.

There was a 16% increase in the number of unique hirers from 2023 to 2024 with a 53% increase in revenue and a 117% increase in the number of coming to St Martins to attend an event held in one of our venues.

Throughout the year we were pleased to host theatre companies Rollercoaster Theatre and Theatrical Inc. who made regular use of our spaces to develop and rehearse new theatre productions, as well as JMC Academy who made extensive use of our Irene Mitchell Studio to present the work of graduating students. We hosted two shows that were presented as part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival: Shakespeare Ghostbusters by Ghostlight League and From Taiwan with Laugh, a 6-show season of international comedians performing stand-up comedy in Mandarin.

St Martins was also busy during the Melbourne Fringe Festival with the Mandarin language *Black Comedy in 1988* by Pending Productions, the experimental multimedia piece *Who Is a Dog Rose*, BAM Arts' punching-up comical piece about people with disabilities *PUNCH!* and the experimental ensemble piece *Secret Girl Stuff* about girlhood and womanhood. Other significant productions during the year include the warmly received original piece *Samuel Becket and the Rainbow Girl* presented as part of the Bloomsday Festival, the sell-out season of Scimm. Dance's 2024 graduate showcase and Stage School Australia's showcase that consisted of eight shows over two days with over 700 attendees.

To assist with the growing demand for our venues and to enable our team to serve and nurture hirers to the highest levels of professionalism and care, we increased the hours for St Martins' Venues and Operation Manager and Presenter Services Coordinator, and increased our workforce from four casual workers to seven, who perform technical and front-of-house roles. The increase of staffing positions and hours has allowed the venues team to best manage the influx of new business, as well as being able to develop new policies, procedures and strategies to continue ensuring the venues are used to their full capacity.

The full benefit of our Irene Mitchell Studio technical upgrade in 2023 (funded by Creative Victoria's Creative Neighbourhood Infrastructure Support Program) was felt in 2024 with the volume of hirers attracted in part to using the Studio due to the improved equipment. Other major work to our venues in 2024 included Creative Victoria beginning the process of installing CCTV and improved access system to all our buildings. While the Randall Theatre remains available as a rehearsal space only, the hatches above the stage have been removed and new roofing installed.

In summary, 2024 saw a burgeoning performance hub with very satisfied hirers and engaged audiences.

MARKETING

Our marketing strategy for 2024 aimed to strengthen our community presence on and offline, cultivate meaningful relationships with our supporters, and foster brand awareness and engagement through diverse channels and initiatives.

We strengthened our social media presence this year, which included trialling some of the new and emerging platforms. After careful consideration we discontinued our presence on X (formerly Twitter) despite having a substantial number of followers. This decision was made due to growing concerns about potential brand misalignment with St Martins' core values.

We reformatted and increased the frequency of our Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) communication to make our e-newsletter a fortnightly event. This channel has proven to be a direct and effective means of staying connected with our community, enabling us to share regular company updates and important news.



FINANCIALS

After three lean years of planned deficits, St Martins experienced considerable financial recovery in 2024 to end the year with a modest surplus. Although this surplus was not sufficient to fully absorb the deficiency from previous years, we are confident of fully recovering that position in 2025 with a cash-generating budgeted surplus for the year. We feel very buoyed by the tremendous achievement of turning this around in a short space of time.

Investment in the venues team and the refurbishment and purchase of new assets for the Irene Mitchell Theatre in 2023 were factors that allowed venue hire income to grow by 55% from 2023 to 2024 and there was also an increase in revenue from bar sales at the theatre.

Box office income for the major project *The Word* exceeded expectations, as did box office for the annual end-of-year workshop showcase *Hatched*. The area of the business that underperformed was the workshops, and strategies to promote and generate efficiencies in this important part of the business are a priority for 2025.

Donation income from individual givers and trusts was consistent with 2023, with the additional income from Creative Partnerships Australia's Plus1 program that delivered \$50K in matched funding plus a bonus of a further \$12.5K. All major 2024 projects were fully funded, with highlights being a new two-year partnership with the Department of Education to fund schools in the Young Changemakers program, another three-year partnership with the City of Stonnington to fund the Young Changemakers program at a housing estate, and funding from the Gailey Lazarus Charitable Foundation to support other areas of Young Changemakers including a new performance outcome. Key funding secured for 2025 include \$300K across 2025-2026 from Creative Australia's Two-Year Investment Pilot Program and \$30K from the Betty Amsden Foundation to fund strategic development and planning.

There was a small increase in FTE hours from 2023 to 2024, and for 2025 we are reinstating the Executive Director position, delivering pay increases to all staff, and introducing a new staff person who will have an FTE of 0.6.

We recognise our responsibilities and the challenges that we face, together with fellow arts and other not-for-profit organisations, in competing for available donor funds. It is our objective to deliver our work – through productions, workshops, and venue utilisation – by expanding our access to private, corporate, and institutional fundraising activities, aware that the level of past government support cannot be relied upon into the future.



STATEMENT OF SURPLUS OR DEFICIT AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AS AT 31 DECEMER 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
REVENUE		
Grant Income:		
Government	500,022	335,570
Philanthropic Trusts	161,750	71,000
Private Donations	24,924	55,391
Total Grant Income	<u>686,696</u>	<u>461,961</u>
Other Income	445,144	376,540
Maintenance Subsidy – Creative Victoria	2,997	21,754
Total Revenue	<u>1,134,837</u>	<u>860,255</u>
EXPENSES		
Administration	589,228	583,917
Production	424,287	293,152
Marketing and Sponsorship	29,911	10,948
Venue Expenses	64,001	71,172
Maintenance Expenses	2,997	21,755
	<u>1,110,424</u>	<u>980,944</u>
Surplus (deficit) for the year	<u>24,413</u>	<u>(120,689)</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>24,413</u>	<u>(120,689)</u>
Total comprehensive income attributable to the members of the entity	<u>24,413</u>	<u>(120,689)</u>



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	413,112	279,151
Trade and Receivables	52,270	84,370
Other Current Assets	23,687	20,205
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	<u>489,069</u>	<u>383,726</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	151,931	176,052
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	<u>151,931</u>	<u>176,052</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>641,000</u>	<u>559,778</u>
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	74,215	62,759
Provisions	59,647	45,368
Other Liabilities	383,062	333,655
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>516,924</u>	<u>441,782</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Capital Grants	126,807	145,140
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>126,807</u>	<u>145,140</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>643,731</u>	<u>586,922</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>(2,731)</u>	<u>(27,144)</u>
EQUITY		
Retained earnings (Accumulated losses)	(2,731)	(27,144)
TOTAL EQUITY	<u>(2,731)</u>	<u>(27,144)</u>

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMER 2024

	Retained earnings \$	Total \$
Balance as at 1 January 2023	93,545	93,545
Less (deficit) attributable to members	(120,689)	(120,689)
Balance as at 31 December 2023	(27,144)	(27,144)
Plus surplus attributable to members	24,413	24,413
Balance as at 31 December 2024	(2,731)	(2,731)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMER 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from customers	1,295,014	1,129,827
Payment to suppliers and employees	(1,161,162)	(1,072,677)
Interest received	109	908
Net cash provided for operating activities	133,961	56,530
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	-	(2,772)
Net cash provided for investing activities	-	(2,772)
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	133,691	53,758
Cash at beginning of financial year	279,151	225,393
Cash at end of financial year	413,112	279,151





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Core Funding Partner



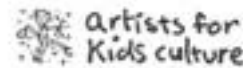
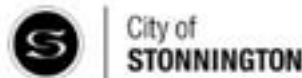
Fundraising Partner



Marketing Partner



Young Changemakers Partners



Scholarships Partners



The Word Partners



Gene Tree Darwin Development Partner



DONORS

We are very grateful for the support received by the Gandel Foundation and also by Australian Communities Foundation through the Alice Sloan Fund.

Many generous individuals also supported us during 2024 with donations.
We extend a warm thank you to:

Anonymous (5)
Simon Abrahams
Jan Armstrong-Conn
Christopher Bell
Virginia Bonello
Rachel Burke
John Calvert-Jones
Bindi Carlisle
SJ Chapman
David Chong
Myfanwy Clark
Ana Constantinou
The Crawley Clinic
Chantelle Duffy

David Elvins
Jacinta Farrugia
Ann Fuller
Julie Harrington
Jenny Hayley
Graham Haynes
Paula Hernandez
Aida Innocente
Renaë Jarman
Maryclare Los
Omri Lustig
Elise Margow
Catherine Mayer
Valerie Mayer

Alix McManus
Paul McSweeney
Jane Patrick
HM Prentice
Jesse Purton
Alison Richards
Arabella Richards
Ben Ruse
Natalie Swann
Fiona Symonds
Tao Weis
Liz White
Janet Whiting AM
June Wilson





ST MARTINS YOUTH ARTS CENTRE

stmartinsyouth.com.au

info@stmartinsyouth.com.au | (03) 9867 2477
28 St Martins Ln, South Yarra, VIC 3141

 @stmartinsyac  @stmartinsyac

 @stmartinsyac  @stmartinsyac