



MTFC  
FOUNDATION

DONOR IMPACT REPORT 2020



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Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Peoples of the Boon Wurrung, the First Peoples of Country on which Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ stand. We pay our respects to all of Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders, and to our shared future.

MTC is a department of the University of Melbourne



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# 2020 IN NUMBERS

**40,056**

paid attendances  
before March  
shutdown

**124,019**

tickets cancelled  
due to closure

**\$13.7 MILLION**

box office loss

**24%**

of tickets to cancelled productions converted to donations

**39%**

of tickets to cancelled productions converted to credit  
towards future tickets or subscriptions

**11**

out of 12  
Mainstage Productions  
cancelled or closed  
early

**345**

employment  
opportunities for  
freelance artists  
and crew lost

**417**

cancelled  
performances

**19%**

total revenue  
in 2020 from  
private  
donations

- **5,802** total donors to MTC (\$2 or more)
- **13%** increase in supporters of MTC
- **88%** increase in Donors of \$1,000 or more to MTC
- **284** new \$1,000+ Donors

**462**

students  
participated in online  
MTC Education  
programs

**8,057**

visits to virtual tours  
of MTC HQ and  
Southbank  
Theatre

**17**

MTC Youth  
Ambassadors

**5** writers commissioned and  
**2** new writers-in-residence as part of MTC's  
**NEXTSTAGE** Writers' Program

**12**

participants in  
MTC's Women in Theatre  
Program

**8**

new Australian plays  
developed through  
Cybec Electric

**25**

projects supported through  
free studio hire at MTC HQ  
for local artists

# CHAIR'S REPORT

JANE HANSEN AO



In 2020 Melbourne Theatre Company, along with many in the arts sector, faced its darkest year. It was a year like no other where MTC had to navigate the velocity of the crisis, its challenges and its uncertainties, which were felt all the more acutely here in the state of Victoria.

As I reflect on my first year as Chair it is heartening to be reminded that throughout all the difficulties we faced, the commitment and resilience of the MTC team and broader community, including our loyal Donors, meant that we weathered the year as well as we could possibly have hoped.

The sudden cancellations of *Torch the Place* and *Emerald City* in March signalled the beginnings of a rapidly evolving crisis and it was soon apparent the worst was yet to come. The Board and Executive team acted quickly to contain costs and set in place plans to maintain business continuity while the Company adapted to new remote-working arrangements amid the unusual challenges posed by our varied workforce. The generosity of our audiences through ticket and cash donations received immediately in response to these first cancellations was an amazing promise of the support which would accompany us through extended lockdowns.

An initial six-month closure escalated into over ten months off stage – the longest period our theatres have ever been dark. A total of eleven production

cancellations and MTC's extended shutdown resulted in significant hardship for everyone involved in making theatre as well as an enormous hit to our box office and ancillary revenue streams.

Fortunately, through careful programming and prudent financial management over recent years, and thanks in no small part to your generous support, MTC entered the crisis more financially stable than many of our peers. Both the Management Board and more recently the Foundation Board had deliberately tried to build reserves wherever possible to withstand any downturns. Through a combination of measures MTC managed to reduce expenses, access Federal Government support packages and draw down reserves in order to remain solvent. All staff agreed to reduced hours and remuneration, while many were stood down for extended periods on JobKeeper. These concerted efforts and the help we received from our long time subscribers and donors meant that MTC ended the year containing operating losses to \$1.7 million, a considerable achievement given the severity and protracted nature of the difficulties we faced.

Philanthropic support has always played a vital role in MTC's capacity to deliver our programs and in 2020 this loyalty proved a lifeline for the Company's survival. We are immensely thankful to you and the many, many donors who recognised the grave situation faced in the arts, gave generously, and helped to sustain MTC. All gestures – including crediting or donating all or a portion of purchased tickets, along with additional outright donations – were warmly received and greatly appreciated. Your support, along with the influx of thoughtful messages of consolation and good wishes, made a very real and material difference to the spirits of our team.

Thanks to your incredible generosity, MTC is in the best possible position to consider 2021 as a year of recovery, which is not to discount the substantial impact events of the past year have had on the Company or our staff. With the health crisis turning into an economic one, we have approached the current season cautiously but are planning for a brighter future. Strategic government investment arrived at a critical moment in the last quarter of the year which helped us present a season in 2021, provide employment for the artistic community,

encourage people back into the Melbourne Arts Precinct and assist with the recovery of our much-loved city.

The Federal Government's RISE Fund has enabled MTC to plan the 2021 season with greater confidence, including making a significant investment in three new Australian works; while support from the State Government allowed us to return to the stage with investment in COVIDsafe infrastructure. We are very grateful for this public investment from both levels of government, along with ongoing financial and other support from the Australia Council for the Arts.

This year, our sights are now firmly set on recovery so that we may emerge re-focused and re-energised for the future. MTC is a Victorian cultural icon, a model for all the state theatre companies around the country and one very dear to the hearts of our audiences, donors, artists and staff. This past year has been one of unforeseen challenges but in our 67-year history we have faced other hardships and come through them together. It is heartening to be able to say we have done so once again with our community of Donors alongside us. Thank you for championing the Company through 2020 and ensuring our return to the stage in 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Hansen', written in a cursive, flowing style.

# ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CEO'S REPORT

BRETT SHEEHY AO



How does one recap a year like 2020? To begin, I'd like to acknowledge the severe impact of performance cancellations on our artists – creative teams and actors – as well as our technical crews and makers who were engaged on our 2020 productions and activities, over two hundred of whom we had to let go when COVID struck. On top of that we still had nearly a hundred more roles yet to make offers on. Please accept my heartfelt appreciation for your advocacy on behalf of our community of artists through your generous support of MTC. This allowed us to remain a creative home for these champions of the industry, finding imaginative ways to continue to make theatre in 2020 and promising a return to the live stage in 2021.

The past year has been a previously unimaginable rollercoaster but we are grateful to have had our loyal supporters by our side at every turn. We began 2020 extremely well with *Home, I'm Darling* under the direction of Sarah Goodes in her last year with us as Associate Artistic Director, and *Torch the Place* directed by Dean Bryant – both productions achieving outstanding success. The latter closed a week early on that fateful weekend in March but was already a sell-out hit. We had also opened *Emerald City* but it too closed, this time a mere three days after opening. And then darkness descended on our theatres for the entire year, requiring a very quick pivot to an 'off-stage' enterprise.

The first thing we established was a new online hub to help audiences stay connected during this utterly disconnected time. MTC NOW was launched in April and intended to bring audiences some of the joy, curiosity and entertainment that a trip to the theatre would usually provide. Every week from then on, audiences had a dose of MTC to enjoy from wherever they were thanks to your generous support.

The range of special editorial and theatrical content included virtual tours, video Q&As with artists, an Open House Melbourne event, quizzes, recommendations from the MTC team, features on theatre-makers and our talented people behind the scenes, as well as new artistic projects like MTC Audio Lab and online readings.

While off-stage, there was still much happening as part of our ongoing artistic programs. We continued to develop new Australian stories at a great pace through our NEXT STAGE Writers' Program, working with writers and directors to shape the next suite of works that will grace ours and other stages around the nation. This happened in person when we could and on Zoom at other times.

We welcomed two new writers-in-residence and offered commissions to five more writers. Emme Hoy and Merlynn Tong joined the Company as our new resident writers, and three of our former residents became new commissionees: Andrea James, Elise Esther Hearst and Phillip Kavanagh. New commissions were also awarded to Nathan Maynard and Diana Nguyen.

That all this NEXT STAGE activity could happen is thanks to support of the donors, foundations and organisations of MTC's Playwrights' Giving Circle who make this landmark initiative possible.

Other artistic endeavours were our Women in Theatre program and Education program, both of which continued 'virtually' thanks to the ongoing support of our Women in Theatre and Education Giving Circles; our contribution to the annual Emerging Writers' Festival – First Stage with the support of the Vizard Foundation; and the awarding of a University of Melbourne MacGeorge fellowship to eminent dramaturg Ruth Little, who conducted online workshops with our writers.

As the financial details in this report attest, MTC did extraordinarily well in 2020 given the circumstances. To finish the year with a relatively modest deficit of \$1.7 million (which is 6-7% of our usual annual revenue) is a considerable achievement and ironically made our 2020 year one of the most financially successful in the national arts landscape – no mean feat. And that is thanks to the enormous sacrifices made by staff and artists, the support of our broad community including our Donors and the overall management of the emergency.

Our recovery from the crisis and mitigation of the artistic and financial losses of 2020 will be spread over our activities in 2021 and 2022. Both years will see the staging of shows cancelled in 2020, and will deliver a clean and healthy slate for the Company in its planning of 2023 and beyond.

As some will be aware, 2020 was my last full year with MTC. I will leave the Company towards the end of 2021 when we launch the 2022 program. Irony seems to abound at the moment, as it is the success of our management of 2020 and our carefully calibrated and curated program in 2021 with your support which will enable me to pass the baton of leadership of a wonderful and healthy organisation, poised to take a thrilling leap into the future. Once again, thank you for being the lifeblood of our creative community. We couldn't do it without you.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CO-CEO'S REPORT

VIRGINIA LOVETT



The announcement of the Federal Government's JobKeeper was very welcomed and gave the Company the ability to keep staff with crucial, theatre-specific expertise attached to MTC, ready for our return. It also provided our many casual staff with a salary for their months of unemployment.

As the year went on, there were many difficult but necessary decisions as we implemented strategic measures to stabilise the Company over what became a 10-month shutdown. All areas of the business were affected, reserves were drawn down, department specific workforce plans were introduced and many were stood down on JobKeeper. With immense stress and uncertainty around the world and in our professional lives, staff wellbeing was, as ever, a key concern and a priority throughout the year.

With Victoria's second lockdown, the cancellation of the rest of the season was inevitable yet still heartbreaking. We again rallied and started to plan for 2021 as a recovery year, folding in the cold reality of the COVID impact. We looked at every space and every operation with a new lens. On top of everything there was an underlying challenge – how to plan when we don't even know when we can open the doors?

With the wealth of creative thinkers in the building we landed on an option that would give us flexibility to navigate capacity restrictions and allow enough time to cancel if more lockdowns occurred. 2021 was to be presented in two acts, with a reduced season of plays.

The promise of our return in 2021 was only assured by the staggering generosity of our subscribers and donors such as you, who not only donated their tickets back to the Company, but also buoyed our spirits with constant displays of support. We were also heartened by the commitment of our many corporate partners who stood by us over this time. It all reinforced how important Melbourne Theatre Company is to this city and the lives of many people.

As a result of the strategic organisational measures we implemented and the incredible support from audiences, we ended the year with a deficit of \$1.7 million. While still a significant loss, it is a remarkable result all things considered.

To support our arts community in need, with your help we opened the sound studio at MTC HQ for free hire. Artists were able to access the space to record a project of their choosing with technical support from MTC team members. This was a hugely popular offering with over 25 projects supported – including an album by one of our production staff – before the stage 4 lockdown meant we had to close MTC HQ.

We also partnered with the Victorian Actors' Benevolent Trust in May for their VABT Virtual Big Bucket Rattle. This special digital campaign raised over \$80,000 for VABT's COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Fund and meant that our long-standing relationship could continue despite no performances to support their in-person fundraisers.

Throughout the year we were in frequent dialogue with government at all levels and appreciative of their openness to discuss the road to recovery for the Victorian arts sector. Our industry colleagues in the Melbourne Arts Precinct and our national theatre company colleagues rallied like never before to strategise, share best practices and offer a much needed shoulder of support.

In October we had welcome news that our funding application as part of the Federal Government's Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand Fund (RISE) was successful. This significant grant of over \$1 million will go towards the development of three new Australian productions in our 2021 program. The strategic investment in new Australian work, at such a crucial time for MTC, was a game changer and critical to helping us plan for 2021.

We were also grateful to the Victorian State Government for their help in getting us get ready to welcome our audiences back. Through Creative Victoria's Strategic Investment Fund, we received assistance with COVID-safe infrastructure and artistic projects at Southbank Theatre.

With such support in addition to the ongoing generosity of those closest to us, we were able to close the year on a note of optimism and look forward to our reopening and the beginnings of our recovery.

We continue to face a challenging year ahead with a reduced season, revenue centres forecasted down and the looming presence of COVID-19. Recovery will take a number of years as we start to reopen the Company, rebuild audience confidence, replenish our reserves and play a vital role in the revival of our great state. It will be a long road ahead but once again, thank you for your critical support in 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Lovett'.

It's still too early to process the full impact the COVID-19 pandemic will have, not only on MTC but on the broader arts and entertainment industry – particularly in Victoria where the creative industries have always played an enormous role in driving economic benefits for the state. What we do know is that your remarkable generosity ensured we survived the seismic trauma of 2020.

Following a very successful January and February with critically acclaimed productions and sold-out seasons, the year was to take a very different turn. On Friday 13 March, the Company and our world turned upside down. Eleven of the twelve shows in our 2020 season were cancelled or closed early, realising \$13.7 million in box office loss, a 60% reduction in overall revenue and 345 jobs lost for artists, crew, makers and venue staff.

The Executive quickly identified the escalating situation, and the impact it would have. We moved to triage costs, reschedule shows and model how we could sustain the Company in order to be ready to return to the stage as quickly as possible. The Company was catapulted into the new world of working remotely while MTC HQ operated on skeleton staff to continue set construction and ticketing operations along with in-person artistic activities while restrictions permitted. Thank you for your help in enabling us to adapt and remain a home for artists and creatives.



# 2020 PRODUCTIONS

## HOME, I'M DARLING

by Laura Wade

20 January–29 February

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner



## TORCH THE PLACE

by Benjamin Law

8 February–14 March

(scheduled to 21 March before shutdown)

Arts Centre Melbourne, Fairfax Studio



## EMERALD CITY

by David Williamson

6 March–14 March

(scheduled to 18 April before shutdown)

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner





# DONOR EVENTS

## HOME, I'M DARLING POST-SHOW COCKTAIL PARTY

Following the performance of *Home, I'm Darling* on Tuesday 4 February, Donors attended a post-show cocktail party to meet with members of the cast and director Sarah Goodes in the MTC Lounge, Southbank Theatre.



(Top left) Kay Ronec and Toby Truslove; (top right) Michelle Nielsen, Nikki Sheils, Diana Burleigh and John Nielsen; (bottom left) Jill Buchanan, Ann Cutts, Jane Turner and Sarah Goodes; (bottom right) Yvonne Constantine, Peter Paltos and Sandy Constantine

## TORCH THE PLACE POST-SHOW COCKTAIL PARTY

After the show on Tuesday 25 February, MTC Donors celebrated *Torch the Place* with the cast and director Dean Bryant at a post-show cocktail party in Amcor Lounge, Arts Centre Melbourne.



(Top left) Adrian Nelson, Louise Nelson and Max Brown; (top right) Fiona Choi, Anna Pecora, Nancy Pecora, Max Brown, Diana Lin, Michael Bowden and Graham Wademan; (bottom left) Fiona Choi, Max Brown, Charles Wu, Diana Lin and Michelle Lim Davidson; (bottom right) Anna Pecora, Michelle Lim Davidson and Nancy Pecora



# CANCELLED PRODUCTIONS

As a result of the COVID-19 public health crisis and associated lockdowns, nine of MTC's 2020 productions were cancelled entirely in addition to the early closures of *Torch the Place* and *Emerald City*.

Across the year, a total of 417 performances were cancelled.



AN MTC NEXTSTAGE ORIGINAL  
**BERLIN**

by Joanna Murray-Smith

**25 April–6 June**  
Southbank Theatre, The Sumner



AN MTC NEXTSTAGE ORIGINAL  
**SLAP. BANG. KISS.**

by Dan Giovannoni

**7 May–23 May**  
Southbank Theatre, The Lawler

**26 May–27 May**  
Bunjil Place, Narre Warren

**29 May**  
Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo

**2 June**  
Mildura Arts Centre

**5 June**  
The Drum, Dandenong

**10 June**  
West Gippsland Arts Centre,  
Warragul

**12 June**  
Potato Shed, Drysdale

**13 June**  
Karralyka Centre, Ringwood

**16 June–17 June**  
Launceston College

**19 June**  
Horsham Town Hall



**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES**

by Hannah Moscovitch

**15 May–27 June**  
Arts Centre Melbourne,  
Fairfax Studio



AN MTC NEXTSTAGE ORIGINAL  
**THE HEARTBREAK CHOIR**

by Aidan Fennesy

**13 June–18 July**  
Southbank Theatre, The Sumner



**TRUE WEST**

by Sam Shepard

**1 August–4 September**  
Southbank Theatre, The Sumner



**GIRLS & BOYS**

by Dennis Kelly

**30 October–12 December**  
Arts Centre Melbourne,  
Fairfax Studio



**FUN HOME**

Music by Jeanine Tesori,  
book and lyrics by Lisa Kron  
Based on the graphic novel  
by Alison Bechdel

**15 July–15 August**  
Arts Centre Melbourne, Playhouse



Shakespeare's

**AS YOU LIKE IT**

**14 September–24 October**  
Southbank Theatre, The Sumner



**SUNSHINE SUPER GIRL**

by Andrea James

**20 November–19 December**  
Southbank Theatre, The Sumner



# DIGITAL DONOR EVENTS

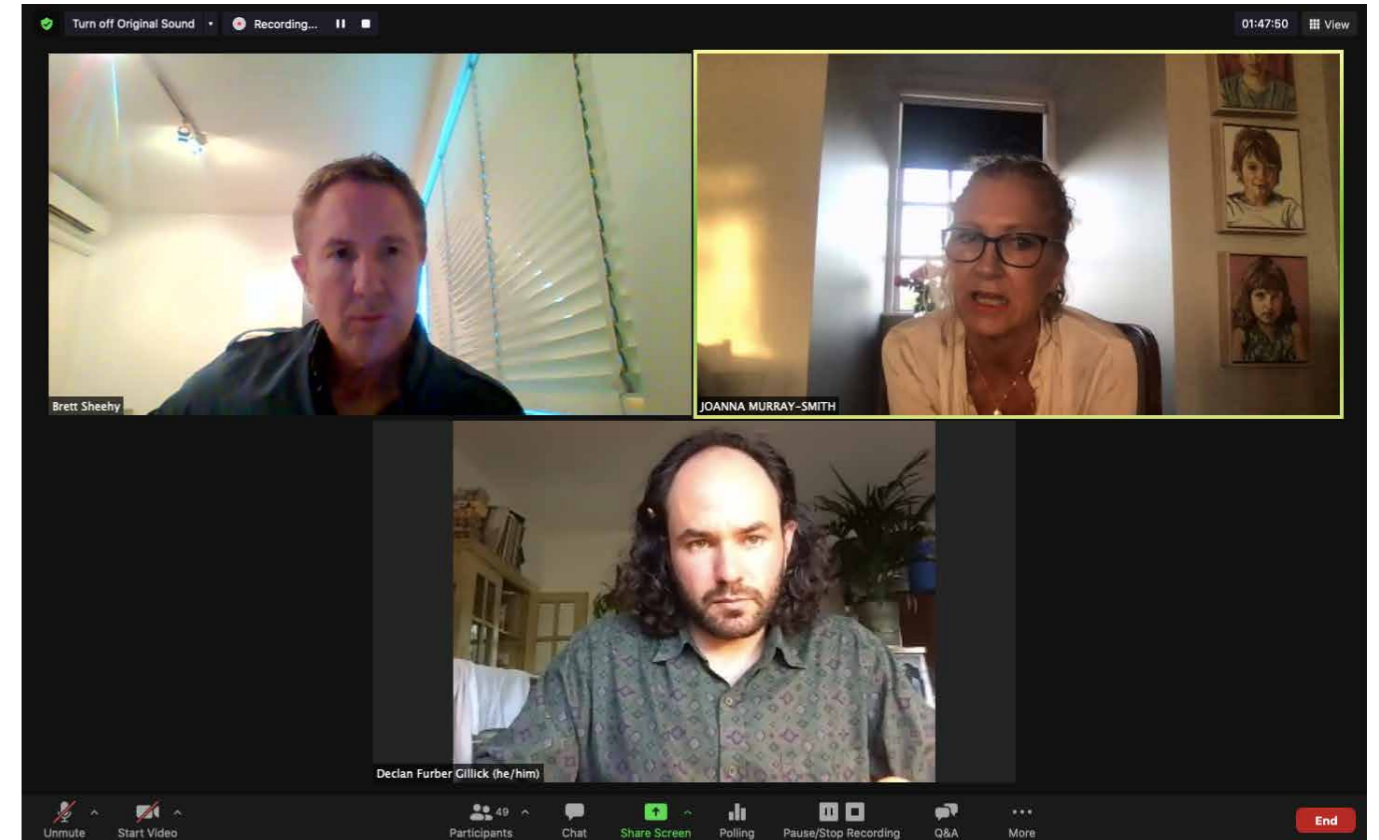


With seven of our scheduled MTC Donor events cancelled along with Season 2020 productions, our community of supporters were invited to engage virtually with MTC creatives. Three events were curated especially for Donors as a thank you for your generous support while we were offstage.

## BRETT SHEEHY AO AND SIMON PHILLIPS IN CONVERSATION

Thursday 8 October, 6.30pm  
Zoom Webinar

This event featured MTC Artistic Director & CEO Brett Sheehy AO in conversation with former MTC Artistic Director and leading theatre director Simon Phillips, with an appearance by MTC Executive Director & Co-CEO Virginia Lovett to host her beloved trivia – a staple of in-person Donor events.



## PLAYWRIGHTS IN CONVERSATION

Thursday 19 November, 6.30pm  
Zoom Webinar

Donors joined NEXT STAGE playwrights Joanna Murray-Smith and Declan Furber Gillick in conversation hosted by Brett Sheehy AO over Zoom, with a message from MTC Foundation Board Chair Janette Kendall.

## MTC 2021 – ACT 1 BRIEFING

Thursday 3 December, 6.30pm  
Zoom Webinar

With restrictions lifting, we were thrilled to share MTC's plans for 2021 to Donors ahead of the public announcement. Following a welcome by MTC Board Chair Jane Hansen AO, Donors joined Brett Sheehy AO and Virginia Lovett as they revealed details of MTC's year in two acts and the programming for Act 1.



# MTC EDUCATION GIVING CIRCLE

‘We are very grateful for the supporters of the [MTC Education] program that enable us to access it for free. MTC are always thinking of ways to connect to regional areas in their educational programs as well as delivery of performances and teacher training. Thank you so much.’

— Teacher, St Joseph’s College Mildura

MTC Education connects young people and teachers to first-rate learning opportunities. Each year MTC runs a range of enrichment programs, scholarships and workshops designed to foster students’ love and understanding of the creative industries.

Despite the impact of the COVID crisis on arts and education in Victoria, MTC Education continued to find imaginative and innovative ways to best support Victorian students in 2020 thanks to the generosity of our MTC Education Giving Circle Donors.

These included a virtual tour of MTC HQ and Southbank Theatre, video workshops and interviews with MTC creatives as well as interactive show related digital content. MTC Education continues to produce more online resources and opportunities for remote engagement than ever before, in response to both demand from schools and requests from the Department of Education.

## VIRTUAL SCHOOL VICTORIA PARTNERSHIP

MTC again worked with Virtual School Victoria on the delivery of an online Year 8 Drama course, providing weekly online lessons, which culminated in a virtual performance via Webex. MTC Education also created bespoke digital resources for the school’s new VCE Drama and Theatre Studies courses.

## YEAR 8 DRAMA COURSE

July–December | Online Teaching

**Guest Artists** Roshelle Fong, Madelaine Nunn, Jacob Battista, Izabella Yena, Aljin Abella

**Participants** 76

**New resources created** 29

**Producer** Nick Tranter

*Supported by Virtual School Victoria.*

## WEBINARS

### SLAP. BANG. KISS. LIVE STREAM Q&A

11 September | Online

An opportunity to engage with cast and creatives of *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* as they provided insights into the theatre-making process.

**Guest Artists** Dan Giovannoni, Prue Clark, Ian Moorhead, Kate Davis, Amelia Lever-Davidson, Tahlee Fereday, Artemis Ioannides, Conor Leach

**Facilitator** Nick Tranter

**Participants** 65



## TORCH THE PLACE REVISION

28 October | Online

VCE Theatre Studies revision with the director and members of the *Torch the Place* cast. This session was complemented by an interactive revision resource available on MTC’s website.

**Guest Artists** Michelle Lim Davidson, Max Brown, Dean Bryant

**Facilitator** Nick Tranter

**Participants** 197

## VICTORIAN CHALLENGE & ENRICHMENT SERIES

An extension program for high-ability students in Years 9 & 10 was offered free to Victorian Government schools.

### DISCOVERING THEATRE WITH MTC: EXPLORING SLAP. BANG. KISS.

3 September–11 September | Online

### MAKING THEATRE WITH MTC: EXPLORING EGG

27 October–5 November | Online

**Teaching Artists** Krystalla Pearce, Suzie Thomas, Nick Tranter

**Participants** 142

*Supported by the Victorian Government.*

## TEACHER AS ARTIST DIGITAL PD WEEK

A series of online professional development events for educators.

30 November–3 December | Online

**Guest Artists** Sarah Goodes, Petra Kalive, Jacob Battista, Clemence Williams, Fiona Choi

**Facilitator** Nick Tranter

**Participants** 22

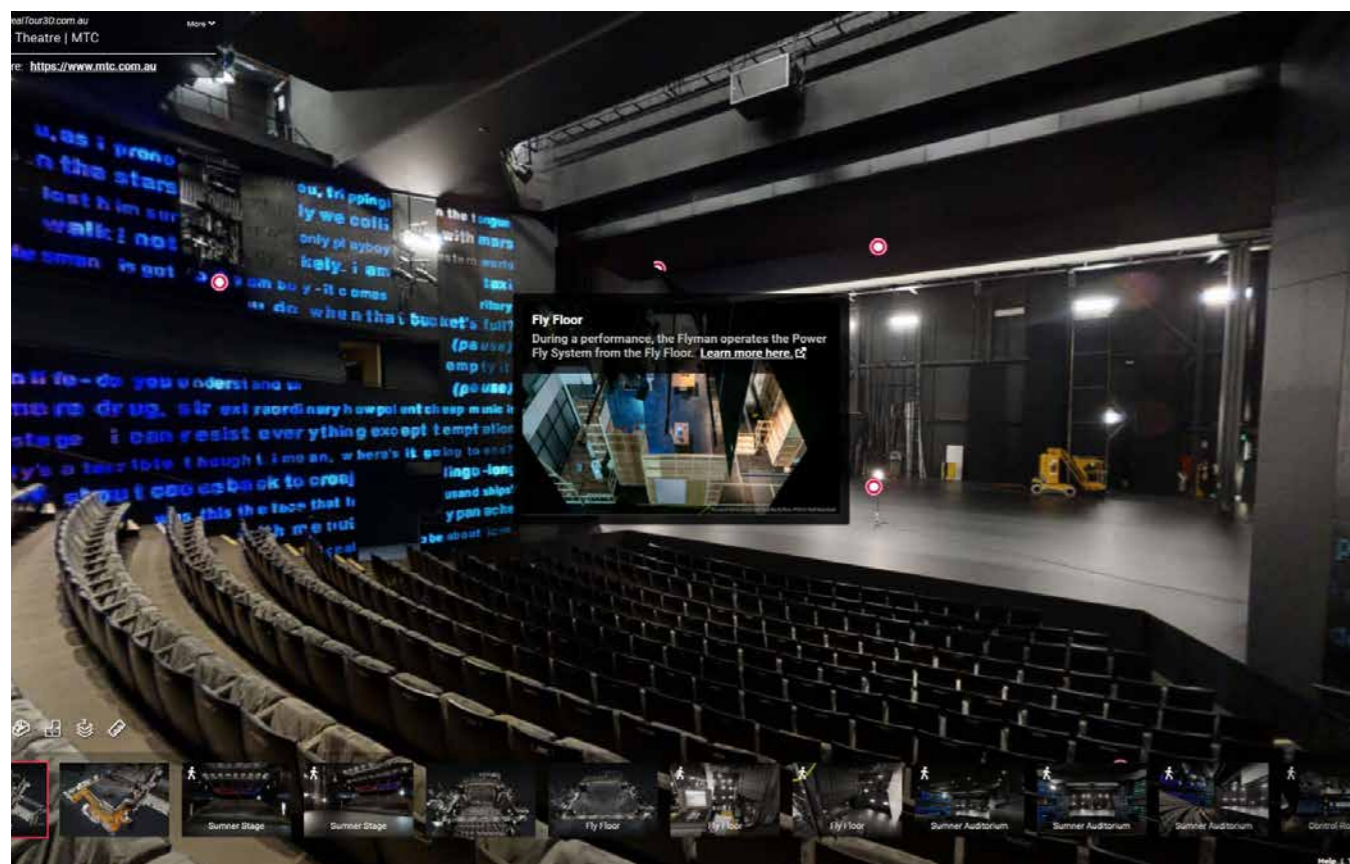
*Regional participant places supported by the Gailey Lazarus Foundation.*

## HQ TOURS

In person guided tours of MTC’s headquarters in Southbank took students behind the scenes to see the workshops, rehearsal rooms and production areas. HQ tours were run in January before being cancelled due to the shutdown. For the remainder of 2020, schools were able to access the virtual tour.

**Participants** 60





## PRE-SHOW TALKS

Pre-show talks and post-show Q&As were held for *Torch the Place*. Others were scheduled for productions later in the year, which were subsequently cancelled.

4 & 11 March | Fairfax Studio

**Teaching Artist** Meg Upton

**Participants** 302

## DIGITAL RESOURCES

MTC has a growing array of digital education resources available free of charge to help students and teachers get the most out of their MTC experience.

### VIRTUAL TOURS

3D interactive tours of Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ. The tour of Southbank Theatre was completed and made available in 2020.

### MORNING TEA WITH MTC

A new video series featuring MTC staff and artists answering questions submitted by students during Melbourne's first lockdown.

### EDUCATION PACKS

Learning resources to prepare students to see an MTC show, unpack the content, and revise for exams.

### VCE INTERACTIVES

Resources to explore key terms in VCE Drama and Theatre Studies with examples from MTC productions.

### PRODUCTION ROLES RESOURCE LIBRARY

A suite of resources to learn about how theatre is made.

### PLAY RESOURCES

Teaching materials for plays popular with schools. Supported by the Victorian Department of Education and Training. Select VCE resources produced in collaboration with Virtual School Victoria.

## EDUCATION ACTIVITIES CANCELLED AS A RESULT OF SHUTDOWN

### SLAP. BANG. KISS.

Melbourne season | 7 May–23 May

Regional tour | 26 May–19 June

### PRE-SHOW TALKS FOR SLAP. BANG. KISS. AND FUN HOME

11, 13 & 18 May; 5 August

### BETTY AMSDEN YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP COURSE

21–25 September

### FIRST PEOPLES YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM

29 June–3 July; 28 September–2 October; 30

November–4 December

### REGIONAL TEACHER PD WORKSHOPS

June; December

### WORK EXPERIENCE

March–August

## THE GERALDINE LAZARUS REGIONAL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Workshops for students in regional schools around Victoria moved online after the shutdown. In 2020, workshops included: Exploring Macbeth; MTC's Production Processes; and bespoke workshops for VCE Theatre Studies and English.

**March–November** | Online from April

**4 March** | Lavers Hill K-12 College

**6 May** | Bayview College

**20 May** | Mildura Senior College

**29 May** | Bellarine Secondary College

**16 June** | Mortlake Secondary College

**27 May** | Bayview College

**12 August** | St Joseph's College Mildura

**14 August** | Bellarine Secondary College

**7 September** | Tallangatta Secondary College

**22 October** | Warrnambool College

**11 November** | Kurunjang Secondary College

**12 November** | Kurunjang Secondary College

**Teaching Artists** Nick Tranter, Darcy Brown, Suzie Thomas

**Guest Artists** Nadine Garner, Michelle Lim Davidson, Dean Bryant, Ian Moorhead, Frank Stoffels, Kerry Saxby

**Participants** 227

*MTC thanks the Gailey Lazarus Foundation for their incredible generosity in enabling MTC's Regional Enrichment Program.*

*MTC thanks the Victorian Department of Education and our 2020 Education Giving Circle Donors who made this program possible: Paul & Wendy Bonnici and Family, Judy Bourke, Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM, The Cordiners, Ann Darby, Bruce Freeman, Linda Herd, Larry Kornhauser and Natalya Gill, Hart Line Fund (a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation), Mark and Jennifer Hayes, Roslyn and Richard Rogers Family, Hilary and Stuart Scott, Richard and Debra Tegoni, Walter and Gertie Wagner, Ann and Alan Wilkinson, Anonymous (4).*



# YOUTH AMBASSADORS

‘In a year that has been truly difficult, I feel incredibly lucky to have been part of the theatre world and to have been on the receiving end of the stories, advice and experiences of some very talented people.’ — Katherine, 2020 Youth Ambassador

April – December | Online

## Participants 17

With the support of the Youth Ambassadors Giving Circle, each year since 2010 MTC has provided a rare insight into the world of professional theatre for a group of Year 11 theatre-lovers from across Victoria.

In 2020, 17 students were selected to participate including:

- 7 male, 10 female
- 8 government schools, 9 non-government
- 8 from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- 3 from regional schools
- 3 from low-ICSEA schools
- 2 students who previously completed work experience at MTC

Though the program could not proceed in person in 2020, participants were still able to meet and engage in the enrichment program digitally. Online Ambassador sessions included screenings of classic theatre productions through Digital Theatre+ - the world’s largest provider of filmed theatre performances and online drama education resources. These sessions also served as an opportunity to meet MTC artists including actors Michelle Lim Davidson and Nadine Garner.

With the support of our Donors, this cohort will continue to engage with MTC in person in 2021 with a new selection of participants.

*MTC thanks our Youth Ambassadors Giving Circle for their generous support of this program: Melody and Jonathan Feder, Bruce Freeman, Linda Herd, Jock and Jenny Jeffries, Larry Kornhauser and Natalya Gill, Tom and Ruth O’Dea, Heather and Simon McKeon, Ging Muir and John McCawley, Suzy and Dr Mark Suss, Kevin and Elizabeth Walsh, Jan Williams.*





# WOMEN IN THEATRE

‘The Women in Theatre Program has provided invaluable industry knowledge and insight into people’s real experiences working in the arts. I have found discussions with the group extremely grounding, connecting all of us to share stories and ways of working.’

— Piper Huynh, Executive Management Participant 2020/21

MTC’s industry-leading Women in Theatre Program helps create opportunities for women pursuing careers in a range of disciplines from production to artistic and executive management.

In 2020, the program welcomed 12 new participants who took part in a year of mentoring and career development and workshops, thanks to the generous support of our Women in Theatre Giving Circle.

## FEBRUARY–DECEMBER

This program took place at MTC HQ and then remotely during MTC’s shutdown.

## PARTICIPANTS

**Veronique Bennett** – Lighting Design

Mentor: Anouk van Dijk, Choreographer and Artistic Director

**Ashlee Clapp** – Sound Composition

Mentor: Darius Kedros, Composer and Sound Designer

**Briony Dunn** – Programming

Mentor: Sam Strong, Director

**Emma Gibson** – Dramaturgy

Mentor: Jenni Medway, MTC Literary Associate

**Amy Holley** – Sound Design

Mentor: Petra Kalive, MTC Associate Director

**Piper Huynh** – Executive Management

Mentor: Martina Murray, MTC Director of Artistic Operations/Senior Producer

**Brynna Lowen** – Set & Costume Design

Mentor: Bridget Balodis, Director in Residence, Malthouse Theatre

**Katy Maudlin** – Director

Mentor: Helen Bowden, Producer, Lingo Pictures

**Tariro Mavondo** – Artistic Direction

Mentors: Leticia Cáceres, Director, Caroline Stacey, Artistic Director, The Street

**Krystalla Pearce** – Arts Education

Mentor: Sarah Goodes, MTC Associate Artistic Director

**Clare Rankine** – Producer

Mentor: Marline Zaibak, Company Manager, Malthouse Theatre

**Jamaica Zuanetti** – Playwright

Mentor: Joanna Murray-Smith, Playwright

## SALON AND WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Erica Bagshaw

Selene Bateman

Gabriel Edwards

Tariro Mavondo & Penny Harpham

Sam Strong

MTC staff

*MTC thanks our Women in Theatre Giving Circle who generously enabled the 2020 program: Amanda and Mark Derham, Christine Gilbertson, Charles and Cornelia Goode Foundation, Sarah Gorman, Jane Hodder, Janette Kendall, Lord Family, Kim and Peter Monk, Leigh O’Neill, Prof Hannah Piterman, Richard and Debra Tegoni, Marion Webster OAM, Anonymous.*





# NEXT STAGE

‘In TV writing, all the development is done behind locked, closed doors. So it was an insanely intimidating prospect to have my foetus of a play workshopped with actors, so I could redraft it for a reading with a live audience. But now I’m on the other side ... this process doesn’t just strike me as a creative privilege and luxury, but a creative necessity ... I’m nothing short of indebted to NEXT STAGE and its supporters for that.’

— Benjamin Law, *Torch The Place* playwright and Year Two Commissioned Writer



In February 2020, we opened our second ever NEXT STAGE Original Production for the Mainstage with Benjamin Law’s *Torch the Place*, with three more NEXT STAGE Originals to be premiered throughout 2020. Unfortunately, restrictions saw the mid-season cancellation of *Torch The Place* and postponement of the NEXT STAGE Originals *Berlin* by Joanna Murray Smith, MTC Education Production *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* by Dan Giovannoni and *The Heartbreak Choir* by the late Aidan Fennessy.

There were also multiple workshops, readings and developments scheduled for our cohorts of Commissioned Writers in 2020 affected by the pandemic. Despite this, MTC’s Literary and Artistic Teams worked with speed, flexibility and dedication to reimagine much of the program for online or digital delivery in 2020, and even managed to facilitate four socially distanced development workshops and rehearsals during the restrictions over the first six months of 2020.

## WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE

In August MTC welcomed two new writers-in-residence: Emme Hoy and Merlynn Tong. Across the program to date there have been 11 resident placements, with all previous years’ residents going on to receive play commissions.

## COMMISSIONED WRITERS

- Van Badham
- Angus Cerini
- Patricia Cornelius
- Aidan Fennessy
- Declan Furber Gillick
- Louris van de Geer
- Dan Giovannoni
- Michael Gow
- Elise Esther Hearst and Phillip Kavanagh (2020 co-commission)
- Tom Holloway
- Andrea James (2020 commission)
- Anchuli Felicia King
- Benjamin Law
- Nathan Maynard (2020 commission)
- Joanna Murray-Smith
- Ellen van Neerven
- Diana Nguyen (2020 commission)
- Joe Penhall
- Leah Purcell
- Chris Ryan, Megan Washington (composer) and Mark Leonard Winter
- Melissa Reeves
- Natesha Somasundaram
- Chris Summers
- Kylie Trounson

NEXT STAGE is made possible by the donors, foundations and organisations of MTC’s Playwrights Giving Circle:

Louise Myer and Martyn Myer AO, Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO, Christine Brown Bequest, Allan Myers AC QC and Maria Myers AC, Tony Burgess and Janine Burgess, Dr Andrew McAliece and Dr Richard Simmie, Larry Kamener and Petra Kamener





# CYBEC ELECTRIC

Cybec Electric is an annual series of public play readings of new works made possible by The Cybec Foundation. Cybec Electric took place in February featuring the work of nine talented playwrights, including three of MTC's NEXT STAGE writers-in-residence.

## 27-29 FEBRUARY SOUTHBANK THEATRE, THE LAWLER

**Total Performances** 5

**Paid Attendance** 238

**Literary Director** Chris Mead

**Literary Associate** Jennifer Medway

**Programs Producer** Karin Farrell

**Stage Manager** Pippa Wright

**Lawler Supervisor** James Paul

## CYBEC SCENES 1

### 27 & 29 FEBRUARY

*THE O'GRADYS* by Charles O'Grady

*MONUMENT* by Emily Sheehan

*GOLDEN BLOOD* by Merlynn Tong

**Director** Rachel Chant

**Cast** Cheryl Ho, Nisha Joseph, Kurt Pimblett, Nikki Viveca, Gareth Yuen

**Cybec Electric Intern** Meta Cohen

## CYBEC SCENES 2

### 28 & 29 FEBRUARY

*CELEBRITY SKIN* by Alistair Baldwin

*BOLLYWOOD DREAMING* by Andrea Fernandez

*KINDER SURPRISE* by Madelaine Nunn

**Director** Mark Wilson

**Cast** Heidi Arena, Cheryl Ho, Nisha Joseph, Kurt Pimblett, Glenn Shea, Gareth Yuen Cybec

**Electric Intern** Emma Fawcett

## NEXT (ON) STAGE

### 28 FEBRUARY

A presentation of new works by NEXT STAGE writers-in-residence: Elise Esther Hearst, Andrea James and Phillip Kavanagh in conversation with MTC Literary Team Chris Mead and Jenni Medway.

**Cast** Heidi Arena, Cheryl Ho, Kurt Pimblett, Maurial Spearim, Nikki Viveca, Gareth Yuen

**Cybec Electric Intern** Fleur Murphy

**Cybec Foundation** Thank you to The Cybec Foundation whose generous support makes this initiative possible.





# LITERARY DEVELOPMENT

## COMMISSIONS

In addition to plays developing through MTC's NEXT STAGE Writers' Program, the Company has a number of other commissions underway that continued their development in 2020.

### COMMISSIONS SUPPORTED BY THE JOAN AND PETER CLEMENGER TRUST

Kylie Coolwell  
Anthony Weigh

## FIRST STAGE

In partnership with the Emerging Writers' Festival, MTC's Literary Department worked with Ilbijerri Theatre and Footscray Community Arts Centre to select four emerging playwrights as they developed short, sharp works over a series of intensive workshops.

### WRITERS

Nazaree Dickerson, Grace Feng Fang Juan, Artemis Munoz and Anisa Nandaula

21 June

Online via Zoom



MTC's partnership with Emerging Writers' Festival to present First Stage is generously enabled by The Vizard Foundation.

## MTC AT MPAVILION

MTC partnered with MPavilion for their 2019/20 program, presenting two free events in early 2020 that featured members of MTC's NEXT STAGE Writers' Program. The final event in the series was due to take place in March but was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

### IN CONVERSATION WITH ANDREA JAMES

20 January

MPavilion, Queen Victoria Gardens

### ASIATOPA TAKEOVER: BENJAMIN LAW ON TORCH THE PLACE

20 February

MPavilion, Queen Victoria Gardens

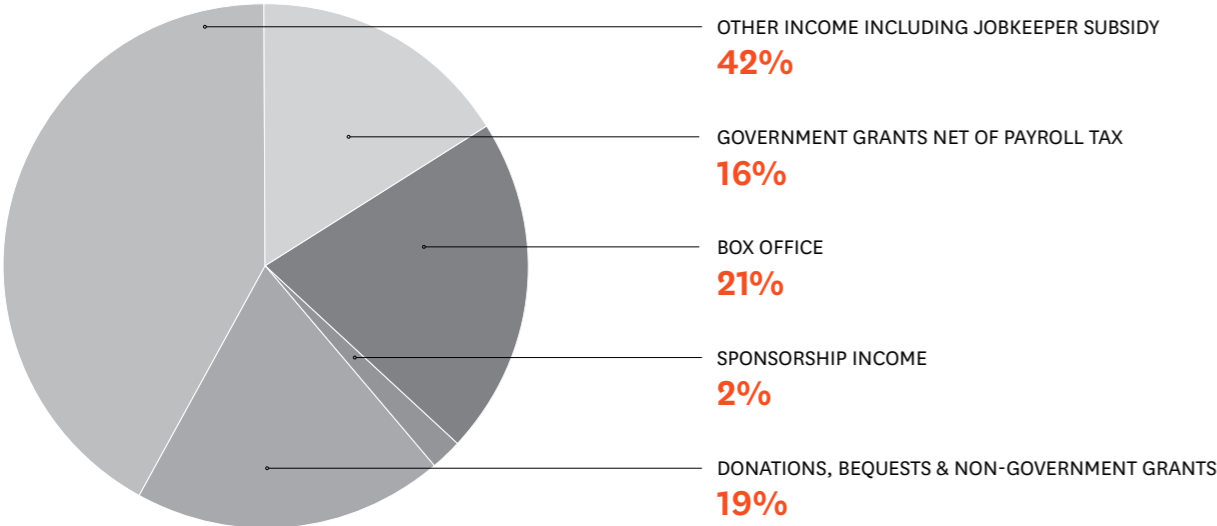
*In partnership with Arts Centre Melbourne.*



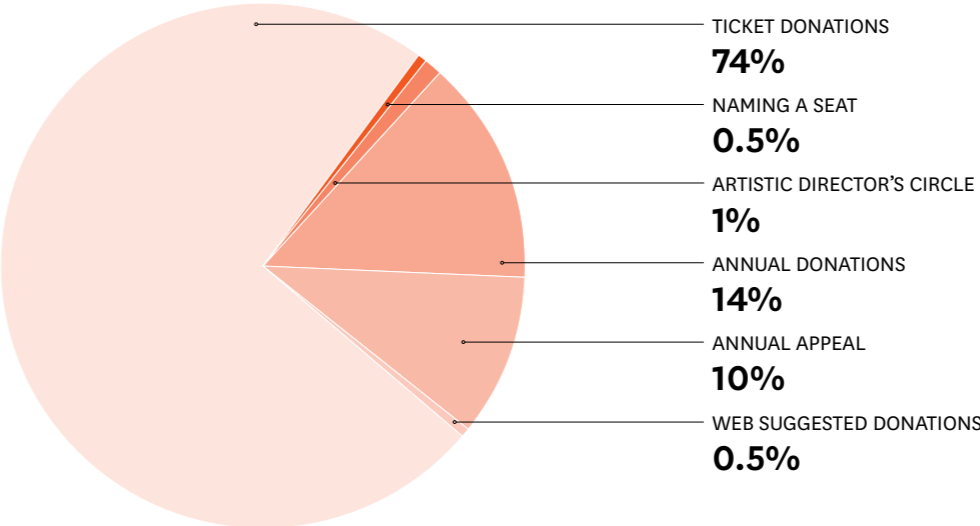


# FINANCIAL REPORT 2020

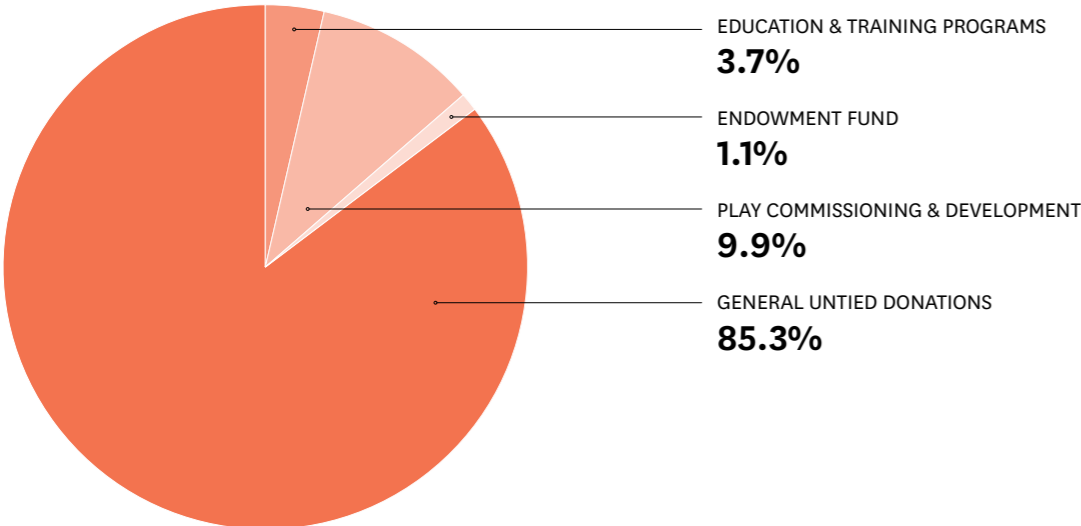
## 2020 INCOME - \$16.1M



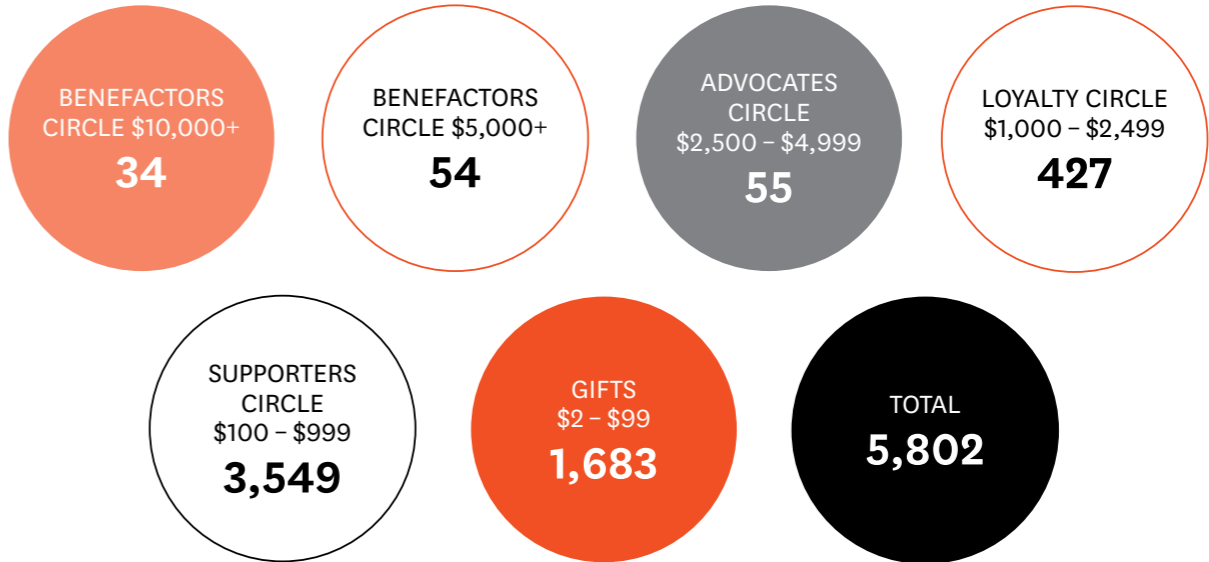
## BREAKDOWN OF UNTIED DONATIONS



## TOTAL DONATIONS (EQUALLING 19% OF MTC'S 2020 INCOME)



## 2020 ANNUAL GIVING DONORS BY CIRCLE





# MTC FOUNDATION BOARD

## JANETTE KENDALL – CHAIR

Non-Executive Director of Vicinity Centres, Tabcorp, Costa Group, Australian Venue Co, Visit Victoria and KM Property Funds; Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Member of Chief Executive Women. MTC Board Member; MTC Foundation Board Member 2015–2020 and Chair January–December 2020.

## PAUL BONNICI

Investor and Advisor to Good Stuff Global Pty Ltd; Board Member of the National Gallery of Victoria Foundation Board; Director, Boncal Group. Former Chair of Melbourne Spring Fashion Week, Board Member Olivia Newton John Cancer and Wellness Centre Appeals Board, Chair of RMIT Fashion Design & Enterprise Advisory Board. MTC Foundation Board Member since July 2018.

## SHANE GILD

Non-Executive Director, PayGroup Ltd. Former Executive Director at Canaccord Genuity and Senior Director at Deutsche Bank with over 20 years' experience in equities and capital markets. MTC Foundation Board Member since October 2020.

## JANE GROVER

CEO of SMCT; Chair for the Centre of Contemporary Photography; former General Manager Crown Resorts various portfolios, former Executive Manager Starwood Group. MTC Foundation Board Member since October 2020.

## LOUISE MYER

Founding Director of the Myer Community Foundation (Myer Stores); Former Board Director of Asialink; Founder and owner, Whare Kea Lodge, New Zealand; 2013 Relais & Châteaux Woman of the Year; trained at Hotel de Varenne, Paris; prominent Melbourne philanthropist and generous supporter of the Arts. MTC Foundation Board Member since January 2016.

## LEIGH O'NEILL

Executive General Manager, Global Financial Services, Xero; Chair of Chunky Move; Committee Member of Human Rights Watch Australia. Former EGM, Consumer Customer Solutions, NAB and Board Member for the Griffin Theatre Company. MTC Foundation Board Member since March 2015.

## HILARY SCOTT

Senior Counsel, GFG Alliance; previously Corporate Counsel, Kin Group Pty Ltd; Legal Counsel, Pact Group Holdings; Legal Counsel, Symbion formerly Mayne Group Limited; Lawyer, Deacons (now Norton Rose Fulbright). MTC Foundation Board Member since January 2016.

## TRACEY SISSON

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## LIZ CHAPPELL

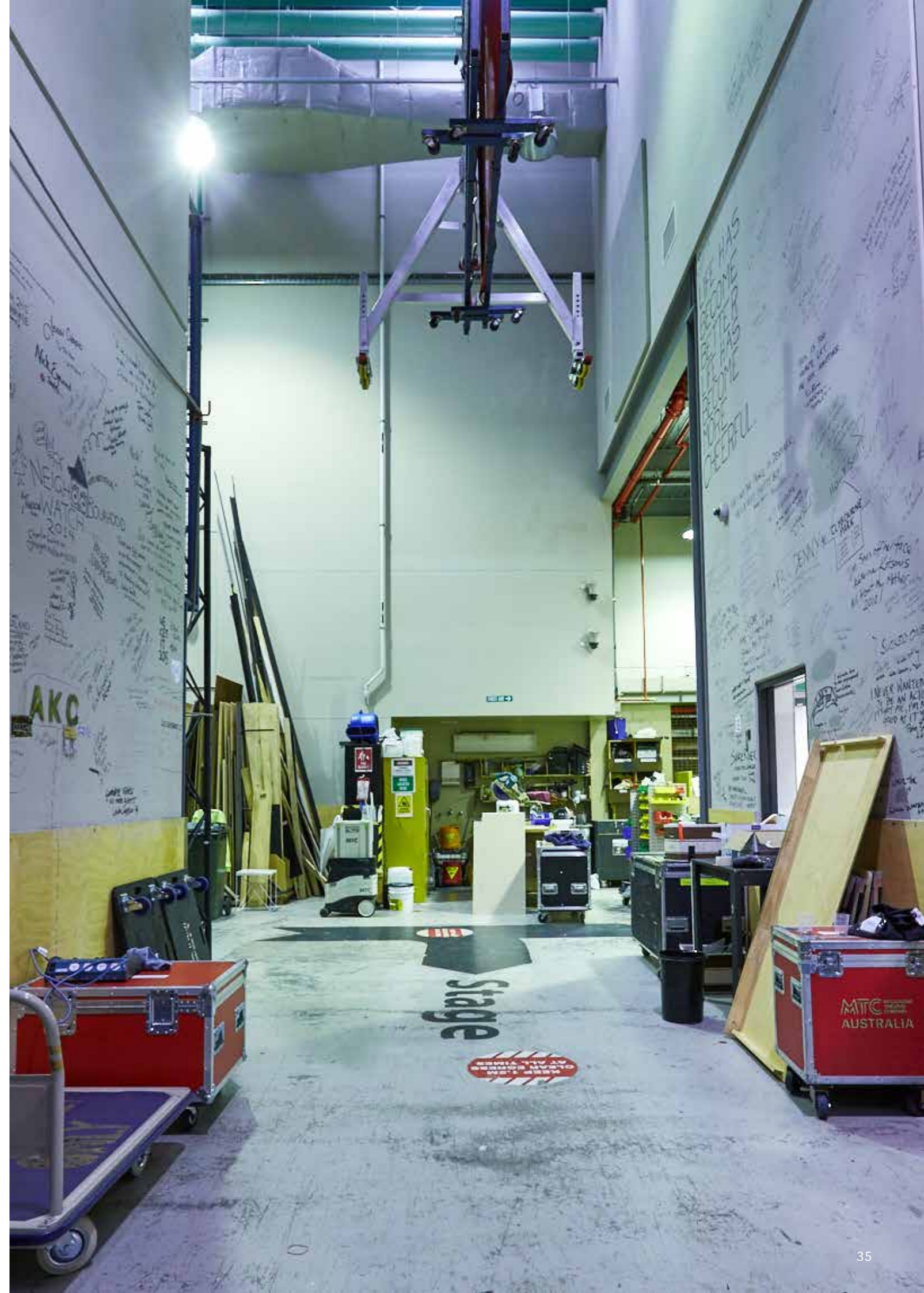
MTC Finance Director; MTC Foundation Board Member since March 2015.

## VIRGINIA LOVETT

MTC Executive Director and Co-CEO. MTC Foundation Board Member since January 2015.

## RUPERT SHERWOOD

MTC Director of Development. MTC Foundation Board Member since January 2019.





# CIRCLES OF GIVING

## MTC LIFETIME PATRONS

Acknowledging a lifetime of extraordinary support for MTC.

Pat Burke Peter Clemenger AO and Joan Clemenger AO	Greig Gailey and Dr Geraldine Lazarus Allan Myers AC QC and Maria Myers AC	The Late Biddy Ponsford The Late Dr Roger Riordan AM Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO	Ursula Whiteside Caroline Young and Derek Young AM
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## ENDOWMENT DONORS

Supporting the long term sustainability and creative future of MTC.

<b>Leading Gifts</b> Jane Hansen AO and Paul Little AO The University of Melbourne	<b>\$50,000+</b> Geoffrey Cohen AM Orcadia Foundation The Late Biddy Ponsford Andrew Sisson AO and Tracey Sisson	<b>\$20,000+</b> Robert A. Dunster Prof Margaret Gardner AO and Prof Glyn Davis AC Anne and Mark Robertson OAM	<b>\$10,000+</b> Jane Kunstler Anonymous
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## MTC'S PLAYWRIGHTS GIVING CIRCLE

Supporting the NEXT STAGE Writers' Program.

Louise Myer and Martyn Myer AO, Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO, Christine Brown Bequest, Allan Myers AC QC and Maria Myers AC, Tony Burgess and Janine Burgess, Dr Andrew McAlicie and Dr Richard Simmie, Larry Kamener and Petra Kamener



## TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS



## ANNUAL GIVING

Donors whose recent gifts help MTC enrich and transform lives through the finest theatre imaginable.

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A collective of Donors helping MTC return to the stage in 2021.

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Anita Petris and Mark Roberts  
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Suzanne and Anthony Wedd  
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Richard Armitage  
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Dr Peter and Dr Carole Wigg  
Ann and Alan Wilkinson  
Jan Williams  
Peter Winspur and Bruce Dixon  
Rosslyn, Brad and Abby Yelland  
Mandy and Edward Yencken  
Greg Young  
Amy and David Zeplin  
Anonymous (193)



# MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

We were buoyed by the generosity and messages of support received from our Donors during our time offstage in 2020:

I'm looking forward to the return of MTC when the time is right. I have no doubt that people will come to recognise the value and importance of live performance after time in isolation!

**We are pleased to be able to continue to support you at this time. We have had a lifetime of enjoyment from the Company, and have been delighted to watch as our children have grown to share that enjoyment.**

I will greatly enjoy the future performances at MTC again knowing how important they are to society.

**You and the MTC have given me so much pleasure it is hard to imagine the pain the arts generally is experiencing. I hope soon we will be back and giving you all standing ovations.**

We share your fervent hope that MTC is back on the live stage in the very near future.

**Gosh, life without live theatre is awful, we really miss the buzz and excitement of the whole theatre experience, all the more to look forward to when we meet again.**

I have subscribed to MTC for fifty years – going right back to ‘Young Parents Previews’ – and have been donors for much of that period. YPP was a concession which provided free childcare/babysitting as well as discounted tickets to young families. I have always felt we owed a little extra to MTC, which is why we feel privileged to be able to do something at times like these. We can ill afford to lose MTC or any of the people associated with the Company.

**We look forward to a time when we are able to come out of isolation and can experience the pure joy of live theatre.**

Thanks to MTC and all the artists and support team for many years of happy, enjoyable, provocative and entertaining performances. It is our honour to support you all through this difficult time, so that you are able to continue the important role you play in developing the Arts in Victoria.