
BELCONNEN COMMUNITY ARTS & CULTURE PROGRAM

A PROJECT OF BELCONNEN COMMUNITY SERVICE
SUPPORTED BY THE ACT GOVERNMENT

ARTISTIC REPORT 2007

CONTENTS

Introduction
The Venues
Community Cultural Projects
Support for Artists
Partnerships
Promotion and Marketing
Program Staff
Statistics Summary



INTRODUCTION

2007 was the 2nd year of a multi year funding agreement with artsACT, and the 3rd year of funding for a full time arts and cultural worker. Projects undertaken also blossomed, as more individuals, groups, and Centre programs became aware of the many possibilities presented by the facilities, support, and artists brought together by the Community Arts and Culture Program.

The key principles of the program are:

- To ensure that inclusive, transparent and culturally inspiring processes are utilized to achieve outputs and outcomes for the community.
- To ensure that the program will target diverse groups and foster their ability to express themselves creatively.
- To involve participants in all aspects of the program (planning, implementation, and evaluation).
- To build community connectedness.

These underlying principles are being carried forward through the program for 2006-08.

Above all, the Arts and Culture Program holds to one basic tenet: venues and infrastructure do not create the cultural life of a region – people do.

THE VENUES

The Arts and Culture Program has set up both the Belconnen Gallery and Theatre as venues for hire, but also as developmental tools for local artists and communities. As such, they have been embraced by Belconnen residents, with significant numbers of participants, audiences, and visitors, and providing a growing sense of local creativity and activity in Belconnen. The venues have been kept open, flexible, and accessible, with cheap hire rates, technical and artistic support, and free promotion.

Belconnen Gallery

The Gallery has become a key element of arts in Belconnen with CCD objectives strongly underpinning the focus of the program. The work exhibited in all cases has been of high quality and excellence at all times. The location of the gallery encourages many Belconnen residents who have not previously had an interest in visual art to have a look. The Gallery is located in a particularly accessible part of the Community Centre, and thus attracts casual visitors as well as those coming specifically to see the works, a most pleasing situation which encourages maximum exposure in the community. There were 17 exhibitions in 2007, involving 100 artists, attracting 9,000 visitors at a rate of 46 per day. Curator Anni Doyle-Wawrzynczak continued her work with artists, supporting them through advice on work, through hanging, through seeking out new and emerging artists and groups, and organising openings and media releases.

The 2007 program is summarised below. Work presented overwhelmingly supported local artists, both emerging and established, and included a number of exhibitions that were created through other programs at Belconnen Community Service. Images from the exhibitions and openings are included with the support material.

WASTELAND

8-25 Jan 10 artists Local, special project 100 visitors

Wasteland aimed to provide a catalyst for artists and communities as individuals and groups to express their relationship to the environment including and between Western Sydney and the ACT. This stretch of landscape is viewed as a space to be traversed between two destinations – a wasteland to pass through. Lines of beauty and despair are sped past, the natural and built positive space blurring into negative space. Wasteland, a somewhat bleak title for an exhibition has yielded a collection of photographs that sing; songs of the forgotten and the remembered, of our own patch of land and of far corners of the world; songs of indigenous truths and non-indigenous impact; of the personal and the universal, the internal and external - each image a reflection of the artist's idiosyncratic take on journeys, physical, historical, cultural and moral, producing images pregnant with blood and sweat, hard luck stories, dreams gone wrong, land gone crying, nature reclaiming; evocations of place and time. The exhibition was part of a larger project by the MV Network, and was also shown at Tuggeranong Arts Centre and the Artists' Shed in Queanbeyan.

BELCONNEN COMMUNITY CENTRE MURAL

20 Feb-9 Mar 4 artists Local, special BCS project with community 438 visitors

This project began last year as a proposal to repaint the three murals on the front of Belconnen Community Centre as part of marking the 40th birthday of Belconnen. 4 community artists were engaged to work on the mural designs. They are Phil Nizette, Nasser Palangi, Duncan Smith, and Kurt Laurensen. All four have had extensive experience in producing public and community based art works, and have long term established links to Belconnen and the Community Centre. The exhibition showed large scale images of the proposed mural, and photographs of the community workshops involving 120 residents.

LANDMARKS

12-23 Mar 15 artists Local artists, partnership 334 visitors

Another in a series of engagements and partnerships with Strathnairn Homestead Gallery. Curator Anni Doyle selected works from the members of Strathnairn Arts Association. The art exhibition gives members an opportunity to showcase work produced for the Annual Members Exhibition as well as focusing on Strathnairn as a Belconnen arts facility. The title highlights the unique nature of Strathnairn Homestead. Formerly a soldier settlement, it is picturesquely located among vineyards and fields. This rural haven is the home of a busy arts association, gallery, retail outlet, as well as a number of artists' studios. Strathnairn Arts Association performs an integral role in the arts, cultural life and history of the area. Opened by Mary Porter MLA.

DOWN TO EARTH

27 Mar-13 Apr 1 artist Local artist, emerging 583 visitors

Omagaia, a local user of BCS services, staged her first exhibition of works at Belconnen Gallery. Using diverse media, she produced a colourful and popular show, attracting a lot of interest in the community.

SNAP SHOOTERS

17-27 Apr 30 artists young local artists 474 visitors

Comprised multimedia art works from young people who live in the Belconnen Region. Like a roll of film artworks unravel what affects, influences, motivates, disturbs and compels the artists. Part of National Youth Week.

BLACK MOUNTAIN SUITE

1-18 May 1 artist Canberra artist 553 visitors

Paul James has been fascinated by the bush landscape in the A.C.T. since he first began to paint. *Black Mountain Suite* has evolved from his desire to closely study the natural environment on and around Black Mountain in Canberra's northern suburb of O'Connor. James created the watercolours and oils in *Black Mountain Suite* over the last eighteen months, working on Black Mountain and in the studio. Concerned with the different aspects of the natural landscape, the works reflect the changing colours and shapes as they are revealed or hidden during the day and throughout the seasons.

THE HEALING POWER OF THE GARDEN

22 May-1 Jun 1 artist local artist, emerging 318 visitors

Following on from James Rowell's inaugural April 2005 exhibition *Nostalgia Myths* and hot on the heels of a successful Melbourne exhibition in April this year, Rowell continues his painterly dialogue using dotting, massed colour and a selective use of impasto. 14 of the 17 works act as a paean to the individual plants that make up his much loved vegetable garden; among them zucchinis, snowpeas, lettuce and tomatoes bursting up to and seemingly past the picture plane; 2 reflect on the nature of greenhouse gases, while the last acknowledges the enduring and integral presence of Aboriginal Australia in Rowell's vision of garden.

FROM THE COAST TO THE MOUNTAINS

5-15 Jun 1 artist local artist 471 visitors

A new exhibition of oil paintings by Peter Sterns, a prolific self taught artist. The 35 oil paintings are the product of eight months work. Peter has always enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of landscapes. He especially finds the Australian landscapes appealing. His previous exhibition at Belconnen in 2006 looked at the outback. Peter has been a favourite at the Gallery since last year, and has been involved, along with curator Anni Doyle-Wawrzynczak, in talking about and demonstrating some of his painting in retirement homes as part of the Gallery on the Go project, which sees artists and artworks go directly to people who might otherwise not be able to see them in a gallery setting.

UNREALITY

18-29 Jun 1 artist Canberra artist 225 visitors
Justin Newbury presented photographic manipulations, abstract prints, and fractal works.

IMPATYE: OUR BELONGING TRACKS

2-27 Jul 5 artists Indigenous local 891 visitors
A stunning exhibition of works new works on silk, canvas, glass and paper on show as part of NAIDOC Week. The artists are Lyndy Delian, Duncan Smith, Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Renee Smith, Jenni Kemarre Martiniello, Janet Fieldhouse, and Barry Cooper, all prolific creators of diverse work. They are variously writers, poets, photographers, performers, community cultural workers, painters, printmakers, dancers, musicians, multi-media, glass and textile artists. Emotionally and visually rewarding the exhibition reflects the vision, depth and maturity of the ACT's pantheon of contemporary Aboriginal artists.

IN GOOD COMPANY

8-24 Aug 3 artists local artists 675 visitors
An exhibition in oils, acrylic, watercolour, and mixed media by Val Johnson, Val Fitzpatrick, Sandra House, Isla Patterson, and Jo Hollier.

SPRINGALING

27 Aug-7 Sep 9 artists special group exhibition 461 visitors
Parkinson's ACT Inc presented an exhibition of paintings and photographs. All work on display was produced with people suffering from Parkinson's Disease. Some of these artists are in the advanced stages of the disease and have great difficulty in doing everyday tasks that people take for granted.

AMALGAM – COMING TOGETHER

10-28 Sep 5 artists Canberra multicultural group 696 visitors
A mixed media exhibition from the members of Encuentro. This culturally diverse group of artists includes Rosemary von Behrens, Ian Haynes, Celia Gallardo, Gay Santiago and Chun-chiang Shih with new works in painting, photography and ceramic exploring relationships between nature, the prosaic and the spiritual.

OBJECTS OF MEMORY

2-26 Oct 1 artist EASS award artist 1000 visitors
Singaporean born Meelan Oh has been making art since she completed a Diploma of Graphic Design at Singapore's Nanyang Academy of Fine Art in 1985. She has been living in Canberra since the latter half of the 1990's, completing her Visual Arts Honours degree at ANU in 2006. Oh is the recipient of the Belconnen Gallery 2006 ANU Emerging Artist Support Scheme (EASS) award. The works on paper in this collection are imbued with the scent of the daily rituals of offering and prayer intrinsic to Singaporean life, for burning incense sticks are this artist's brush of choice.

REINHABITS

30 Oct-15 Nov 1 artist returned by popular request 532 visitors
Gaida Macs was the recipient of Belconnen Gallery's 2004 EASS award. Weeks out from her inaugural solo exhibition, her body of work was destroyed in the heavy rains and subsequent flooding of late June 2005. The rescheduled exhibition *In-habits*, in April 2006, thrilled audiences during the sell-out opening night. In *Reinhabits*, Macs continues her love affair with found objects, influenced this time, in both materials and the exhibition's underlying themes by her geographical relocation from her home in Canberra to the far northern NSW coast.

THE CARRIERS, LOCAL TERRAIN

16-29 Nov 2 artists Kultour national event 1031 visitors
The Carriers – Local Terrain, attempts to question the very nature of gallery-based art and the need for a stronger voice for artists from culturally diverse backgrounds. Artists actually carrying their own artwork in public can become a very symbolic gesture as to the integrity of their own voice and creativity. To take it over various local terrains in full view of the public comments on how art can be 'earthed' and useful as a means of public involvement and debate. It can also state how burdens must be carried by those who enter a new terrain – negotiating and navigating a new territory with the memory of an old one. The work to be exhibited by Van in Belconnen and carried in Canberra is titled 'Painting of an Extremist', and is part of a national tour in association with Multicultural Arts Victoria and Kultour. It is a comment on the lack of transparency going on in Australia's so called democracy. Van is the founder of the Carriers movement which is an ongoing project dedicated to exposing contemporary, culturally diverse art beyond the gallery scene to new audience in public spaces. Van carried his work in Belconnen Mall and Civic. He was joined in the exhibition by local artist Stephen Harrison, well known for his extraordinary work in Canberra.

Van is coincidentally a nephew of Kevin Rudd, and the exhibition was (also coincidentally) held during the election, in which Belconnen Community Centre was also open as a polling booth! This led to some interesting national media coverage.

BEHIND THE MASK

4-13 Dec 17 artists BCS project 404 visitors
The Belconnen Community Service celebrated the International Day of People with a Disability by showcasing the work of its artists from two programs run by its Disability Unit. The first program, Ceramics, was represented by a wide selection of pottery under the rubric "Behind the Mask".

Belconnen Gallery Summary:	
Days open	198
# exhibitions	17
Artists	100
Visitors	9178
Visits/day	46

Belconnen Theatre

Since 2005 there have been four central initiatives operating in the Belconnen Theatre, which have constantly varying outcomes – a process designed to accommodate changing and increasing needs in its service area. They are:

- Support for the theatre as a venue that can be hired out to independent performance groups.
- Building a Belconnen based community theatre initiative that seeks to engage a range of age groups with theatrical interest in the production of their own work.
- Promoting, attracting, and supporting a diverse range of new groups to use the theatre.
- Forming partnerships with established organizations throughout the ACT to use the venue regularly.

The reduced rates and simplified technical operation of the theatre have opened up more possibilities for one-off hirers to much more easily set up performances, and this has been reflected in the enormous increase in use from April 2005, when these changes were made. This process is ongoing, as we strive to develop a level of equipment that is rugged, easy to use, but retains its flexibility. Similarly the hire conditions and forms are under constant review, to maintain a consistency of approach within the Community Centre, and maximise accessibility. Maintenance and cleaning are ongoing issues, as our cheap hire rates do not fully support this. Risk management procedures and policies are part of the framework of BCS activity, and the Theatre is continually reviewed as part of this process.

2007 saw some protracted negotiations with DHCS, the owners of the building, to improve seating and lighting for public safety reasons. New work lights were installed in the Theatre, and a major refit was made to the old moveable seating banks, installing a new solid structure which stabilised and vastly improved them, and provided a new technical storage area underneath. This took 3 weeks in October, but was managed with the relocation of only one show to Hawker College.

Community Theatre initiatives have viewed the Theatre as a regional focus for creative energy and concentrating creative drive. The development program had aimed to encourage and foster projects to draw on local desire and experience in broadly attractive areas of activity such as dance/ amateur theatre/ young people’s theatre/ community theatre. It was rapidly discovered that these activities were already developing and needed logistical, venue, mentoring, and technical support. New development of local theatre has now switched to supporting existing groups such as Tempo, Phoenix, Child Play, and Ickle Pickle, and the WET Season and its follow up, the Hunting Season. (see projects section).

We have now successfully staged three community theatre shows at Christmas. The shows, in partnership with Ickle Pickle, are original works with large casts in an updated pantomime form, drawing large family audiences to the Theatre, and designed to be exceptionally good value for money and very accessible. This has already proven beneficial in terms of participants and audiences, and we now have theatre for and by children in every school holiday, produced by local companies Ickle Pickle, Tempo, Music for Everyone, and Child Play.

The Theatre is now seen as a great local resource with diverse programming, attractive to niche audiences. The Belconnen Theatre continues to be one of the cheapest equipped performance venues

in Australia to promote accessibility, and this policy has so far been outstandingly successful, with demand far outstripping supply. The Theatre is run as an accessible community space rather than as a commercial venue and this is expected to continue through the funding period. With the imminent arrival of new performance spaces in Belconnen it is anticipated that the current Theatre will change its focus and become a smaller sized alternative and accessible performance space appropriate for developing and emerging artists and companies, cultural groups and more intimate performance, and progressively generate new users and activities through the programs of Belconnen Community Service itself.

The 2007 program is summarised below. Work presented overwhelmingly supported local theatre, dance, music, and cultural groups, as well as the significant development of young performance creators through the WET Season (described later in this report). Images from the events are included with the support material.

The table below shows theatre users in 2007, and identifies categories which broadly fit their work. As can be seen, users were predominantly local, mostly theatre based, and many of them were youth oriented.

THEATRE USER	local	youth	cultural	theatre	music	dance	film	WET
Child Play	✓	✓		✓				
David Finnigan	✓	✓		✓				
Tugpindulayaw	✓		✓	✓				
Multicultural Festival			✓					
Tempo	✓			✓				
Canberra Dance Development Centre						✓		
Radiance Integrated Dance						✓		
Film Monk	✓	✓					✓	
Karnataka Association	✓		✓					
ACT Gang Show		✓		✓				
Within (WET)	✓	✓		✓				✓
BCC Mural group								
Action Callisthenics	✓	✓				✓		
Frozen Shape Collective (WET)	✓	✓		✓				✓
Maruki Community Orchestra	✓				✓			
Pattie Collins filmmaker							✓	
Tomas Flamenco						✓		
BkU (WET)	✓	✓		✓				✓
Jen Proctor						✓		
Bridges (BCS)	✓		✓					
Main Event Wrestling	✓							
Strange Bird (WET)	✓	✓		✓				✓
Hidden Corners	✓	✓		✓				
ANUMSS		✓		✓				
Schmick As				✓				
Excalibur Callisthenics	✓	✓				✓		
Meatbee	✓				✓		✓	
Bengali Cultural Association	✓		✓					
School of Belly Fusion	✓	✓				✓		
Forward Productions (WET)	✓	✓		✓				✓
Eloquent Productions (WET)	✓	✓		✓				✓

THEATRE USER	local	youth	cultural	theatre	music	dance	film	WET
Bungee (BCS)	✓	✓		✓				
Phoenix Performing Arts of the Pacific	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Jordan Prosser (WET)		✓		✓				✓
Merici College		✓		✓				
Hunting Party	✓	✓		✓				
Music for Everyone		✓		✓	✓			
Warehouse Circus		✓		✓				
Canberra Festival Ballet School	✓	✓				✓		
Radford College	✓	✓		✓				
Ickle Pickle	✓	✓		✓				

Shows presented during the year included:

A Prisoner's Dilemma	Accidental Death of an	The Landlords
2 Meals from Manila	Anarchist	Pinafore Pirates
Within	Through The Looking Glass	Suits and Cirquarella
The Birthday Party	Midsummer Nights Dream (2	Dracula
Jackaroo and the Beanstalk	versions!)	Maruki plays the Classics
Pinocchio	Rebecca	
Bring Me the Head of Edgar	Khaki Fur Felt	
Allan Poe	Faiva	

THEATRE USE SUMMARY	2007	2006	2005
total uses	345	371	277
performances	145	174	116
performances per wk	2.96	3.35	2.23
average audience	65	69	68
average % capacity	37.5%	40%	39%
average audience/wk	193	232	152
Total unique participants	1673	1584	1334
Total audience	9460	12078	7923

COMMUNITY CULTURAL PROJECTS

Gallery on the Go

In 2006 the program started a "mobile gallery" with initial funding from Seniors Grants. The cultural needs of Belconnen's Senior citizens extend beyond the confines of the Gallery space. "Gallery on the Go" engages seniors who are unable to visit the Gallery at places where they already congregate for other purposes. The curator takes several art works and, where possible the artist, to the people to show the art and to engage senior citizens in discussion about local contemporary art and its relevance to their lives. Visits consist of a presentation of the art with a twenty minute talk, an

introduction to the artists, where possible, and general discussion with seniors about their own involvement, past or present, in art and cultural life. Gallery On The Go made 4 visits to senior citizen day centres during the grant period, presenting to around 100 senior members of the community, both male and female. Visited were; the BEST Club, (Belconnen Energetic Seniors on Tuesday), run by Belconnen Community Services at the West Belconnen Leagues Club, the Belconnen Kirra Aged Day Care Centre, the North Belconnen Day Centre and the Ngunnawal Neighbourhood Centre. The two participating Belconnen based artists were painter, Peter Sterns and painter and printmaker Joan Hollier.

The opportunity to engage directly with seniors' groups in comfortable, accessible venues where they have already congregated for other purposes was rewarding not only for the seniors but for the artists and curator involved in the visits. Time and again, the opportunity arose for those seniors who had previously been artists to share their experiences and the joy their art practice had brought them; for seniors who had been thinking that perhaps they were 'too old' to begin to make art to feel a sense of possibility about art creation; for the groups in general to handle and look closely at beautiful works on paper and to experience the thrill of seeing an artwork created right in front of their eyes in between morning tea and lunch.

For the artists and curator, these visits provided invaluable opportunities to enter into the seniors community, to experience aging as a positive force and to sense the possibilities for further visits and extensions of the program; into hands on art making experiences for seniors and the possible future exhibition experiences that could flow from that endeavour and into a general extension of the Gallery on the go program. At the end of each visit, they were immediately invited back by volunteers, facilitators, managers and clients, with both of the artists who participated in these four visits keen to continue their involvement.

This short project was enormously successful, with excellent anecdotal feedback, and we will be looking for ways to extend it beyond its funded life.

2007 visits	3
Participants	80

Literary Initiatives

The Arts and Cultural Development Program worked on resourcing and continuing the popular Scribblers group at Belconnen Community Centre. Scribblers received venue support for its fortnightly gatherings, some assistance with artist fees for special workshops, and support for applications. Initial discussions were held with University of Canberra staff regarding future links and joint events and workshops in the community. It is undoubtedly the case however that much more work could be initiated, especially in the rich field of community writing groups; and that some opportunities to be involved in ACT events such as the Canberra Writers' Festival were let slip.

Scribblers Workshops	40
Avg participants	10

Maruki Community Orchestra

A community music partnership development. The Maruki Community Orchestra provides the community with an exciting and accessible musical experience, and the opportunity for all who are interested to become involved in its production and work. Since 2005 they have chosen the Belconnen Community Centre Theatre as a rehearsal and primary concert venue. During 2007 we worked with them to build a strong Belconnen community involvement and commitment. MCO is a serious orchestra devoted to players who are very much representative of the Canberra community, who have strong interests in playing classical musical instruments in an orchestra environment, but who are either not skilled and/or do not qualify to play in the other Canberra orchestra and music frameworks.

Maruki adds enormously to the value of the arts program. Concerts and rehearsals took place throughout 2007, and discussions were continually under way regarding improvements to their rehearsal venue, and possible future projects. They played a pivotal role in the African Sanctus project, detailed below.

Rehearsals	40
Concerts	4
Participants	65
Total audience	450

Pacific Islands United Festival

The Arts and Culture Program has been heavily involved in the Belconnen Festival since it commenced being organised through the Belconnen Community Centre in 2004. Apart from its role with staging and organisation, it is responsible for the performance program, and seeks to maximise the involvement of local artists and community groups in this increasingly popular event. 2007 saw a break from the Festival, in order to do more research and increase participation by other community organisations and sponsors. Belconnen Community Service undertook to support another local festival in this period. Pacific Islands United had achieved funding for a standalone event, and this took place in Margaret Timpson Park on 27th October. We were able to assist with publicity, stage management, and some logistics support and advice.

Wet Season and the Hunting Party

In 2006, we employed a part time Community Theatre Support worker. We came up with a new program, the WET Season, which would make the resources of the Belconnen Theatre available to a number of emerging theatre artists working in Canberra. Our goal was not to create new groups, but to assist those artists who are already making theatre outside of existing programs. To this end a number of meetings and workshops were held towards the end of the year, overwhelmingly well attended. The season took place throughout 2007 at the Belconnen Theatre, with 7 productions spanning March to September. The WET Season operated as a group of young independent producers and creators, some of them first time out of college. There was considerable support and cross-over between the productions.

Publicity and media coverage was generally excellent, with good posters, a website, SMS and email strategies for attracting audiences, and a sponsored 2 page promotion in City News. The "buzz" around Canberra was considerable, and this in itself was a great outcome. An apparent spin-off was that a number of other local organizations upgraded their own youth based programs – most notable being Canberra Rep and Free Rain.

Various forms of mentoring were built in to the WET Season. Coordinator David Finnigan met frequently with the producers and explained logistical, infrastructure, and artistic processes. Some of the older and more experienced creators gave advice and practical support to the younger ones. Ickle Pickle entered into a co-production arrangement with one of the groups. And finally, the "Rain Goddesses" endeavored to attend each production and give positive feedback to the young companies. They were Caroline Stacey from the Street, Pip Buining from Canberra Youth Theatre, and Kate Shearer from Jigsaw – our heartfelt thanks for their efforts in assisting young creators in this way. Finally, one form of mentoring was deliberately not undertaken – the WET Season producers were entirely free to pursue their own artistic creation. This led inevitably to an uneven level of work, with obvious flaws that could have been corrected in advance. It was however a deliberate policy decision of the WET Season to give full autonomy to the work presented, as the aim was to provide opportunity, accessibility, and logistic support, rather than curate and develop a season. In retrospect, this may have been flawed thinking. The successor to the WET Season, the Hunting Season, has taken a more curatorial approach.

The companies were expected to meet all their obligations in using Belconnen Theatre, including use of logos and acknowledgements, and conditions of hire. The Arts and Culture Program charged them

for use of facilities, but gave a guarantee that they would not be financially held liable if unable to meet all the costs. This worked well, and gave them the freedom to undertake their work without fear of large budget blowouts.

The WET Season shows:

WITHIN

14-16 Mar 3 shows 10 participants 135 audience

The first production in Belconnen Theatre's 2007 Wet Season is Elyse Horan's Within, a theatrical double-bill which explores the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia. Within combines Maurice Maeterlinck's 1894 play Interior with Horan's original movement piece Hamlet and Ophelia, adapted from Shakespeare's text. These two plays combine to let the audience see 'within' Hamlet's madness and Ophelia's death. It is a unique exploration of the darker side of two of theatre's most enduring characters through a range of theatrical styles. Director/devisor Elyse Horan is the first winner of Copland College's Drama Prize, which provides one graduating Drama student with a week's hire of Belconnen Theatre. Stylistically successful, with some interesting ideas.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

28-31 Mar 4 shows 8 participants 145 audience

Director Nick McCorriston celebrates his sixth birthday in the Canberra performing arts scene with the Frozen Shape Collective's production of Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party. The Frozen Shape Collective is an assemblage of theatre-makers with whom McCorriston has worked since he began making theatre in 2001. The group has been gathered together for this one project, after which it will be disbanded. Mixed reviews, probably unadventurous.

BRING ME THE HEAD OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

3-4 May 2 shows 11 participants 160 audience

Bring Me the Head of Edgar Allan Poe, the newest play from Canberra writer Adam Hadley, opens with the grotesque funeral of a murdered prostitute and ends with the terrified screams of a man buried alive. Set on a jungle island out of time and space, the play veers from tragedy into comedy and back again, exploring the mystery of Edgar Allan Poe's death with speculation, fantasy and sheer unadulterated weirdness. Bring Me the Head of Edgar Allan Poe has evolved over months of workshops and rehearsals after writer Adam Hadley and director Naomi Milthorpe (incorporating under the name of Strange Bird) received a Development grant from artsACT. The project is halfway through the process of development and thus far has involved collaboration between some of Canberra's finest young artists to develop a truly original, multi-artform piece incorporating traditional theatre, live organic sound, film, and original animations by Arran McKenna. Excellent script, good performances, great special effects. Won a CAT award!

ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST

6-16 Jun 8 shows 7 participants 107 audience

Dario Fo classic, done "classically" by established emerging group BKU. Unknown as to why it attracted such small houses.

MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM

22-28 Jul 7 shows 26 participants 315 audience

Forward Productions' version of A Midsummer Night's Dream aims to take the well loved comedy to a new level. By expressing social ideas relevant to the youth of today and using heavier music and a darker setting, the show aims to bring young people back to theatre and Shakespeare's works. Modestly successful as a show, but quite impressive for a first time producer/director in pulling together so many people and resources.

KHAKI FUR FELT

14-18 Aug 6 shows 12 participants 155 audience

Eloquent Production in association with Ickle Pickle Productions is presenting a world premiere "Khaki Fur Felt". A story of one family and their struggles as one by one the men go off to war, it covers three generations and is told from the point of view of a wife, mother, and grandmother - 2nd World War, Vietnam and Iraq. Playwright Tim Sanders has previously written short stories and film scripts but now has decided to delve into the art of theatre. Originally from Perth, and now studying Politics and History at the ANU, Tim has based this semi-biographical play in both cities. Tim himself is in the Australian Defence force as a reservist, studying to become an Army Officer. Kat Brand, the director, has been a part of the Canberra amateur theatre scene for years on and off the stage. She completed a Double Major in Drama at Hawker college where she got the chance to apply for the school's drama prize, which allowed her to put on this production. Enjoyed good original elements and publicity, but was probably one of the more traditional efforts of the WET Season - probably could have benefited enormously from a different kind of mentoring.

THE LANDLORDS

12-14 Sep 3 shows 6 participants 95 audience

An original play in one act by Jordan Prosser and Sam Burns-Warr. Two young men, the last two human beings alive on earth, awake to the last day of their lives. Outside there is nothing but wasteland and the wave of bad karma that has desecrated the rest of the human race. But Death has grown impatient, and what comes around, comes around again... Emerging writer, director and performer Jordan Prosser is the recipient of the inaugural Radford College Drama Prize for the WET Season. Having already moved to Melbourne, he was our "interstate" artist. Possibly the most successful piece, only truly original use of the theatre, live bath on stage. Also won CAT award.

WET SEASON SUMMARY	
Productions	7
Performances	33
Participants	80
Audience	1102

During the course of the WET Season, an opportunity came for the core group of organisers to apply for a Launchpad Grant from the Foundation for Young Australians. Led by community theatre worker David Finnigan, this application took the form of a website and blog, and was successful for first stage funding. Belconnen Community Service became the community partners of what was termed "the Hunting Party", a group of young people who then undertook a visioning and community mapping program under the guidance of the Foundation. They prepared a second stage application which included a performance, workshops in schools, interviews, sound bytes, a more advance website, blog, facebook etc, which led to the development of the Hunting Season for 2008, a fitting follow up to the WET Season as it now incorporated direct input and ideas from a large number of local young people from 15 to 25 years old. This second stage application was successful, and the Hunting Season will commence operation in mid 2008.

Banana

Belconnen and Northern Arts Network ACT came into being from a number of public meetings in 2005, and received support and assistance from the Arts and Culture Program. Following its public presence at the Belconnen Festival in November 2005, THE BANANA PARTY at the Belconnen Gallery and Theatre became its first major event in 2006. It included an exhibition of 2d and 3d works by some 30 local artists at the Belconnen Gallery, Theatre, and Community Centre, combined with short film and performances of music, poetry and theatre. A funding seminar and another event at Belconnen Markets took place during the year. In 2007 there was one meeting, a reflection of the fact that there is a great deal of interest, but the organisation remains fairly loose at this time, and needs to consider its best methods of operation, as it is and must be independent from the funded program at BCC. Some fledging moves are once again afoot in 2008.

Belconnen Community Centre Mural

This project began as a proposal to repaint the three murals on the front of Belconnen Community Centre as part of marking the 40th birthday of Belconnen. 4 community artists were engaged to work on the mural designs. They are Phil Nizette, Nasser Palangi, Duncan Smith, and Kurt Laurenson. All four have had extensive experience in producing public and community based art works, and have long term established links to Belconnen and the Community Centre. Chief Minister Jon Stanhope introduced the artists and the process at the Belconnen Festival launch on 26 October, 2006. The artists then worked with 120 community members in 13 different workshop groups to develop designs, concepts, photographs, and drawings. The designs were then exhibited at Belconnen Gallery in Feb 07, the panels constructed and painted in the Theatre in March, and the Chief Minister returned to launch the mural in April. Jennifer Jones joined the artists group for this last phase. Public reactions have been overwhelmingly positive, media coverage was excellent, and the workshops ensured that a wide cross section of the community was involved. With thanks to the ACT Government for some extra funding, and to DHCS and artsACT for their contributions. And finally, no graffiti has been recorded in the 13 months of the mural's life to date!

The Wasteland Project

Wasteland aims to provide a catalyst for artists and communities as individuals and groups to express their relationship to the environment including and between Western Sydney and the ACT. This stretch of landscape is viewed as a space to be traversed between two destinations – a wasteland to pass through. Lines of beauty and despair are sped past, the natural and built positive space blurring

into negative space. Wasteland is a project of the MV Network, a federation of regional arts facilities and presenters bonded by the M5 motorway, stretching from the Casula Powerhouse in Western Sydney through Campbelltown and the Southern Tablelands to Canberra and Queanbeyan. The Wasteland exhibition at Belconnen was the first stage in a multi phase project, involving our gallery curator who put together a stunning collection for Belconnen's showing of Wasteland, with artists Luisa Abello, Jenni Kemarre Martiniello, Nasser Palangi, Geri Johnstone, Ian Haynes, Sheila Keunen, Barbie Robinson, Jennifer Phillips, Kathleen Fisher, and Susan Henderson. The exhibition then showed at Tuggeranong Arts Centre in July, and at the Artists Shed in Queanbeyan in November along with their Recycled Materials exhibition. It is scheduled to finish in Goulburn in 2008.

Memory and Identity Collage (MIC)

This project, funded by ACE, was planned as a ten week course running between May and August 2007. The course was targeted primarily at culturally and linguistically diverse community members, and designed to assist them with placing themselves within our community and helping forge their identity as Australians.

The Memory and Identity Collage process has been developed over the last few years by Nasser Palangi, who came to Canberra from Iran on a distinguished artist's visa. He uses his original techniques to offer people insights into the nature of memory and how it might be articulated, creating artworks that reflect heritage, history, and family stories, together with other concepts and ideas which participants are interested in exploring visually. While exploring individual backgrounds, the artworks go well beyond their form, creating new identities and angles on Australian history and culture, and helping participants place themselves more fully within the general community. It is a way of placing and preserving memory that is far more than a collection of objects. The artworks will be personal, symbolic, and collective. They will have a simultaneous meaning in both the past and the present.

The project was delayed for personal reasons, and will now take place in 2008.

African Sanctus Canberra

Belconnen Community Service Arts and Culture Program began producing the World Premier orchestral version of African Sanctus by David Fanshawe. This large-scale community performance was to take place in Feb 2008 on Lake Ginninderra, the site of the new Belconnen Arts Centre.

African Sanctus blends sound recordings of over fifty African tribes, classical choral singing, and contemporary pop and rock music elements into a unique and exciting live performance. The fusion of these elements into the traditional Latin Mass setting includes choruses, soloists, orchestra, indigenous drums, spectacular visual displays, and original African sound track.

Five hundred people were expected to participate in African Sanctus through the following areas:

- Dance - With support of Ausdance, various community dance groups and dance schools will participate in the performance. Local cultural groups, schools and colleges will also be involved in dance based activities.
- Music - The Maruki Community Orchestra will be the centre point of the music component, along with a specially formed choir assembled from the many Canberra choral groups. African band Hoza will work alongside Maruki to create the work, and will also coordinate community drumming workshops and performances.
- Production - Singing, dance, drumming and performance workshops will be run by local Canberra artists at the Belconnen Community Centre. Young people will also be involved in the technical aspects of the performance, assisting in the sound, lighting and stage management.

African Sanctus aims to bring together all areas of Canberra's artistic community. This will be a once in a lifetime experience for many of the performers. Artists engaged to work on the project include John Gould, conductor of the Maruki Orchestra; Judith Clingan, choir coordinator; Gus Mpfu,

drumming coordinator; Lailah Masigah, dance coordinator; and Gary France, supplying instruments and students from the ANU for the massive percussion requirements.

Cultural worker Sarah Van Der Sommen worked tirelessly to bring many of these elements together, as well as pre publicity and sponsorship. Composer David Fanshawe had agreed to come to Canberra for the show, and the Multicultural Festival was set to include it in their program, agreeing to publicity costs and the entire site infrastructure. Symbolically it potentially stood as a perfect cultural action on the site of the new Art Centre, and would have ensured a high level of community involvement there right from the "start". A large number of workshops, sessions, and rehearsals were held in Belconnen and Canberra. Public interest ran high, with many people recalling African Sanctus from the 60's, and looking forward to the event.

What went wrong? Logistically the event was large. It seemed likely that despite engaging early with paid artists, co-ordinators, and volunteers, the Arts and Culture Program was not sufficiently resourced to keep ahead of the workload. Two applications for funding had gone in, and both had failed. The more significant one, to the Australia Council's Community Partnerships for an annual program of activity, had passed successfully through stage 1, but in the end failed for some very specific reasons. The major issue was that African Sanctus, as a large community project with multiple partners, had not shown sufficiently its connection to local African communities, and had not successfully identified itself as a project with community cultural rather than music and performance outcomes. As author of the application, I could not disagree with that view. While there was a definite connection to the African communities through Gus Mpofu (president of the African Australian Association), it had not been clearly stated, agreed, or worked through; and both the orchestra and choir, although heavily community based, found it hard to comprehend the community cultural aspects – they still saw it as primarily a musical performance. The Arts and Culture Program, having achieved half the necessary resources, was not in a position to risk the project without the other half, and so African Sanctus Canberra was reluctantly postponed in November 2007.

Much to our surprise, the choir and orchestra were absolutely dedicated to continue into 2008. It now seems likely that there will be a small performance in mid 2008, and negotiations are taking place to attempt to stage the full work with all its community aspects in the 2009 Multicultural Festival. It may however still be the case that insufficient resources will delay or prevent the project from successfully fulfilling its objectives.

African Sanctus Canberra Summary	
Workshops and rehearsals	26
Orchestra members	65
Choir members	70
Drummer participants	15
Dance participants	30
Artists on project	7

Radiance

Radiance Dance is a progressive performance project that develops participant's individual skills as well as the groups' and culminates in several public performances. It is therefore vital to the success of the project that participants attend sessions regularly and that continuity of support and care is provided. Each week builds on the next and develops what has already been done. Radiance Dance is like any sports team or artistic company and relies and depends on each individual to create the whole. During the first half of 2007, venue and technical support was given to the group at Belconnen. It is hoped to develop our relationship during 2008.

Two Meals from Manila

This project saw a remount of Tugpindulayaw's community performance piece Manila Takeaway, developed from original research by Noonee Doronila, combined with a new piece written by David Finnigan in the Philippines, To Heat You Up and Cool You Down. It was presented as a season at Belconnen Theatre for the Multicultural Festival, and its 3 performances attracted healthy and enthusiastic audiences. Most of the performers were emerging amateur artists or community based, and its placing of different aged and culturally diverse participants and audiences was a successful venture. Noonee's piece continues to work well with different community performers involved, and we are looking at possible touring through Kultour in 2009-2010.

SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS

Belconnen arts programs have achieved a high reputation in the last five years for community based participatory activities, while at the same time seeking out and working with local established professional artists. Previously funded projects and initial assistance have helped establish a number of organisations who are sustaining their activity in the region, including Phoenix Players, Strathnairn Homestead Gallery, Scribblers, Ickle Pickle, and BEAN. The Belconnen Gallery and Theatre programs provide an excellent mix of community, emerging, established, and professional activities, and this is a true reflection of the arts and cultural milieu in the ACT. Support for artists is a vital part of the Arts and Cultural Program.

Artists' work and projects are encouraged and supported through the Gallery and Theatre framework, but also through opportunities that become available in the region. This applies across the board. Emerging artists and groups are specifically identified and assisted, often with some elements of mentoring. Community and amateur artists are equally sought out and encouraged, through projects, workshops and the use of facilities. Established and professional artists are similarly supported – our contacts with other organisations, and with other artists and institutions in the ACT, allow for further possibilities in addition to what can be provided at Belconnen, and extended opportunities for wider promotion of their work are constantly being explored. Grant writing assistance and advice continues to be an important function of the Arts and Cultural Development Program, helping artists and cultural groups to build and maintain their sustainability in the ACT.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are constantly developing with ACT based and funded organisations, to establish a permanent presence in Belconnen. The rationale behind this is simple – such organisations are funded to service the whole of the ACT, so a partnership between them and BCS would expedite their services in Belconnen and directly benefit the region. This will become increasingly available with the addition of the resources of the new Belconnen Arts Centre in 2009. Partnership organisations during 2007 included:

- Music for Everyone - MFE currently stages an annual musical at the Belconnen Theatre.
- Maruki Community Orchestra.
- National Multicultural Festival
- Tuggeranong Arts Centre – various joint events including Wasteland Exhibition and Jali Buba concert from Kultour
- Ickle Pickle – joint producers of Christmas family shows involving large audience and participant numbers at Belconnen

- Radiance Dance
- Strathnairn Gallery, with media support and joint exhibitions
- Tugpindulayaw Theatre Company, particularly Manila Takeaway season
- Hunting Party – community partners with BCS

PROMOTION AND MARKETING

The use of email and website strategies remains an integral part of the promotion of the Program and assist in marketing and raising the profile of local artists and organisations. The website was kept totally up to date during the year, and always had the latest photos and news of activities. (<http://www.bcsact.com/art>) There was no expectation of driving large traffic to the site, rather it was a place where enquiries, artists and groups could be directed to either view events or get information, and a record kept of events throughout the year. Similarly, 623 email news items were sent to an expanding mail list during the year, detailing not only local arts and culture events but also containing an enormous number of items from around Canberra and its locality, including jobs, workshops, grants, and opportunities along with the cultural items. This to date has proved to be an effective, versatile and cheap promotional tool, and has provided a profile for the Arts and Culture Program that extends way beyond Belconnen. Well targeted press releases and newsworthy items have appeared in The Canberra Times, BMA, the Chronicle, City News, The Daily Telegraph, Lowdown, ABC Radio National, Artsound FM, 2XX, and CAP amongst others, with some 150 items for 2007. Most noteworthy was the national coverage given to Van Than Rudd's exhibition, the consistent and mostly positive coverage for the WET Season, the Belconnen Community Centre mural, and African Sanctus Canberra. Finally, a number of postcards were produced across the Community Centre programs, along with 4 Centre newsletters, and a number of other posters involving the Arts and Culture Program, and these operated as a valuable promotional tool in a general profile raising and awareness sense.

PROGRAM STAFF

The Arts and Culture Program runs a lean staffing structure. The following details cover broad duty statements:

Community Arts and Culture Program Officer – Jan Wawrzynczak

This full time position manages the program and its staff, and reports to the BCS Director of Community Cultural and Strategic Development.

Duties include:

- Development and coordination of community cultural development projects
- Enable community groups, artists and individuals to develop knowledge, skills, and cultural expression
- Play a leading role in bringing the Belconnen arts community together
- Prepare, implement, and evaluate an annual plan
- Participate as a Belconnen Community Centre team member
- Supervise other staff and volunteers
- Oversee the operation and future direction of the Belconnen Gallery and Theatre
- Manage the promotion and marketing of the program
- Ensure OH&S and risk management practices are maintained

Community Theatre Program Support – David Finnigan

This position is from 4-6 hours per week, and was originally designed to support the bulging theatre program initiate community and amateur theatre activity in Belconnen, based on the strength and interest of this work in previous years. Belconnen gave birth to such well known ACT companies as Tempo, Phoenix, and Free Rain. In 2007 the position was responsible for the WET Season and Hunting Party initiatives.

Duties include:

- Developing community theatre projects
- Support local artists in developing their work
- Identify emerging artists
- Provide mentoring, training, artistic development, and venue support opportunities
- Encourage collaboration and a regional theatre focus

Gallery Curator – Anni Doyle Wawrzynczak

A part time position that commenced in 2004, this position was designed to support a consistent, relevant exhibition program.

Duties include:

- seek out and interact substantially with local artists
- support emerging and first time exhibitors
- ensure that the Gallery is accessible and efficiently run
- assist with openings, invitations, and promotions
- assist with curating advice and hanging
- advise on gallery maintenance and equipment
- develop a varied exhibition program

The position increased in hours during 2006 to 6.5 hours per week, and included developing relationships with other galleries, and the Gallery on the Go project.

Theatre Support Worker – Justin Watson

This position was from 2-4 hours per week, designed to enable easy access to theatre resources for incoming groups.

Duties include:

- Assist incoming groups with technical advice
- Give operational assistance where required
- Be client support oriented
- Ensure safety standards are met
- Supervise maintenance and repair of theatre assets
- Advise on technical and maintenance upgrades
- Be flexible in responding to needs

Reception

The Arts and Culture Program employed (along with other programs at Belconnen Community Centre) staff at reception, an essential service to enable efficient handling of queries and to ensure that staff remain totally accessible to clients.

STATISTICS SUMMARY

Gallery days open	198
Gallery Exhibitions	17
Gallery Visitors	9178
Theatre uses	345
Theatre Performances	145
Total Theatre audience	9460
Total workshops	109
Total unique participants in Program	2050

Report by Jan Wawrzynczak, Belconnen Community Arts and Culture Program Officer

www.bcsact.com/art