



INSIDE WAAPA

Western Australian
Academy of Performing Arts

Official newsletter of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University (Issue 50) November 2017

PHANTOM REVISITED
Ben Lewis steps back into lead role

GLOBAL REACH
New international
partnership

DYNASTY
and James Mackay

DEFYING GRAVITY
30th Birthday

PLUS
WAM awards
and much more



PHANTOM REVISITED

BEN LEWIS HAS STEPPED BACK INTO A MUSICAL THEATRE LEAD ROLE HE KNOWS WELL

In September, WAAPA alumnus Ben Lewis took over the title role in the West End production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London.

He is joined in the long-running production by another WAAPA graduate: Amy Manford, who plays the alternate Christine Daaé.

In her final year at WAAPA, Manford was awarded the prestigious Barbara MacLeod Scholarship for Most Outstanding Female Classical Student. She then moved to London to complete postgraduate study at The Royal College of Music, graduating recently with a Masters of Performance in Vocal Performance.

Manford has performed internationally as a soloist with the London Handel, London Cello and the Perth Symphony Orchestras. She has sung at iconic venues such as the Seoul Arts Center in South Korea and at Buckingham Palace for the Prince of Wales.

Playing the alternate Christine marks the 24-year-old singer's West End debut. Manford performs Christine twice a week, alternating with another actor because of the extreme demands of the part, which include 11 dress changes, all with corsets, elaborate dance moves, including climbing ladders, and wearing a skirt that weighs more than 8kg for her opening number.

Ben Lewis comes to the role of The Phantom after playing the same character in a different show – the original Australian production of Lloyd Webber's sequel, *Love Never Dies* in 2011.

Four years earlier, Lewis had watched from the audience as his younger brother Alexander performed the lead role in the original Australian

production of *The Phantom of the Opera*. Alexander was playing Raoul and understudying The Phantom and Ben was there to applaud his brother the first time he went on in the title role. After starting his career so successfully in musical theatre, Alexander is now forging an international career as an opera singer.

"I was probably more nervous than he was and spent the whole show just watching him, so I don't remember much else about the experience," recalls Ben. "He did an awesome job though and I was super proud!"

Both brothers graduated from WAAPA in 2004 and are the sons of acclaimed opera singers Patricia Price, WAAPA's current Head of Vocal Studies, and Michael Lewis, who teaches sessionally at WAAPA.

Amy Manford studied at WAAPA with Patricia Price. When Lewis met Manford on the first day of *Phantom* rehearsals: "I was like, 'Oh, you studied with my mum!'"

It's been just over five years since Lewis and his wife Melle Stewart – they met while studying at WAAPA – moved from Sydney to London to pursue their musical theatre careers. Ben describes the English capital as a tough town but "the creative rewards are there if you are willing to stick it out".

Stewart recently starred in another of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musicals, *By Jeeves* at the Old Laundry Theatre in the Lake District and directed by the show's lyricist, Sir Alan Ayckbourn.

Coming from such a high-profile performing arts family, Lewis says that his parents and brother are very considerate when it comes to providing feedback on his performances.

"I think they know that I think deeply about my work and they are all very respectful of my process and don't try and get in the way of that."

He admits that having played The Phantom before has definitely been an advantage, both in terms of the emotional connection and the physical demands of the part.

"I've always felt a connection with the character which helps, but I always take my strength and confidence from my preparation," he says. "More often than not, I feel like if I am diligent with my work, detailed, and curious, then the rest takes care of itself."

"However there is a comfort that comes from understanding some of the technical aspects of the work. Wearing the mask, prosthetics, wig etc. can be quite a shock and an adjustment, but for me it has felt so familiar and that has probably made the transition from rehearsal room to stage a lot easier this time round."

Lewis also points out how isolating the role can be, as the only other person The Phantom shares the stage is with the actress playing Christine. So Lewis makes a point of touching base with the other members of the company as much as possible.

"The cast and the crew are wonderful and it is a pleasure to walk into Her Majesty's each and every day," he says.

So what does it take to get a lead role in a musical on the West End? Lewis offers this advice for budding performers:

"Just work hard. Put your phone down and work hard. There are so many talented people out there, but it means nothing without graft."

GLOBAL REACH

AN EXCITING NEW PARTNERSHIP OPENS INTERNATIONAL DOORS FOR WAAPA STUDENTS

A new partnership between Edith Cowan University (ECU) and a top international conservatoire is giving music students the chance to study in England or learn from the best teachers in the world, right here in Perth.

In August, ECU and the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which will pave the way for student and staff exchanges, short course and placement opportunities, knowledge sharing, research collaboration and joint performance projects.

ECU Vice-Chancellor Professor Steve Chapman said the partnership would give WAAPA students access to RNCM's internationally renowned teachers as well as facilitate knowledge sharing between the two institutions.

"It also opens the door for students from Perth and Manchester to study at either world-class school and broaden their horizons," Professor Chapman said.

RNCM Principal Professor Linda Merrick said the RNCM is constantly seeking new and exciting opportunities to enhance the experience it offers to both students and staff.

"Our professional partnerships with other world-class providers who share our passion and ethos are integral to realising this ambition."

"We pride ourselves on giving all of our students real-world experiences during their studies, both in the UK and internationally. Our partnership with WAAPA will help us develop this important work, incentivise student and staff mobility, share best practice and create mutually beneficial projects and initiatives," she said.

Professor Merrick visited Perth on Tuesday 29 August to sign the MoU and to give the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Oration 2017 at ECU's Mount Lawley campus.

In her oration *'The value of performing arts education in a changing world'*, Professor Merrick outlined how in an uncertain world performing arts matters more than ever before.

From the rapid rise of social media and the major changes in how young people access music to the exponential growth in TV talent shows, Professor Merrick also explored the conflict between artistic integrity and economic realities.

Reflecting on what the future may hold she explained how higher education can respond to the challenges of an increasingly global, virtual and media driven world.



Even before this important partnership between WAAPA and RNCM was formalised, the Manchester conservatoire has for many years been a highly sought-after post-graduate destination for WAAPA's Classical Vocal graduates.

Following their undergraduate training at WAAPA with Head of Classical Voice, Patricia Price, sopranos Samantha Clarke and Daniella Sicari have both recently graduated from RNCM with a Masters of Music, under the tutelage of Mary Plazas.

Clarke, who was recently awarded a 2017 Royal Northern College of Music Gold Medal, gave her professional debut as Pamina in *The Magic Flute* by Mozart in the Longborough Festival Opera 2017 season. Since then she has performed the role of Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with the British Youth Opera Company and performed in the finals for the Independent Opera Scholars' Recital at Wigmore Hall, winning the Nora Goodridge Developing Artist Award from the Australian Music Foundation. Clarke is now commencing studies with Yvonne Kenny at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

In 2015, Daniella Sicari received the Young People and the Arts International Scholarship to further her studies abroad. In 2016, she was awarded the Amanda Roocroft Prize by the RNCM and has most recently been awarded The John Cameron Prize for Lieder and the 2017 Joyce and Michael Kennedy Strauss Award.

Sicari applied to RNCM for her postgraduate studies because of the range of performance opportunities on offer: self-devised lunch time recitals, opera scenes, opera production auditions and external opera company residencies/mentorships.

"I wanted to go to a place that would show me what was expected of me in a professional company," she explains. "I was so pleased that RNCM offered me a place on their course and I feel I've grown as an artist here."

"RNCM is known for its friendliness and welcoming nature, this is absolutely true and it made such an impact on my time here. The people I've met here have inspired me and I have learnt many important lessons from the teachers and guest artists who have visited the College."

Sicari is also a talented jazz singer. For just over a year she has been the lead vocalist in Dani Sicari and The Easy Rollers, a seven-piece vintage jazz band made up of RNCM musicians. They have been steadily building a reputation as one of the hardest working swing bands in the north of England with appearances at Manchester and Glasgow Jazz Festivals, Spinfest, and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, among many other gigs.

In December, Sicari will perform the role of The Fairy Godmother (La Fée) in RNCM Opera Production's *Cendrillon* by Massenet and next year will appear as Gretel in their production of *Hansel and Gretel*.

Currently half way through her studies at RNCM is mezzo-soprano Chelsea Burns, who will graduate next year. Burns completed her Bachelor of Music, majoring in classical performance and a Postgraduate Diploma of Music at WAAPA in 2015. She then auditioned at England's prestigious trio of the Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music and RNCM. She was accepted to all three but eventually chose RNCM for her postgraduate studies under the tutelage of Ann Taylor.

Main photo: RNCM Principal Professor Linda Merrick and ECU Vice-Chancellor Professor Steve Chapman signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

Inset photo: Daniella Sicari

From left: Ben Lewis as *The Phantom* and Amy Manford as Christine Daaé in the West End production of *The Phantom of the Opera*



Photos by Johan Persson



AND JAMES MACKAY

that particular moment. I'd been going back and forward between Sydney and LA for several years, and felt like I was spinning my wheels a little. I hadn't booked any work yet in the US. The scholarship was not only hugely encouraging and reassuring that I wasn't kidding myself pursuing a career in the US, but it allowed me to hang on in LA for a crucial extra few months, and gave me the resources to apply for my first O-1 visa. A couple of months after the scholarship I booked two episodes on a series in Vancouver, *The Tomorrow People*, and after finishing the second episode (plus a few bonus weeks of holding my breath in Canada), my visa was approved. I drove down the coast to California in January 2014 and began a new chapter based in LA.

IW: You've been in a string of high-profile films recently - what has been the highlight so far?

JM: *The Dressmaker* was a real treat. It brought me back to Australia for a really satisfying and exciting job after a fairly prolonged stint in LA of auditioning relentlessly but getting nowhere. When I first read the script, and then the book, I fell in love with the story and was determined to get the role, but that kind of eagerness can sometimes work against you energetically. Auditioning is – cruelly – a lot like dating in that way. In this case though I got lucky and it is one of the best working experiences I've ever had. *Battle of the Sexes* has definitely been another highlight. It was a lot of fun to play an Australian character in a US film, and another wonderful ensemble cast to be a part of. The directors also made *Little Miss Sunshine*, which is one of my favourite films, so that was a thrill.

IW: The Dressmaker is a who's who of great Aussie talent starring alongside Kate Winslet. What was it like working on that film?

JM: It was a magic experience. A truly wonderful and lovely bunch of people, many of whom I had grown up watching and admiring, so I was pinching myself. Every single person working on that movie gave it everything they had and I think it's a magic piece of Aussie cinema. I'm proud to be a part of it.

It created new friendships and consolidated old ones and because so many of us were on set at the same time for the scenes involving the townsfolk, it was a riot. I loved working in Melbourne and we finished the shoot with a week on location out in Horsham, which was a blast. Everyone had a great time.

And the material itself was so rich and theatrical. We had no time – no table read, no rehearsal – which gave the whole process a sort of vaguely terrifying adrenalised feel. Some of it was so heightened and some of it was so naturalistic, it was sometimes difficult to know where to pitch things. There were plenty of moments of 'is this way too much?' anxiety for everyone, I think it's safe to say.

But [director] Jocelyn Moorhouse, and [producer] Sue Maslin had such a clear sense of the story – not to mention the legendary Don McAlpine and Jill Bilcock who shot and edited the film respectively – and gave us so much freedom to play, we could just throw ourselves into it. The world and the period had been created so exquisitely by the designers. We were in that wild, beautiful landscape. I think it all translated into something really special.

IW: Dynasty looks as if it's a lot of fun to be a part of... what have you enjoyed most about it? ▶

JM: We're having a ball. It's so much fun. With the absurdity and extravagance of the environment that this family live in, and the theatricality of the storylines, how couldn't you – I mean, it's *Dynasty* after all! We inherited our crew from *The Vampire Diaries*, so they've all been working together for years, and the cast has become very tight already, so it really does feel like a family. It's made setting up in a new city much easier, and I've never been part of a cast that hangs out together so much outside of work.

I'm also really enjoying the full-time nature of the job. It's so rare to be on a gig that means working most days for months on end. It's bliss. It's the first time in a while I've felt secure. Just knowing where I'm going to be for the next few months and being on a schedule, having some routine, is a very pleasant novelty.

IW: You did a lot of theatre work in Sydney before you moved to the US - have you been able to continue that in the US or has film/TV work become the priority?

JM: I haven't done a play in nearly five years (since *The History Boys* in January 2013). I'm actually kind of shocked to realise that it's been that long. I guess film and television became the priority when I moved to LA, but I've auditioned for plenty of theatre back home via self-tapes since then. I would love to get on stage again, I really miss the theatre. There's a physicality and an immediacy to performing on stage that doesn't really exist when you're working with cameras.

I had landed a role in the MTC production of *Macbeth* earlier this year which I was super excited about, but unfortunately I had to withdraw once *Dynasty* got picked up to series. I was more disappointed than I'd probably care to admit, but I am well aware by now that these sorts of situations are champagne problems.

IW: What's next for you?

JM: The *Dynasty* circus rolls on. I'm starting to think about what might happen during the hiatus, but until we know exactly when that is, or if we're going to a second season, it's somewhat futile to speculate. For now I'm enjoying being unavailable! If we're talking dream scenarios, I am hopeful there might be an opportunity on a film – or a play – back home, once we wrap series 1. But it will be back to business as usual for a jobbing actor: read the scripts, do the auditions, roll the dice, try not to panic. And, as usual, I'll be as fascinated as anyone else to find out what the next job to land will be. ■

Main Photo from left: Robert Christopher Riley as Michael Culhane, Alan Dale as Joseph Anders, Nathalie Kelley as Cristal Flores, Grant Show as Blake Carrington, James Mackay as Steven Carrington, Rafael de la Fuente as Sam 'Sammy Jo' Flores, Elizabeth Gillies as Fallon Carrington and Sam Adegoke as Jeff Colby

Inset Photo: James Mackay as Steven Carrington

Photos by: Art Streiber/The CW -- (c) 2017 The CW Network, LLC. All Rights Reserved.



DEFYING GRAVITY TURNS 30

2017 MARKED THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF WAAPA'S AWARD-WINNING DEFYING GRAVITY PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Defying Gravity celebrated 30 years at the forefront of Australian percussion in the 'Hit Parade' percussion festival in September, which culminated in four gala concerts that showcased the energy, passion and power of percussion - featuring performances by international percussion superstar Kuniko Kato, Defying Gravity founder Gary France and alumni Marcus Perrozzi, Iain Robbie and Kaboom Percussion (Catherine Betts and Joshua Webster).

The concerts were also the culmination of an 11-day residency by Kuniko Kato, who first met Defying Gravity at the 2010 Australian Percussion Gathering in Brisbane.

One of the most gifted and significant percussionists of her generation, Kuniko is renowned for her astonishing virtuosity, exquisite musical insight and expressive yet elegant performance style. A specialist in contemporary percussion music, she has collaborated with Steve Reich, Toru Takemitsu, James Wood, Franco Donatoni, and Unsuk Chin, among many others.

Thanks to the generous support of the McClements Foundation, Kuniko performed two solo concerts when she arrived at WAAPA, dazzling audiences with her breathtaking virtuosity in masterworks by Johann Sebastian Bach, Steve Reich, Iannis Xenakis and Arvo Pärt.

"Kuniko Kato is an amazing performer and a wonderful human being," says 2nd Year percussion student, Arund Pearce. "Watching her physical, exhilarating performance style has inspired me to incorporate more

'performance' into my playing. Her visit was an experience I will never forget."

In 30 years, Defying Gravity has grown from a nucleus of four students to the current line-up of 18 players. Known initially as the WA Conservatorium of Music Classical Percussion Ensemble, the group made its debut on 17 September 1987 in a program that included Edgar Varese's *Ionisation* and John Beck's *Overture in Percussion*.

Senior Lecturer Tim White, Artistic Director of Defying Gravity since 1994, has overseen national tours and concerts in venues ranging from the Perth Concert Hall to a sheep station at Mt Magnet in WA's far north. The group has also toured to Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane, and represented Australia at the 2011 PASIC percussion convention in Indianapolis USA. Defying Gravity has performed at the Perth International Arts Festival and established a national profile through its regular recordings and broadcasts on ABC Classic FM.

"It's been a fabulous and fun thirty years," says Tim. "Over sixty percussionists have graduated from Defying Gravity with BMus degrees, and the vast majority have gone on to enjoy fulltime careers in music.

"I've loved seeing the students blossom as people and as musicians, and their music-making and teaching has enriched our society, touching the lives of so many people. And on top of that, we've all had so much fun with Defying Gravity – exploring the mysterious, joyful, surprising and many-splendoured thing that is 'percussion'."

DRAMA DOWN UNDER COMES TO CHINA

DRAMA IS HELPING TO BUILD AN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BRIDGE BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND CHINA



From top: Dr Gabrielle Metcalf and Dr Min Zhu; participants of the 4th Annual International Children's Drama Festival

In July, WAAPA sessional lecturers Dr Gabrielle Metcalf and Dr Min Zhu were invited to Beijing Normal University in China to run a week of workshops at the 4th Annual International Children's Drama Festival – Teacher Training and Student Summer Camp.

The festival included lectures, workshops, performance and roundtable discussions around the theme of drama education. Dr Metcalf gave a lecture at the opening ceremony of the festival called *Drama Down Under: An Australian Perspective on Teaching Drama in the Primary School*, which introduced the development and rationale of drama education for young people in Australia, as well as the structure and characteristics of Australian curriculum.

With other guest speakers, all of the lectures conveyed the idea that the Arts play an important role in education, especially in the development of children's imagination and creativity. The significance of drama education is being recognized and explored by Chinese educators.

More than 90 Chinese primary and secondary school teachers from schools throughout China participated in the workshops. Although they taught a variety of subjects in their schools, they were all keen to learn drama skills they could apply to their classes. In the workshops, Dr Metcalf and Dr Zhu introduced the elements of drama to the teachers and demonstrated how to use voice, movement, role and relationship to create drama in devised and improvised scenarios, and discussed how to plan and manage a drama class.

At the closing ceremony of the festival, the Chinese teachers demonstrated what they had learnt with a devised performance including scenes from *Macbeth* – which only a few teachers had heard of before the workshops!

Dr Metcalf and Dr Zhu have now been invited by Beijing Normal University to run workshops with other educators from Russia, England and Finland at the International Education Conference in Xiamen City in November.



STAFF AND GRADUATES WIN BIG AT THE 2017 WAM AWARDS

When this year's coveted WAM Awards were announced on Thursday 2 November at the Gate One Theatre in Perth's Claremont Showgrounds, a number of WAAPA staff and graduates were among the winners.

Jazz lecturers Daniel Susnjar (and his eponymous Afro-Peruvian Jazz Group) and Tom O'Halloran won the awards for Best Jazz Act and Best Keys/Synth Artist respectively, while sessional staff member Rickie Malet picked up Best Bass/Strings/Woodwind Instrumentalist.

Composition/Music Tech graduate Jake Steele (aka Tobacco Rat) took out the Best Electronic Live Act and Feels – percussion graduates Elise Reitze and Rosie Taylor – won the Best Electronic Producer gong. Best Bassist Sara McPherson and Best

Guitarist Axel Carrington from Rag n' Bone are both Contemporary Music graduates.

The late, great Dr Graham Wood was inducted into the WAM Hall of Fame in a beautiful and heartfelt acceptance speech from Jamie Oehlers and a rousing performance of one of Wood's compositions was performed by Daniel Susnjar (drums) and Harry Mitchell (keyboard).

Dr Wood was honoured for his work in the Australian music scene for initiatives such as founding the Perth International Jazz Festival, starting and co-owning the iconic Ellington Jazz Club in Perth, being appointed Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning at WAAPA in 2016, and recording and touring nationally and internationally with many acclaimed artists and ensembles.

From top: Steven Caston (above) honours the late Dr Graham Wood on his induction into the WAM Hall of Fame; Daniel Susnjar celebrates his WAM Award win

NEW PERFORMING ARTS AWARD

On Wednesday 8 November, Bachelor of Performing Arts (BPA) graduate Charlotte Otton was announced as the winner of the inaugural WAAPA FAC Residency Prize.

This exciting new annual award offers a BPA Performance Making graduate the opportunity to undertake a four-week residency at the Fremantle Arts Centre, during which they can develop a new work with support from FAC and present a showing for feedback and potential programming.

This award further extends the ongoing partnership between WAAPA and FAC, with FAC having presented and co-presented shows with WAAPA students from Defying Gravity, Music Theatre, Classical Voice, Jazz and Acting, and on several site-specific works with LINK Dance Company.

"FAC is committed to supporting artists make new work and through our Artists in Residency program in particular, we support young and new graduates as they begin to make their way as independent professional artists," says Jim Cathcart, Director of FAC. "Last year half of all our WA Artists in Residence were recent graduates.

"So I am very pleased to expand our engagement to graduates of WAAPA's Performance Making course through this Residency Prize."

According to Cathcart, who selected the recipient in consultation with his staff at FAC, "Charlotte's application stood out by proposing a project with a clear sense of purpose, good artistic rationale and a capable artistic team."



Above: Charlotte Otton



MAESTRO ON THE MOVE

WAAPA's Head of Classical Music (Strings), Associate Professor Alexandre Da Costa is now on tour with his *Stradivarius at the Opera* show.

Da Costa has created a 'concert-spectacle' in which he and a string ensemble perform the great classics of romantic opera – *Carmen* by Bizet, *Romeo and Juliet* by Prokofiev and *Turandot* by Puccini, among others – and more modern pieces against a backdrop of dramatic lighting and striking visual images.

This contemporary fusion of music and digital arts offers the audience a captivating visual and aural immersive experience. Da Costa performs as both soloist – on his magnificent Stradivarius violin – and conductor.

Da Costa will farewell this year and see in 2018 by leading the Vienna Symphony as guest concertmaster for their famous New Year concerts at the Vienna Konzerthaus on December 30, 31 and January 1. He also has guest soloist dates with the Sinfonia Toronto, the Halle Staatskapelle, the Winnipeg Symphony and many other recitals and concerts.

Photo by Carlos Guerra

Photo by Jon Green

PUSHING BOUNDARIES

TWO RECENT PERFORMANCES PUSHED THE BOUNDARIES OF WAAPA'S PERFORMANCE TRAINING THROUGH EXCITING NEW COLLABORATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INVENTORIES OF BODIES IN MOVEMENT

In October, 50 performers from local WA arts companies, Co3, DADAA's Tracksuit program and WAAPA's LINK Dance Company collaborated for the first time to create the powerful work, *Inventories of Bodies in Movement*.

LINK joined forces with Co3, WA's flagship contemporary dance company, and Tracksuit, DADAA's ongoing performing arts program providing for people with disability, to create a mass contemporary dance display by dancers and non-dancers performed on the South Lawn of the Fremantle Arts Centre.

Choreographed by revered French artist Christine Fricker, *Inventories of Bodies in Movement (IBM)* was originally performed in Marseille and has subsequently travelled to nine cities around the world with each production tackling a different theme.

"IBM is always different according to the theme, the cast, the city where it takes place," explains Fricker. "For Perth it's the question of isolation and the relationship to this extraordinary natural world."

The 50 performers for the Fremantle iteration created the material from scratch over two weeks with Fricker at the helm.

Performed over 30 minutes, *IBM* is set in a grid with each performer inhabiting a 1.6m square indicated on the ground. Specially created for novices and professionals alike, this work breaks open the divide between these two worlds. It brings young and old, professional and aspiring dancers, able-bodied and disabled people together.

The result is a beautiful, arresting patchwork of humanity, people from different walks of life moving in their own worlds and connected together with intent.

"It was my first time working with disabled people on this project and the Tracksuit/DADAA dancers made such an incredible work, they gave me their trust," said Fricker. "I also enjoyed working with the young dancers of Co3 to

see how they progressed to be closer to their sensations, to be able to make their own choices."

Fricker had already worked with the LINK dancers during their recent tour to France. However she found that creating this new piece with them in Perth highlighted their great energy and range of movement, a difference she noticed between them and French dancers.

"I appreciated their curiosity and enthusiasm for new processes," Fricker explained. "I also enjoyed their commitment and their generosity in guiding the other participants with great simplicity."

"I'm touched by the way the dances that emerge through IBM are so personal and so authentic – that's why I keep working on this project that is always the same and at the same time so different."

THE SECRET PROJECT: DISPATCH

WAAPA's commitment to new collaborations and community engagement was also evident in *The Secret Project: Dispatch*, a site-specific theatre piece devised and performed by the 2nd Year Bachelor of Performing Arts (Performance Making) students from 4-7 October at the Wireless Hill Museum in Perth's southern suburb of Ardross.

Wireless Hill has been a significant landmark for communication for the Noongar Beelieer people for tens of thousands of years and was also one of the first sites for radio technology in Australia.

This provided the rich background material on which the students were able to devise a promenade-style piece built around historical and verbatim text interwoven with new writing, a unique sound design, strong image creation and movement.

The students were supported on their creative journey by international guest director Barney O'Hanlon, from the renowned SITI Company in New York, dramaturg Renee Newman and guest artist, WAAPA Aboriginal Performance graduate Ian Wilkes.

"My time at WAAPA was extraordinary and I very much fell in love with the school and all the

amazing humans there!" says O'Hanlon. "Working on the site specific piece with the 2nd Year BPA students was a truly wonderful experience, our process was rich, the site was beautiful and I loved what we created together."

"These young artists brought their ideas, their creativity, their hearts and their minds to this project every day. The openness with which they came to the work was an incredible gift to this visiting artist from the other side of the globe."

O'Hanlon describes how through his research on Wireless Hill and its history, he learned about the area's deep connection to the local Nyoongar people.

Rick Brayford, Coordinator of WAAPA's Aboriginal Theatre course, put the American director in touch with actor/dancer/director Ian Wilkes.

Wilkes has a strong family connection to the arts and indigenous affairs: his great-uncle was the acclaimed playwright, the late Jack Davis; his father is prominent West Australian academic Associate Professor Ted Wilkes AO; and his aunt is film and theatre director Lynette Narkle, a whose acting credits include *The Sapphires*.

"Ian is a very busy artist but he offered his time, artistry and ancestral connection to *The Secret Project* and I truly cannot imagine having done the piece without him," says O'Hanlon.

"I also want to send a special shout out to the staff at WAAPA who are doing incredible work nurturing all of these artists. I'm so proud to have had to opportunity to work alongside you all."

The Secret Project: Dispatch represents the culmination of a year-long unit introducing BPA students to the particular opportunities and challenges of making site-specific performance.

Dr Frances Barbe, Course Coordinator, Bachelor of Performing Arts is grateful for the generous community support the project received.

"It was fantastic to work with staff at Wireless Hill Museum and City of Melville on this project. Their willing support made a huge difference to the development of this unique work."

From left: Inventories of Bodies in Movement; The Secret Project: Dispatch



RESEARCH'S NEW VOICE

LIVE PERFORMANCE PRODUCTION RESEARCH STEPS INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

A new journal launched on 11 October at WAAPA aims to provide a dedicated space for the dissemination of production-based research.

Behind the Scenes: Journal of Theatre Production Practice was developed to fill a void in

the publication of articles that give focus to the production aspects of live performance. Its purpose is to give visibility to and engage current researchers in a dialogue on the many aspects of performance that are seemingly 'behind the scenes'.

The journal is the creation of Dr Sue Fenty Studham, Assistant Professor and Head of the Bachelor of Fine Arts Stage Management Program at The Theatre School of DePaul University in Chicago.

When Dr Studham completed her PhD at WAAPA in 2015, she realised that although there are a number of scenography journals available to

researchers, there was no current platform to disseminate the research produced from investigating the practices of theatre production.

"This type of research, often practice-led, does not fit within a traditional research model, nor an industry format," said Dr Studham in her address at the launch. "It is hybrid and so, a new hybrid space was required to showcase it."

Working with Dr Studham on the many stages of the journal's development were Professor Cat Hope, Dr Helen Rusak, Dr Renée Newman, Dr. Jonathan Marshall, Dr. Lyndall Adams, Fleur Kingsland, Dr Sharon Matthews and Sally Hyslop.

The inaugural issue of *Behind the Scenes: Journal of Theatre Production Practice* is dedicated to the late Associate Professor Maggi Philips.

"Her belief in the value of practice-led research is one of the reasons that this journal exists," said Dr Studham. "Maggi was fascinated with the movement of bodies, ideas and identities and this journal is indebted to her musings on performance as research... her words live on in this journal and beyond."

Above left: Dr Sue Fenty Studham

CRAZY DANCE LOVE

AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR STUDENT DANCERS CROSSES LANGUAGE BARRIERS

In September, for the fourth year in a row, WAAPA Dance students were invited to participate in the prestigious Beijing Normal University (BNU) Creative Dance Seminar in China.

Fifteen dance students travelled to China with Kim McCarthy, WAAPA's Coordinator of Classical Dance, and Sue Peacock, Acting Head of Dance.

The week-long event featured seminars, master classes, workshops and performances, and offered the WAAPA dancers the opportunity to network with students and staff from performance schools from all over the world, including America, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong.

The classes ranged from classical and contemporary ballet to traditional dances such as Chinese sleeve dancing.

The WAAPA students concluded their week at the Seminar by performing Kim McCarthy's *Escape Artist* in the Beijing Dance Academy Theatre. The work was originally performed in May as part of WAAPA's dance season, *Rise*.

Dancer Meg Beeson describes her week in China as "filled with fun, adventure and laughter".

"How lucky we all were to go to another country and share this beautiful art form with like-minded beings," she says.

Dancer Kirsty Clarke agrees: "To be immersed in a culture that differs from us in so many ways, and yet still be able to communicate and understand one another through doing what we love is crazy."

"Learning from the teachers of these other academies, it was amazing what you could still understand regardless of them speaking a different language, and you realise how movement can depict so much."

In addition to their time at BNU, the students were able to go sightseeing, taking in Beihai Park, the Silk Markets, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China.

"Being able to see some of the great landmarks of the world while we were there was great," says Clarke. "But I think the highlight for me was after the performance, when the curtain closed on stage... being able to see everybody so happy about a common passion, I think it's a moment that's unforgettable."



Photo by Liu Haidong



Photo by Rikto Erick



Photo by Stephen Heath

CLASSICAL MUSIC ACCOLADES



On 25 October, WAAPA celebrated the achievements of its most outstanding Classical Music students at a concert for the winners of 2017 Classical Music Awards.

Pianist Hannah Th'ng won both the prestigious Friends of the Academy Award for the most outstanding final year student in the Classical Music program and the coveted Barbara MacLeod Scholarship for the most outstanding female Classical Music student.

The latter, established in memory of Captain Barbara Denise MacLeod, provides \$10,000 to enable the winner to further develop their musical skills by undertaking a short intensive program of study at a leading music institution.

Th'ng, who this year completed her Honours degree under the tutelage of Anna Sleptsova, looks forward to learning from the celebrated pianist/composer/pedagogue Emeritus Professor Larry Sitsky AM at the Australian National University's School of Music.

"I plan to fly over for two weeks and then return to Perth for a couple of months so that I can still maintain my teaching/performing engagements whilst having time to digest what I have learnt," says Th'ng. "I intend to do this over a period of 8-10 months."

Th'ng intends to use the \$1,000 prize money from the Friends of the Academy Award to purchase additional music books and for other possible study opportunities.

"I am of course extremely excited since I was previously unable financially to undertake further studies outside of Perth on my own, so these awards will enable me to do what I have always wanted to do," says the talented pianist.

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to WAAPA, its supporters, the Friends of the Academy, the wonderful lecturers and staff members, the amazing students, and my immediate and church family for making all this possible. It has been a hard but rewarding journey and I am excited for what lies ahead!"

The winner of the 2017 Warana Music Award for best concerto performance in the Classical Music program was pianist George Carolin-Unkovich.

Carolin-Unkovich, who is in the second year of a Bachelor of Music under Anna Sleptsova, won with an outstanding performance of the *Allegro* from Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor*, accompanied by the Faith Court Orchestra under conductor Christopher Dragon.

"I'm thrilled to not only have won the prize, but also to have had the opportunity to perform with the Faith Court Orchestra and Christopher Dragon," says Carolin-Unkovich. "I would like to thank all the tireless WAAPA staff, friends and sponsors of the Academy and all of the students involved for their commitment in making this year's event take place."

The Dame Mary Gilmore Bequest, provided by Perth's Karrakatta Club to the most promising overall final year female student in the Classical Vocal course, was presented to Ema Rose Gosnell. The mezzo-soprano, who studied with Fiona McAndrew at WAAPA, plans to pursue postgraduate studies in opera next year.

The Luigi Paolino Award for Excellence in Classical Percussion, established in memory of WAAPA percussion graduate Luigi Paolino and awarded to the most outstanding undergraduate percussionist, was awarded to Tao Issaro.

Percussionist Laura Harris was awarded the Norman Archibald Percussion Scholarship. This scholarship was founded by Neil Archibald in 2015 in memory of his father to provide financial support to WAAPA students who demonstrate excellence in classical percussion.

The Friends of the Academy First Year Classical Vocal Award, presented to the most outstanding mid-year recital given by a 1st Year Classical Vocal student, was jointly won this year by two sopranos, Ashley Chua and Isabella Marslen, who achieved the equal highest mark.

WAAPA congratulates these outstanding musicians, and is indebted to its donors for generously supporting the student scholarship program.

Above: Hannah Th'ng and George Carolin-Unkovich

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SHOWCASE

BY DR JONATHAN W. MARSHALL
WAAPA COORDINATOR OF RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREES

As part of the 9th annual Research Week at ECU, the WAAPA Postgraduate Research Showcase was held on 23 September in the Music Auditorium.

Curated by PhD candidate Emma Jayakumar, the performance featured a selection of postgraduate creative works, ranging from community dance to post-shamanic vocals, cinematic documentary to music composed in response to the WA landscape. In offering a wide spectrum of work, the 2017 Showcase represented the diversity of postgraduate study at WAAPA.

The evening began with Sage Pbbbt playing drums whilst engaging in abstract vocals and guttural noises. Structured according to inner states and the idea of music as a turbulent stream, the piece represents one strand of Sage's fascinating project into meditation and extended vocal techniques inspired by steppe-land shamanic practices as well as contemporary magik – taking what Sage calls an 'agnostic' and playful position on the reality or otherwise of magikal phenomena.

This was followed by Josten Myburgh's meditative, Eric-Satie-esque laptop music. Josten is looking at how to develop musical communities, creating an open-ended work which might foster a sense of freedom and agency in audiences.

Next up was Cissi Tsang, complete with electric guitar and processed environmental recordings that were accompanied by treated video projections of seaside landscapes and wavering sound waves. The piece was reminiscent of the work of Laurie Anderson, using a looped, distorted vocal interjection as a structural element which Cissi then riffed with, mostly using extended strums.

PhD candidate Rusty Gellar offered a change of pace by showing a clip from one of several interviews he has been conducting with camera operators, including the camera operator from David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet*. Ever since the steadicam was invented, camera operators have been able to climb and weave through spaces while taking increasingly stable and well-focussed footage. While some great camera operators did this before

using handheld devices, dollies and other techniques, the steadicam puts the human body into the centre of taking footage. Camera operation becomes, as Rusty explained, a kind of performance.

Moving into the world of theatre, a portion of the script being developed by MA candidate Susie Conte was read by actor Kylie Maree. The piece breathes life into the diaries and writing of WA author Mollie Skinner (1876-1955) offering a poignant portrait of a figure who never quite seemed to prosper. Looked down upon by her mother, and only turning to writing novels after periods as a midwife and a WWI nurse, Skinner ended her peripatetic life in WA, best known as the woman who had hosted UK author D.H. Lawrence on his trip to Australia. Skinner remains a fascinating character who hovers on the fringes of history.

The evening concluded with a combination of festivity and protest in a performance of Maloya music and dance. Maloya originated on the island of Réunion, off the coast of Madagascar. Material is improvised according to a call-and-response structure, and the lyrics deal with the violence of slavery endured by local and diasporic communities on Réunion. Movements tend to swing the body low in the hips and side to side, often in impressive shakes, while the music has a similar shaking, doubled beat. Muriel Toulcanon's project looks at Maloya as a form of community expression, agency and memory.

The piece featured Muriel performing with two dancers and three musicians: one on drum, one on bamboo rattle, and another on a local form of glockenspiel, as well as some alternation between the drum and a struck, musical bow. The main drum was constructed in Perth in collaboration with a Maloya expert, who led the singing for the performance.

The evening ended with much whooping at this vigorous statement of survival in the face of oppressive conditions – a suitably fiery way to end this survey of the fine creative research currently being undertaken at the Academy.

From top: Dr Jonathan W Marshall; actor Kylie Maree; Cissi Tsang; and two images from Muriel Toulcanon's Maloya performance. Photos by Georgia Sassenfeld



JULIE MICHAEL PRIZE

Stacey Thomsett has won the 2017 Julie Michael Prize in Musical Cabaret. This prize, worth \$2,000, was established in 2009 by the Government House Foundation to recognize the support that Julie Michael gave to nurturing and extending the cultural life of Government House. The prize is open to selected students who must write and present their ideas for a musical cabaret act.

Previous winners include Gillian Cosgriff, who has gone on to win best comedy and cabaret awards at Perth, Sydney and Melbourne Fringe Festivals, as well as a Green Room Award; Du Toit Bredenkamp, who played Rolf Gruber in the 2015-2016 Australian production of *The Sound of Music* and starred in the ABC's recent two-part series, *Fridays On My Mind*; and Patrick Whitbread, who has appeared in *Cats*, *Georgy Girl: The Seekers Musical* and is currently touring in *Matilda The Musical*.

At left: Stacey Thomsett wins the 2017 Julie Michael Prize



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ON STAGE AT WAAPA



Verge



The Threepenny Opera



Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson



As You Like It



The Secret Project: Dispatch



Verge

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



Principal Partner



International Travel Partner



Major Partner



Supporting Partner



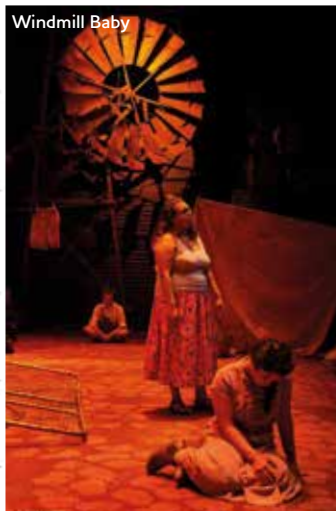
Instrument and Equipment Partners



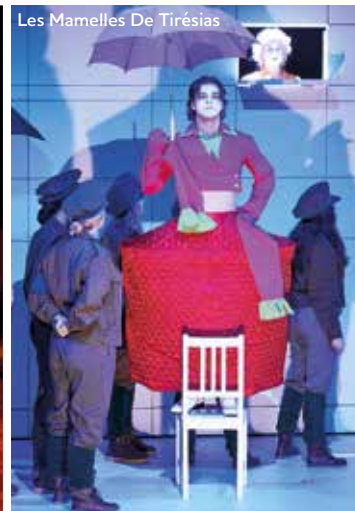
Performance Partners



Hospitality Partner Civic Partner Community Partner



Windmill Baby



Les Mamelles De Tirésias



Verge



Windmill Baby



The Impresario

Cover Credits

Front Cover
'The Phantom Of The Opera': Ben Lewis 'The Phantom' and Kelly Mathieson 'Christine Daaé'. Photo Johan Persson

Back Cover
 All photos by Jon Green Photographer except *'The Secret Project: Dispatch'* and *'Verge'* photos by Stephen Heath Photography.