



INSIDE WAAPA

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Daniel Susnjar with his Bell Award and (inset photo) Sarah McKenzie
Main photo: Andrew Kneebone / inset photo: Yamaha Music Australia

WAAPA JAZZ ARTISTS SCOOP THREE 'BELLS'

Drummer/percussionist/composer/educator Daniel Susnjar has recently completed five years of performance and study in the USA, where he earned both his Doctoral and Masters degrees from the University of Miami Frost School of Music.

While in America, Susnjar performed and recorded with many of the world's finest jazz and rock artists, including Chick Corea, Bobby McFerrin, Terence Blanchard, Dave Grusin, Greg Osby, Steve Miller and Phil Ramone. He has played at high-profile venues in New York City and Miami, and has toured throughout the USA, the Caribbean Islands, Peru and Australia. In 2013, as a Henry Mancini Institute fellow, Susnjar was invited to perform at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

Susnjar's original compositions are influenced by ethnic music from around the world, in particular Hungary, Spain, Egypt and Mali. In April 2014 he released his debut album *Su Su Nje* to critical acclaim, with John McBeath in *The Australian* describing it as "a brilliant breakout percussion display from Susnjar". Showcasing top-shelf musicians from Peru, New York City and Miami, the album features original compositions inspired by Afro-Peruvian rhythms and fresh arrangements of classic Peruvian songs.

Susnjar's remarkable musical talent was recognised early: he was awarded exceptional entry into WAAPA while still in high school and at 17, won Best Soloist at the 1998 Drum Mania IV.

WAAPA is delighted that Susnjar now brings his expertise back to WAAPA as a sessional tutor.

Singer/pianist/composer Sarah McKenzie, described by Australian jazz legend James Morrison as "a musical marvel", has been notching up awards since her WAAPA days. In her final year at WAAPA, McKenzie won the 2008 Hawaiian Award for Most Outstanding Jazz Graduate and the Jack Bendat Scholarship. The following year, she was named the 2009 winner of the Generations in Jazz Vocal Scholarship.

Since then, McKenzie's superb jazz vocals and brilliant piano playing have seen her perform as a featured artist at events like the Stonnington, Wangaratta and Melbourne jazz festivals in Australia and jazz festivals in Europe and the USA including the prestigious Umbria Jazz and Monterey Jazz festivals.

Last year she graduated from Boston's prestigious Berklee College of Music on a full-tuition scholarship, and was nominated as a finalist in the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition.

She has recorded three albums for ABC Jazz, picking up a 2012 ARIA Award for Best Jazz Album for *Close Your Eyes*. The Bell Award-winning *We Could be Lovers*, released in October last year, was recorded in New York with Grammy Award-winning producer Brian Bacchus, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, vibraphonist Warren Wolf and percussionist Marco Valeri. It features a number of McKenzie's own compositions along with new arrangements of classics by Cole Porter, Gershwin and Henry Mancini, among others.

On May 1, the cream of Australia's jazz community gathered in Melbourne at the Plaza Ballroom to recognise outstanding achievements by Australian jazz musicians at the annual Australian Jazz Bell Awards.

The Jazz Bell Awards, which were established in 2003 and named in honour of the late great jazz pioneer Graeme Bell AO MBE, recognise and encourage excellence in the performance, recording and presentation of jazz in Australia.

WAAPA graduate Daniel Susnjar took out two Bell Awards: Best Australian Modern Jazz Album for *Su Su Nje* and Best Australian Jazz Song of the Year for *Forte Pulse Torte*.

Jazz singer/pianist Sarah McKenzie won the Bell Award for Best Australian Jazz Vocal Album for *We Could Be Lovers*.

BEHIND THE CAMERA WAAPA'S ACTING STUDENTS WORK WITH A LEGENDARY AUSTRALIAN CINEMATOGRAPHER

World-renowned cinematographer Don McAlpine shared some of the valuable lessons learned from his 45-year career with WAAPA's 3rd Year Acting students during a visit to Edith Cowan University in April.

McAlpine has a long, illustrious list of films to his credit, including the Australian classics *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, *My Brilliant Career* and *Breaker Morant*. In America he has been cinematographer on films such as *Patriot Games*, *Mrs Doubtfire*, *Romeo + Juliet*, *Moulin Rouge*, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* and most recently *Ender's Game*, to name just a few.

While in Perth, McAlpine ran a series of masterclasses with students from WAAPA's Acting course and the WA Screen Academy. His number one tip was "to practice, practice, practice".

McAlpine, who has worked with Hollywood stars Arnold Schwarzenegger and Harrison Ford as well as WAAPA graduate Hugh Jackman, said being able to work well with people is another vital skill necessary to filmmaking.

"Getting along with the people you're working with and understanding what they're trying to achieve is the key," he said.

WAAPA's Associate Professor Andrew Lewis said McAlpine's visit was an extraordinary opportunity for the students.

"It's a great privilege for our students to have someone of Don's calibre speak with them and share his incredibly rich and extensive experience," Assoc. Prof. Lewis said.



Don McAlpine (centre) with WA Screen Academy students

As McAlpine worked alongside the student directors and cinematographers, the Acting students experienced the collaborative nature of filmmaking and the importance of the cinematographer/director of photography.

During McAlpine's visit, the screening of a documentary directed by the Director of the WA Screen Academy, Dr Cathy Henkel about the great cinematographer's career, *Show Me the Magic*, was followed by a talk from McAlpine about his life's work.

MATT LEVETT WINS HEATH LEDGER SCHOLARSHIP

WAAPA class of 2009 Acting graduate Matt Levett has been awarded the 2015 Heath Ledger Scholarship.

The scholarship, established in 2008 in memory of the late Australian actor Heath Ledger, gives talented young Australian actors the opportunity to establish themselves in the United States.

The announcement was made on June 1 at a star-studded gala dinner in Los Angeles attended by judges including actors Vince Vaughn and Ben Mendelsohn, and Australian cinema glitterati including Jacki Weaver, director Phillip Noyce and writer Stuart Beattie.

Levett won out of a pool of 20 finalists from 300 entrants to take the top prize of \$US10,000, plus a two-year scholarship to the prestigious Stella Adler Academy of Acting and Theatre in Los Angeles, flights from Virgin Australia, \$US5000 in visa assistance and mentorship from industry professionals.

"It will give me the ability to stay longer and give me a foot in the door," says Levett, who first went to the US last September/October, when he signed with the Gersh Agency.

The 31-year-old actor made his feature debut in director Dean Francis' confronting drama *Drown*, adapted from a Stephen Davis play. His other screen credits include *Devil's Playground*, *A Place to Call Home*, *Home & Away*, *Two Twisted* and *All Saints*. Levett directed the Tropfest Film Festival short *Unwanted Friend* and is a member

of ScreenInkMedia, a collective of young filmmakers who have just completed their latest short *Kid*, which Levett wrote and directed.

2013 WAAPA graduate Emilie Cocquerel was named runner-up with Lily Sullivan. They will each receive a round-trip ticket to Los Angeles and a scholarship to attend Masterclasses at Screenwise Film & TV School for actors in Sydney.

Cocquerel made her screen debut in the ABC telemovie *An Accidental Soldier*. She has a key role in Joe Cinque's *Consolation*, the feature debut of short film director Sotiris Dounoukos, and appears in Garth Davis' *Lion* with Nicole Kidman, David Wenham, Dev Patel and Rooney Mara.

The judges also included actor Rose Byrne, *Gone Girl* and *House of Cards* casting director Laray Mayfield, executive producer Adam Schroeder, directors Kieran Darcy-Smith and Gregor Jordan, and Australian-based casting director Ann Fay. The scholarship is run by non-profit body Australians in Film, which supports Australian filmmakers and performers in the US.

In addition to Levett and Cocquerel, four other WAAPA graduates were among the finalists:



Matt Levett accepting the 2015 Heath Ledger Scholarship
Photo: Corbis/Australians in Film

Shareena Clanton (2010), Travis Jeffery (2012), TJ Power (2008) and Harry Richardson (2014).

Of the seven recipients of the Heath Ledger scholarship to date, Levett is the second WAAPA graduate to take out the top prize, following James Mackay in 2013.



Performing Arts student Nicole Harvey with one of the Spare Parts puppets

PUPPETRY COMES TO WAAPA WAAPA JOINS FORCES WITH SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE TO TRAIN STUDENTS

appeal and created an explosion of artistic activity.

In this dynamic atmosphere, Australia's oldest puppetry company Spare Parts Puppet Theatre has joined forces with WAAPA to create a new puppetry unit as part of the Academy's Bachelor of Performing Arts (BPA) degree.

Dr Frances Barbe, BPA Course Coordinator, said that she was very excited to be incorporating puppetry into the training of the performance-making students.

"Puppetry is a great training tool to sensitise performers to the full potential of objects in performance and to develop the visual intelligence of our performance-makers," she said.

"Through their work with Spare Parts, our students will become more visual storytellers who understand the power of the image and metaphor in performance as well as the power of the word. Puppetry is evolving in all kinds of

interesting ways in contemporary theatre and performance. We are so lucky to have a company like Spare Parts here on our door-step, and I look forward to building on this exciting partnership in the future."

In addition, Spare Parts is continuing its own in-house training program, FirstHand, the only dedicated puppetry training program in Australia.

FirstHand was established in 2010 in partnership with Edith Cowan University's Centre for Research in Entertainment, Arts, Technology, Education and Communications, (CREATEC).

Now in its fourth year, FirstHand aims to support emergent artists to develop their skills within the art form of puppetry. It immerses the participants in all aspects of the creation and performance of puppetry including a two-week intensive skills training period, support through a creative development process, business skills and training, and presentation opportunities.

Major arts events like the *Giants* at the 2015 Perth International Arts Festival, *War Horse* and *King Kong The Musical* have propelled the art form of puppetry into the forefront of popular

A FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN BERLIN SPARKS A DANCER'S CREATIVE PROCESS

Joseph Simons, winner of the 2013 Tanja Liedtke Fellowship, toured his new work, *First Things First* to venues in New South Wales, Victoria,

The work was developed during Simons' 2013 residence in Berlin as part of the Tanja Liedtke Fellowship. The fellowship program, created in memory of the late Australian dancer/choreographer Tanja Liedtke, takes place in Berlin and Frankfurt annually and provides opportunities for talented Australian artists.

"I had never been to Berlin before so I thought I'd make a work about discovering a city for the first time," explains the 2008 WAAPA graduate. "That gradually changed to first experiences in general."

The world premiere of *First Things First* took place in New York in 2014, when the Margot Fonteyn Academy of Ballet invited Simons to spend a week with the students and perform his show in their Robert Helpmann Theatre.

This year back in Australia on tour, the show garnered rave reviews. Chloe Smethurst in *The Sydney Morning Herald* described Simons as a "charismatic young artist".

"In his entertaining one-man show, *First Things First*, Simons is developing a style of performance that combines lashings

of humour with storytelling, physical theatre and dance ... In dance sequences ranging from the elegantly abstract to fast and funny jazz, his deft acrobatic moves, pirouettes and spring-loaded leaps attest that this is a fine dancer, as well as a personality big enough to pull off a sassy Salt-n-Pepa routine."

In addition to his Tanja Liedtke Fellowship win, Simons was voted *Dance Australia Magazine's* 2007 Dancer to Watch and won the 2009 West Australian Dance Award for Outstanding Emerging Artist.

Simons has toured Australia, UK, Asia and USA as a dancer with *Chunky Move* and *Lucy Guerin Inc.*, as well as the *Force Majeure* 'Culminate' series. Simons was a guest artist with *West Australian Ballet*, performing the title role in Ivan Cavallari's 2012 production of *Pinocchio*.

As a choreographer, he has created works for West Australian Ballet, The Flying Fruit Fly Circus and several independent projects, including the official music video for Elisha Bones' single *Guts*.

Simons now has plans for another, bigger national tour of *First Things First* in 2016.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Queensland and South Australia from March through May this year.

First Things First is Simons' one-man show that combines dance and comedic physical theatre. As the name suggests, the work takes its inspiration from 'first times' and new experiences.

Photo by Brian Jamie

DANCERS TAKE TOP AWARDS



WAAPA 2nd Year Dance student Saskia Harman

The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) in Western Australia held its annual Festival of Dance from May 28 to June 1 at the John Curtin College of the Arts in Fremantle. The festival showcased over 550 solo and ensemble performances, competing in four prestigious scholarship and award categories.

The festival culminated in a gala performance, directed by Diana de Vos and performed by RAD students and guest artists, to celebrate this year being the 80th anniversary of RAD in Australia.

Queensland Ballet Artistic Associate Rachael Walsh was guest adjudicator, with Sarah Hepburn and Brooke Widdison-Jacobs from West Australian Ballet and Robert Mills, formerly with West Australian Ballet.

WAAPA 2nd Year student Saskia Harman was awarded both the Linley Wilson Scholarship and the prize for the Best Senior Female Dancer. 2nd Year Advanced Diploma student Ellen Williams was the recipient of the Pre-Professional Award, which includes a cash prize as well as a secondment to an Australian ballet or dance company of her choice, and 1st year student Georgia Smith won the Linley Wilson Artistic Prize.

This is the second year that WAAPA students have taken out all the senior prizes in this state-wide competition.

LINK DANCE COMPANY

LINK is WAAPA's graduate dance company – the only one of its kind in Australia – and its alumni go on to enjoy successful careers in the dance world. In May, four of its graduates returned to WAAPA as emerging dance creators to choreograph new works on the current student dancers for the LINK season, *Tipping Point*.

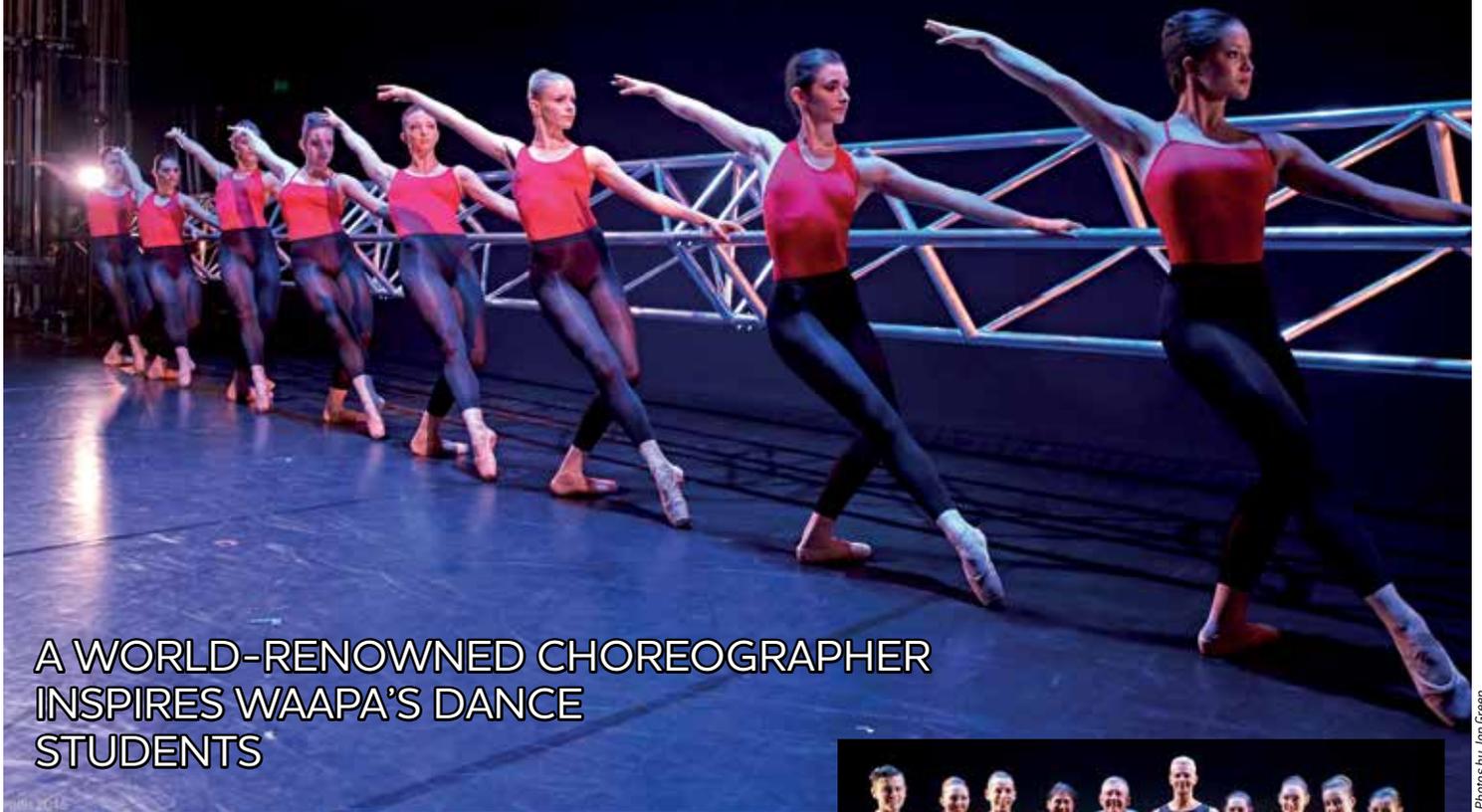
Dancer/choreographer Emma Fishwick, who graduated from LINK in 2010, describes what it was like to be back at WAAPA:

"It's been really amazing and humbling to be invited to work with the company which I was a part of only five years ago. They are a hard working group and I had the pleasure of choreographing on them when they were in their first year of WAAPA. So it's a very cyclic experience. The LINK experience, as a young artist, is such a unique and beneficial opportunity that taught me so much and I anticipate it will do the same for this batch of company dancers.

As an emerging artist in Perth, being invited back to LINK as a choreographer gives me a platform of time, space and resources that I wouldn't otherwise have unless I generated the funding. So needless to say this has been a welcomed and appreciated experience."

Photo courtesy of DANCEvision TV

IN SYNC WITH NILS CHRISTE



A WORLD-RENOWNED CHOREOGRAPHER INSPIRES WAAPA'S DANCE STUDENTS

WAAPA was honoured to welcome internationally-acclaimed Dutch choreographer Nils Christe and his assistant Annegien Sneep as visiting guest artists to mount Christe's work *SYNC* with the 3rd Year Dance students for WAAPA's May dance season.

The visit was supported by the Jackman Furness Foundation for the Performing Arts and Minderoo Foundation.

Over his illustrious career, Nils Christe has created 80 ballets and worked with 69 different companies in 26 countries throughout the world. Born in 1949, Christe began his career as lead dancer with Nederlands Dans Theater. During his 15 years with the company, he choreographed 12 works including *Quartet 1*, which won first prize at the Choreographic Competition in Cologne in 1979.

As Artistic Director of Scapino Ballet Rotterdam from 1986 to 1993, Christe created seven new works, including his successful story ballet, *Pulcinello*. In 2005, Christe received the Dutch Dansersfonds Merit Award.

Christe's wife, Annegien Sneep has been his assistant and rehearsal director since 1981 and supervises the re-stagings of Christe's works around the world. For Christe's later ballets, she also designed the costumes.

Christe describes *SYNC* as "a fast paced, high voltage piece that combines both classical and modern dance techniques, for a cast of nine women on point and three men." Originally created for the Washington Ballet in 1996, this is the first time that Christe has permitted *SYNC* to be performed by students.

While Christe and Sneep demanded that *SYNC* be performed at a 'company' level, they were also incredibly supportive of the students' efforts.

They worked intensively with the WAAPA dancers for five to six weeks prior to the season, and supervised all production elements of *SYNC*, including the set, costumes and lighting.

Prior to the performance season a short studio showing of *SYNC* was held, after which Christe and Sneep answered questions about their long careers to the invited audience.

WAAPA's Head of Dance, Nanette Hassall, believes that working with Christe and Sneep was an invaluable experience for the students. "To produce a ballet from the international canon gave our graduating students the opportunity to benchmark their technical and performance skills," she said. "The students rehearsed and performed it with such passion, intensity and clarity. They worked meticulously on each of the elements in the work for many hours, refining its delivery."

The visit also provided WAAPA Production and Design students with an opportunity to tackle the complicated set design required for *SYNC*. They built a custom-made suspended truss structure, integral to the choreography, which had to support the weight of the dancers as they moved and jumped. Being part of a program that contained three other works, the



3rd Year Dance students with Nils Christe (centre back), Annegien Sneep (to left) and Classical Dance Lecturer Andries Weidemann (centre front)

SYNC set for the WAAPA season had to be a free-standing design so it could be wheeled on and off the stage quickly in between the different pieces for each performance. Christe and Sneep were highly impressed that the students built a design version that was stronger than many that had been constructed in other company situations.

"Having Nils and Annegien here was one of the most memorable and rewarding experiences I have had in my entire life," said 3rd Year dancer Sydney Gallagher. "They were so knowledgeable and generous. I learnt something new every day. It was a privilege to have such respected people in the industry come to WAAPA to teach and choreograph a work of theirs."

Fellow dancer Tia Hockey was equally enthusiastic. "Working with Nils and Annegien was the most rewarding and beneficial experience I have had as a dance student," said Hockey. "The professionalism they displayed in the process opened my eyes to what 'company life' may potentially be like. The opportunity to perform such challenging repertoire under their guidance has helped us all improve and grow."

Photos by Jon Green

UNCONDITIONAL KUČKA

KUČKA TAKES OUT GRAND PRIZE AT WAM AWARDS

At the 2104 Western Australian Music (WAM) Song of the Year Awards held in Fremantle in March, the avant-electronic music sensation KUČKA was awarded the Grand Prize for her song *Unconditional*. Earlier in the evening, *Unconditional* was also voted Electronic Song of the Year.

KUČKA (pronounced 'Kooch-ka') is the performance name of producer/vocalist and WAAPA graduate Laura Jane Lowther. Her music – a combination of Lowther's striking vocals, ambient sounds and industrial glitches set against heavy bass and erratic beats – has been described as "lush electronic pop excellence" and "one of the country's most exciting and most bizarre avant-pop acts."

KUČKA's recent WAM wins follow on from the singer's success at last year's

WAM Awards, where she scooped up three prizes.

As the 2014 Grand Prize winner, KUČKA walks away with \$3,000 cash, recording time at the hit-making Albert Studios in Sydney, the opportunity for a publishing deal with Perfect Pitch Publishing, two days recording at Sonic Lolly, mastering provided by William Bowden of King Willy Sound (Grammy award recipient for mastering Goyte's *Somebody That I Used to Know*), a Berklee Online music course, 500 CDs pressed by DiskBank and a RØDE Microphones package.

Earlier this year she released a video for her track *Divinity*, which was heralded on the music discovery website, Pigeons & Planes and premiered on The Fader. Since then, there have been numerous remixes

of *Divinity*, including over 200,000 plays of Mazde's remix in a month. She has also collaborated with Paces (aka Mikey Perry) on the Shazam-charting *Nothing's Forever*.

KUČKA performs with two other WAAPA graduates, Catlips (aka Katie Campbell) on live electronic beats and Tobacco Rat (aka Jake Steele) on analog synths.

KUČKA has been main support for the diverse likes of George Maple, Clark, Factory Floor, Mariko Mori, SAFIA and more, plus a highlight at festivals including St. Jerome's Laneway, CoLab and ARIA Week's Sunday City Limits.

At the end of May, KUČKA toured to venues in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sydney and Melbourne and has a new EP due in the next few months on the new label Midnight Feature.



CASTING CALLS

HOW AN ARTS MANAGEMENT GRADUATE GOT HER DREAM JOB IN CASTING

To that end, in her final year at WAAPA, Johns secured a workplace secondment with one of Australia's top casting agencies, Mullinars Casting Consultants in Sydney.

It was an "amazing" experience for the young WAAPA student, as she found herself assisting on casting a major TV commercial and a feature film.

When her secondment finished, Johns was offered a job as a voice-over agent with Australia's top voice agency, RMK Management. Around five months later a position became available back at Mullinars and the company approached Johns for the role.

Now a Casting Associate at Mullinars, Johns has worked on film and television projects including *Underbelly*, *Love Child*, *Howzat!* *Kerry Packer's War*, *A Place to Call Home*, *Puberty Blues*, *Paper Giants*, *Fat Tony*, *Serangoon Road*, *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* and *House of Hancock*, which recently aired on Channel Nine.

Johns believes the Arts Management course set her up for her future career. "I apply the skills and knowledge I gained to my work every single day," she explains. "Whether it be negotiating with agents, working with actors in a creative sense or dealing with producers and networks, subjects I studied at WAAPA such as Arts Law, Management and Finance prepared me for many of the specialised areas I am now responsible for

in my position, and have given me an extra edge and a deeper knowledge of the industry and the way it works."

The practical experience Johns gained at WAAPA, working in a number of different arts organisations and getting to know the people behind them, also played an important role in preparing her for the industry. "I still hear their words of wisdom and advice in my head from time to time when I come across a new or difficult scenario."

Johns is happy that many of her fellow graduates have also gone on to positions in top arts organisations in Sydney. "It's our own little arts management community. We see each other often and it's nice to be able to get together and talk shop over a few drinks."

The budding casting director thinks one of the most important skills actors need is to know the industry "inside out." Johns believes it serves actors well to be aware of what is happening on Australian screens, the people who produce the work and their competition in the market.

"It's also important to embrace and maintain your individuality. Casting directors and producers are always looking for someone unique who can bring something different to a role they may not have envisaged before."

"And don't take yourself too seriously...!"

FROM PERFORMING TO PUBLICITY

A 'REFORMED HOOFER' NOW PUBLICISES THE INDUSTRY HE LOVES

When the Royal Shakespeare Company's multi-award-winning *Matilda The Musical* opens at Sydney's Lyric Theatre in July, the names of two WAAPA graduates will be on the marquee: Tim Minchin, who wrote the music and lyrics, and James Millar who will perform the role of Miss Trunchbull.

However behind the scenes another WAAPA graduate has been working hard on the show for the 18 months leading up to opening night. Publicist JP Bolton's career in the arts industry is a tale of making the most of opportunities and appreciating hidden talents.

John-Paul, better known as JP, graduated from WAAPA's Music Theatre course in 1993. After three years of training, his greatest fear was that he'd never score a job. Yet at the start of 1994, just one week after relocating from Perth to Sydney, he landed a part in a show.

For the next seven years, Bolton rolled from one gig to the next with only one short three-month hiatus of being out of work in all that time. He worked mostly in musical theatre but also got gigs in plays and guest roles in television series.

In 1998, Bolton was cast in *Chicago* and toured with the show. By the time *Chicago* wound up in Hong Kong two years later, Bolton had come to a crossroads.

"I was no longer in love with being a performer but I loved the industry so I experienced deep and confronting conflict about what to do," he explains. "Eight shows a week every week and then just move on to the next show no longer fulfilled me."

"Hugh Jackman was at WAAPA when I was there and years later I understudied him in *Beauty and the Beast*. But by the time I turned 30, I knew I wasn't going to be Hugh Jackman. And I also knew that I probably didn't really even want to be Hugh Jackman because, if I'm honest with myself, I didn't have the talent, personality or any of the attributes to sustain that kind of life. I felt like I had gone as far as I could go in musical theatre and I needed to adapt if I was going to stay in the business. That was what made me decide to look at other options."

Back in Sydney, following a short stint in call centres, Bolton "fell into PR", snagging the job of junior publicist on the original Australian production of *The Lion King*. He ended up working with that agency for three years.

"The great thing about *The Lion King* experience was that the team working on the show at that time were the very best in this country," says Bolton. "So I realised that I had to be very sponge-like and just absorb information.



JP Bolton at a press call for 'Billy Elliot'. Photo by James Morgan

This was a whole different world for me, my life had been within the walls of the theatre and suddenly I was in a production office away from the theatre." Bolton threw himself into learning everything he could about the media industry and the editorial process, from pitch to publication of a story.

But Bolton was also able to draw on existing skills. Having been onstage himself for many years, he understood the needs and fears of performers. So while he was learning how the media world worked, he was also able to coach performers in how to handle the press. "It's something I still do, when I work with a performer who might be new to having to do media interviews, I'm able to help them when answering questions so they sell themselves and the show to the best of their ability."

“ KEEP LOOKING AT ALL THAT LIFE CAN OFFER – BOTH ON AND OFF THE STAGE ”

In August 2005, Bolton returned to his home country of New Zealand for a 10-month stint in rock 'n' roll PR. However he found he missed the definite arc of excitement that builds towards the opening night of a big musical. "When you're doing publicity for a band like U2, Bono will do two phone interviews and that will be your campaign."

Out of the blue, Bolton got a phone call from theatrical producer Louise Withers about being

publicist for the Australian production of *Billy Elliot the Musical*. So Bolton came back to Australia and started his own publicity company.

"From starting in PR to having my own business was a fairly steep and quick trajectory," says Bolton. "I attribute a lot of it to luck to be honest. Others might say there's a splash of ability and a dash of panache in there as well but I feel I was incredibly lucky that Louise took a gamble on me on a project with very high stakes."

If it's luck, then Bolton's is holding firm. In the nine years since *Billy Elliot*, Bolton has been the publicist for many other big national touring stage shows including *Miss Saigon*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Annie*, *Hairspray*, Monty Python's *Spamalot*, *A Murder is Announced*, *The Mousetrap*, *Richard III* starring Kevin Spacey, plus dance shows, opera and cabaret. He's just finished work on a new Australian musical in Bendigo called *Ned* and is currently working on both *Matilda* and a production of *Blood Brothers* which will open in Melbourne in July.

"I didn't go to WAAPA wanting to be a publicist yet here I am, 21 years later, and I've worked longer as a publicist than as a performer."

"At WAAPA, part of the course was learning how to fill out grant applications and I thought 'I'm never going to need this, where are my tap shoes? I'm just going to be on stage for the rest of my life'. At that time I didn't know my perspective or the things I would want from life might change. Back then all I cared about was the footlights and performing."

Having enjoyed a successful career as a performer before finding job satisfaction in a related field, Bolton now believes that performing arts students should embrace everything that is offered to them.

"If I could have my time again, I would be a little less focussed on just the performing aspects," he reflects. "The elation I used to get from performing is the elation I now see when an idea turns into a fantastic piece of editorial that is one small part of what helps a show to be a success. So I'd say keep an open mind and don't discount the fact that what you want may change. Keep looking at all that life can offer – both on and off the stage."

Bolton himself doesn't rule out yet another career change. "I don't know what's next," he says. "I've been doing publicity for 13 years now but I don't discount changing direction again. In fact, it's highly likely. Life is change."

Wherever JP Bolton ends up, it's a fair bet that his luck will go with him.

LIFE IN THE PARISIAN SUN

A LONG-TERM MEMBER OF THÉÂTRE DU SOLEIL SHARES HER EXPERIENCES

Astrid Grant graduated from WAAPA's Acting course in 2001. The following year she travelled to France for a workshop with Ariane Mnouchkine at Théâtre du Soleil, and was invited to stay and work there.

Now 13 years later, the Sydney-born Grant returned to Perth in June to perform in *The Song Was Wrong* with the Perth Theatre Company (PTC).

In the intervening years, Grant has toured the world with the French avant-garde theatre ensemble, performing in France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Greece, Scotland, Taiwan, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, America and Australia. She has performed in the company's last four productions – *Le Dernier Caravansérail*, *Les Éphémères*, *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir* and *Macbeth* – and has been involved in a number of other projects, such as a 2005 workshop in Afghanistan.

Of her return to Perth, Grant says: "I am delighted to re-acquaint myself with the city that housed me and holds within it my memories of the most wonderful three years an acting student could have!"

Here Grant talks to *Inside WAAPA* about her life in theatre:

IW: What was it that first attracted you to Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil?

AG: After graduating from WAAPA I returned to my home town, Sydney, just in time for the Sydney Festival of 2002. The Théâtre du Soleil were performing their work *The Flood Drummers* (*Tambours sur la digue*).

I had never seen anything like it. An overwhelming melding of exotic Asian and European poetry, an ensemble work so purely attentive to every detail, dripping with visual beauty and the meticulous but unpretentious physical prowess of the actors. The story was a political fable, pointed, yet mythical; the discrete genius of live music gently cradling, accompanying the story, a figure of Poseidon at the helm, the entire space had been cared for – it was an overwhelming experience from the second I walked in the door. I fell in love with the work. Nothing like that existed here in Australia, so I was compelled to go there to where it did, to go to them.

I learned that Ariane ran workshops and asked her how it might be possible to attend one. She told me to write to the theatre, which I did.

The workshops are actually rare events. Some of the 2000 applicants had waited 5 years, I only waited 9 months. I was lucky.

IW: How would you describe your experience of working with Theatre du Soleil?

AG: Impossible to sum up 13 years at once! It has been deeply rich and changing, and I am sure it goes beyond my conscious perception of it. Moving to France was an enormous cultural shift, which in itself challenged me to look at art, life, people, and myself, in a different way. The learning of a new language, the intense and saturating working practice, the richness of the history of the troupe, the numerous encounters of an incredible number of incredible people from different countries and cultures, working alongside and with them, hosting them, being hosted, touring, constantly learning, being inspired, challenged and surprised by the humble nature of these same simple encounters... Perhaps some of the principal and recurring lessons I carry with me are to never to give up the good fight, to always listen, always learn, and on stage, to believe...

IW: Is it true that as part of the company's philosophy, the members live together communally?

AG: Ha! I am always charmed by this perpetuating rumour! Where did it start?! There are around 70 members of the company. When we are preparing for a show, we can have up to 120 people on the payroll (extra technicians, costume makers, painters, office staff etc.) Our last show had more than 40 people on stage.

We work long hours. We start in the morning and always eat lunch together. It is not uncommon for us to work into the night and eat the evening meal together. It is not unknown for us to crash for the night at the theatre. But we all have our own homes that we go to! Many of us have our own families, children, lovers, housemates, pets, to whom we go home!

IW: What have been the highlights of your time with the company?

AG: Another hard question to sum up. There are so many. But when an audience member remembers you, despite your wig and heavy make-up on stage, and tells you that she felt understood, heard, recognized from your work; when an audience member writes to the company and tells us that his life has been enriched, changed, from his experience of coming to our theatre and spending a day with us; when we see the faces of people light up in wonder, with a recognition of humanity, then we know why we are doing this. That is a great highlight.

IW: How did it come about that you were offered the part in *The Song was Wrong*?



Astrid Grant as Lady Macduff in the Theatre du Soleil production of *Macbeth*. Photo by Michèle Laurent

AG: I have always been interested and drawn to physical styles of theatre, and have maintained a working relationship with the exceptional movement teacher I had at WAAPA, Lisa Scott-Murphy. When Mel Cantwell (Artistic Director of PTC, writer and director of *The Song Was Wrong*) was looking for an actress to play the part of Cécile, my name came up (Lisa is the choreographer on the show). Mel had already seen some of my work, but we met over Skype before she made her decision. It was simply a miracle that the timing was right and I was free to come to Australia for the season!

IW: Do you return to Theatre du Soleil after your season in Perth?

AG: Yes, I will continue to work with them. This year we are running a few workshops as part of what we have called *École Nomade* (Travelling School) and the first workshop will be held in Santiago, Chile, which is where I go next. The rest of the year will be dotted with workshops, but I plan to squeeze in some time to visit my family in Sydney too.

IW: What are your best memories of your time at WAAPA?

AG: There are so many, I sometimes wish I could revisit my lessons at WAAPA. The three years were so rich. We had an extraordinary combination of lessons and teachers. My year group had the extra pleasure of working with and being directed by the late Nick Enright, who left a jewel of understanding of the theatre in us all.

IW: What advice would you give to current WAAPA students?

AG: Be brave. Forget the mould. Make new mistakes. Logic isn't always your friend. Listen. Live. Travel. Laugh. Teach yourself. Learn about theatre from all around the world. Allow yourself to dream. Big, wide, and far.

REPETITION MAKES PERFECT

REPETITEUR LOCHLAN BROWN HAS WON A SCHOLARSHIP TO THE MANNES COLLEGE OF MUSIC

Being a repetiteur is perhaps one of the arts industry's lesser-known career paths. Yet if you're a talented pianist who loves working collaboratively with opera singers or dancers, then this can be a perfect vocation.

In opera, a repetiteur is the person responsible for coaching singers and playing the piano for music and production rehearsals. In addition to strong keyboard skills, a repetiteur must possess exceptional sight-reading and score reading skills. When coaching solo singers or choir members, a repetiteur also needs a working understanding of vocal technique and vocal requirements, a familiarity with many languages, an appreciation for poetry and drama, and an ability to read from orchestral scores and mimic orchestral colours in the piano.

Lochlan Brown can't pinpoint the exact moment when he decided to be a repetiteur. But it was around the time he was completing a double Bachelor of Music (Composition) and Electronic Engineering (Hons) at the University of Western Australia. His friend Daniel Mullaney – a WAAPA graduate who now sings in the renowned English National Opera chorus in London – asked Brown to play through a few songs he was learning. Mullaney then gave Brown some poetry to set to music so that he and Brown could perform together. Mullaney also arranged for Brown to play for a vocal workshop at WAAPA.

By this time, Brown had discovered his love of vocal repertoire. So he enrolled at WAAPA to study piano under Anna Sleptsova and spent the next three years learning how to be a repetiteur on oratorios and productions.

It turns out that Brown has a gift for working with singers. For three consecutive years, he received trainee repetiteur scholarships to attend the prestigious Lisa Gasteen National Opera School in Brisbane. In 2012, he was awarded the Evelyn and Ralph Thompson Memorial Scholarship. On graduating from WAAPA in mid-2013, he launched straight into the Young Artist Program at the WA Opera as a repetiteur.

When asked what he loves most about being a repetiteur, Brown nominates the collaborative process and working with "the crazy people."

"Musicians are all interesting characters, but singers are particularly wild. I'm certain interesting art comes from interesting artists with an urge to express something slightly different."

Brown credits the atmosphere of collaboration and support at WAAPA as being crucial to his smooth transition to professional work. "Students and teachers alike are always



Photo by Kristyn Rowland Photography

enthusiastic to help you achieve your projects and initiatives...I was treated like a working professional whilst cushioned with all the support or guidance I'd need. I think this preparation enabled me to fall so seamlessly into professional work as a musician even before I graduated."

In 2014, Brown received a full scholarship to study Italian diction and the bel canto style at La Lingua della Lirica in Italy, and was invited to return again in 2015.

“STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ALIKE ARE ALWAYS ENTHUSIASTIC TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR PROJECTS”

Through all of this, Brown was also winning commissions and prizes for his choral compositions, and working as a conductor and music director. He has recently been accepted into the 2015 Symphony Services International Conductor Development Program, under the directorship of Christopher Seaman, where he will work with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and Auckland Philharmonia.

Now he has also been awarded a scholarship to the Mannes School of Music to undertake a Masters in Collaborative Piano (accompanying, chamber music, opera and conducting), which starts in September.

Auditioning for Mannes proved an "intensive" process. After his initial application was accepted, Brown was asked to travel to New York in March for an audition. "For the 30-minute

audition, I was required to prepare a number of solo piano works, a handful of lieder, some opera arias and an entire Brahms violin and piano sonata!" laughs Brown. He was also asked to sight read instrumental and vocal repertoire, and was tested on his diction and understanding of Italian, German and French.

But Brown had done his homework before his audition. Before even applying, he had visited New York twice and met the Mannes teachers to work out who would be the best mentor for him.

"Although the audition plays a big part in your acceptance to these schools, it's also about your relationship with the teachers and if they think they can work with you," explains Brown. All that effort paid off – Brown was one of only two pianists accepted into the program and received an 80% scholarship.

At Mannes, Brown will join WAAPA alumni Isabelle Freeman, Chelsea Kluga, Richard Symons, Sarah Guilmartin and Caitlin Cassidy, who are all currently studying at the renowned New York conservatory – a fact Brown took into consideration.

"This is absolutely an industry of managing relationships and it makes perfect sense to study where I have colleagues I work well with."

Brown is also looking forward to being able to expand his talents as a repetiteur, conductor and composer at Mannes. "My interests are all related – composers turn ideas and sounds into manuscript, conductors do the reverse. Also, opera conductors traditionally start as pianists in opera houses."

"We live in an age where sources of entertainment and means of communication are rapidly changing. I believe this requires artists to remain as versatile and evolving as possible to not only pay their rent but to keep art a desirable and accessible part of people's lives."

Brown experienced this first-hand when in August 2013, as repetiteur with the WA Opera's Young Artist Program, Brown performed a medley of popular operatic scenes at the Perth Concert Hall with WA Opera singers for the 4ARTS Festival. The audience consisted entirely of primary school children, yet Brown cites this as one of the highlights of his musical career so far.

"They couldn't understand any of the languages, yet they were screaming, cheering and in fits of laughter at the show we put together... it was surreal," says Brown. "In the current climate of the National Opera Review and the increasing bankruptcy of opera companies worldwide, it was an unbelievable experience to witness the astonishing effect of our performance on those kids."

TRAVELLING TO LEARN

AN ACTOR AND AN OPERA SINGER HAVE BEEN AWARDED \$20,000 EACH TO HELP PURSUE THEIR ARTISTIC DREAMS

In March, actor Nicole Shostak and opera singer Corinne Cowling were each awarded a 2015 Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship.

These annual scholarships provide talented Australians under the age of 35 with \$20,000 for interstate or overseas travel to explore, study and develop their artistic talent. The winners are chosen from nine artistic categories, offered over alternate years, from the fields of acting, architecture, ballet, instrumental music, painting, poetry, prose, sculpture and singing.

Past recipients of the scholarships include author Tim Winton and painter Wendy Sharpe.

2011 Acting graduate Nicole Shostak, whose screen credits include *A Place to Call Home* and *Devil's Playground*, will use her scholarship to hone her skills in long-form improvisational comedy and sketch writing, and to extend her comedy performance experience.

Shostak has already begun her scholarship itinerary, relocating to Los Angeles two months ago to study at the Upright Citizen Brigade (UCB). This is the top improvisational comedy school in America, with alumni such as comedians Amy Poehler and Zach Galifianakis. Many of its graduates have gone on to write and/or perform for the Emmy Award-winning comedy show, *Saturday Night Live*.

"I have always loved comedy, it demands unique timing and really living 'moment to moment'; that kind of spontaneity is really exciting to me," Shostak explains of her decision to study at UCB. "I enjoyed exploring it at WAAPA, and wanted to spend more time pushing the boundaries of its possibilities. The training at UCB is surprisingly technical so there is a good structure to follow that then allows the comedy to naturally occur. It definitely feels like I'm in the right place."



Next year Shostak plans to spend a week in New York taking voice classes with renowned British voice coach, Patsy Rodenburg. She will also spend five weeks in Russia studying at the St Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy and being involved in a residency at the Maly Drama Theatre of Europe, a repertory theatre which specializes in the plays of Chekhov and Russian classics.

Corinne Cowling trained in both music theatre and classical ballet before she settled on a career as an opera singer.

"Something happens when I sing opera, an indescribable connection to my true self," the 25-year-old budding opera star says. "When I sing, I am sharing my heart and soul with the audience." Cowling graduated from WAAPA as the inaugural recipient of the 2013 Dame Mary Gilmore Award for the most promising overall final year female student in Classical Voice.

Last year, as a finalist at the IFAC Australian Singing Competition, Cowling won the Guildhall School of Music and Drama award which provides fees for a year of postgraduate study at London's famous training institution. However the course she is enrolled in, a Masters of Music Vocal Studies, is a two-year degree.

"The expenses not covered by the Guildhall Award include the second year fees and living expenses in London," says Cowling. "The financial pressure is immense, so receiving the Marten Bequest Scholarship was definitely something to celebrate...it will ensure I am able to financially sustain my studies in London over two years, keep my budget organised and make sure every cent counts!"



Left: Nicole Shostak
Right: Corinne Cowling

Guildhall is an internationally respected arts training institution, with successful opera singers such as Bryn Terfel, Anne Sofie von Otter, Teddy Tahu Rhodes and WAAPA graduate Sky Ingram among its alumni. "I know I will be in safe hands as Guildhall has some of the most world-renowned professors and guest lecturers for voice," says Cowling.

Cowling is due to start her Masters at Guildhall in September. The course includes individual singing lessons and coaching; classes in opera, theatre and language; masterclasses with guest artists; visits from agents and casting directors; and plenty of performance opportunities. The course is specially designed to prepare singers for the wider international industry.

"Study and coaching is essential to a successful career in opera," says Cowling of her decision to take on her Masters. "It's impossible to do it all on your own, as it is a classical art form that takes years to understand and execute. The more advice you get the better, and being surrounded by an environment that is rich in opera history such as the Royal Opera House doesn't hurt either!"

Cowling hopes to complete her studies at Guildhall and then audition for young artist programs within opera companies in the UK, Australia or US. Her Marten Bequest Scholarship has helped set her on the path to achieve her goal.

WAAPA WINNERS

In June, 2nd Year Music Theatre student Hayden Baum was awarded the prestigious Bill Warnock Scholarship. The award was announced at the conclusion of the preview performance of WAAPA's mid-year musical *Legally Blonde* at the Regal Theatre.

The scholarship, awarded to the most promising second-year music theatre student, honours Bill Warnock's love of WAAPA performances and his passion for the WA performing arts community.

Presented on the same evening was the 2015 John Cowdell Music Theatre Ensemble Prize to 2nd Year Music Theatre student, Rebecca Cullinan. This prize is awarded to the student judged to have contributed the most to the ensemble of the mid-year musical.

Also in June, 3rd Year Acting students Megan Wilding and Benjamin Kindon were named the winners of the 2015 Sally Burton Awards for best male and female performances at WAAPA.

Nurturing young artistic talent has long been a passion for Sally Burton, the widow of the great Welsh actor Richard Burton.

All students in 3rd Year Acting at WAAPA are invited to perform for the annual prizes – one for a male, one for a female – worth \$2,000 each.

The students are required to perform a Shakespearean monologue or duologue. The judging is based on the ability to speak the verse, connect to the text, interpret the content and present the finished work.

Top image (from left): Hugh Dalrymple, 2015 Bill Warnock Scholarship recipient Hayden Baum, Diana Warnock, Kylie Warnock and Greer Dalrymple.

Below image: 2015 Sally Burton Award winners Benjamin Kindon and Megan Wilding with Sally Burton (centre)

DESIGNING A SECONDMENT



Holly King sculpture at Kew Gardens Christmas Festival

When Rhiannon Walker, who graduated from WAAPA's Design course in 2014, undertook a seven-week secondment in the UK working with British designer Sean Turner, it allowed her to put what she had learnt at WAAPA into practice.

"It helped boost my confidence as a designer and showed me that I was ready for the 'real world'," Walker says.

Walker first met Sean Turner, Associate Designer for LAsTheatre, early in 2014 when she was his design assistant on the Punchdrunk production of *The House Where Winter Lives*, for the Perth International Arts Festival. LAsTheatre and Punchdrunk are both UK theatre companies renowned for immersive theatrical experiences.

While in England, Walker worked as a design assistant on four shows, the main production being an end-of-year pantomime at the City Varieties Music Hall in Leeds, *Dick Whittington: The Rock 'n' Roll Panto*.

"*Dick Whittington* was such an amazing experience because I witnessed it from start to finish, got to work closely with everyone in all departments – which made me feel like I was back at WAAPA – and I had a lot of responsibility throughout the process which allowed me to prove myself as a designer."

Walker then worked with Turner on the LAsTheatre production, *Hweol*, commissioned for the Kew Gardens Christmas Festival. An interactive family show, it brought the tale of the Winter Solstice to life, using a specially crafted

six-metre-high figure of the Holly King. Walker created the head of the giant Holly King sculpture for the show and also made costume pieces.

Other gigs while in England included sourcing costumes for a promotional shoot for LAsTheatre Company's production of *New Atlantis* and helping design a set for a Parkour dance company. "The set had to be structurally strong but also able to be moved from location to location as this company does most of its shows outdoors on the streets."

Now back in Perth and post-WAAPA, Walker is keeping herself busy. She has been production designer on three WA Screen Academy films; she is managing and designing a music video for a local up-and-coming band; she is starting an events design/styling business; and she is turning people's photos into paintings – "possibly another business venture!"

"Since coming home I haven't been out of work so I am keen to get involved in everything Perth has to offer and hopefully one day work for theatre companies around the world from a studio in Perth."

VALE DR MAGGI PHILLIPS

Associate Professor Maggi Phillips was the coordinator of Research and Creative Practice at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, a position that enabled daily access to the integration of artistic innovation and research. Her life path crossed many disciplines and worldviews, from dancer (trained in ballet she travelled the world initially with Casino de Paris and then with works by Doris Haug of Moulin Rouge) to a world literature doctorate (the comparative analysis of postcolonial African and Indian literature), the circus ring (a year with Swiss National Circus Knie where she developed a lifelong love for elephants), to community arts development and dance in the top end (Brown's Mart Community Arts and Feats Unlimited in the Northern Territory) and over the last

twenty years the university boardroom where the imperative to advocate for practice as research for Artist Researchers was paramount.

Maggi began at WAAPA teaching Dance History and Analysis units which she continued until her passing, despite the many other roles she accumulated as Coordinator of Research and Creative Practice at WAAPA. There are legions of dance graduates who remember her with true appreciation for her passion and breadth of knowledge in her field. Maggi believed in the study of dance as a credible academic pursuit at tertiary level and was recognized as a pioneer in this both nationally and internationally.

To say Maggi Phillips was an incredibly special person is an inadequate expression of our love and admiration for her.

She was a vital part of the culture of WAAPA. With grace and dignity she questioned and cajoled, provoked and resolved.

She led, not by putting herself first, but by imbuing in others the "sense of the possible" in the realm of the "improbable" and by doing so encouraged imaginations to soar. She believed in everyone's individual ability and inspired students

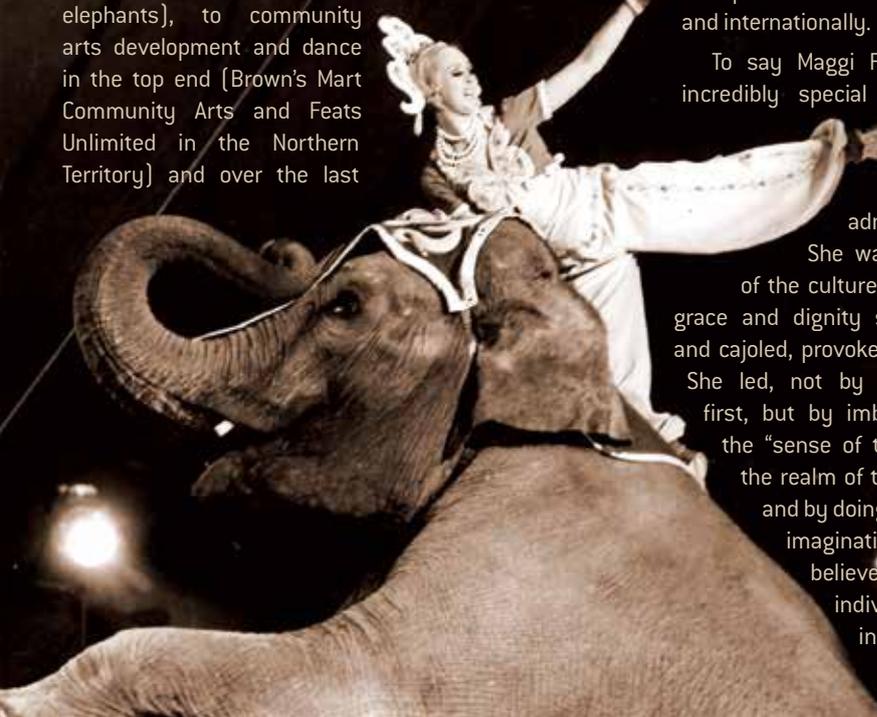


to think – to really think –and encouraged us all to activate and challenge our thoughts, beliefs and dreams. She gave her students the skills to embark on rational enquiry whilst instilling in them the enthusiasm to carry curiosity with them through their life journeys. The staff at WAAPA and the ECU community are united in their grief at losing our esteemed colleague and dear friend. We so miss her healthy cynicism, her joyful optimism, her laugh. We clutch for our fond memories of Maggi and scramble to retain the wisdom she imparted in such a gentle, but considered manner. Maggi Phillips made a giant contribution in the world of dance and academia. But it was our personal interactions with her that we will treasure the most. She will remain in our hearts forever, although forever seems so limiting.

Rest in peace, you deserve it.

Professor Julie Warn AM, Director, WAAPA

Ms Nanette Hassall AM, Head of Dance, WAAPA



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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



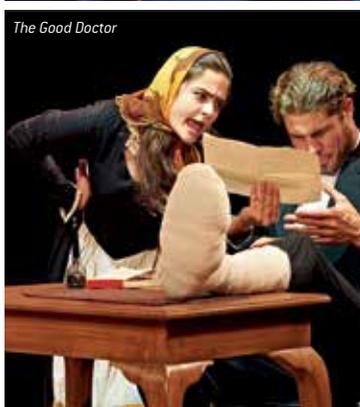
Rai Thistlethwayte in Concert



The Playboy of the Western World



Pulse



The Good Doctor



Legally Blonde the Musical

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Playboy of the Western World



Pulse



Tipping Point



Tipping Point



Legally Blonde the Musical