

NO STRINGS

ATTACHED

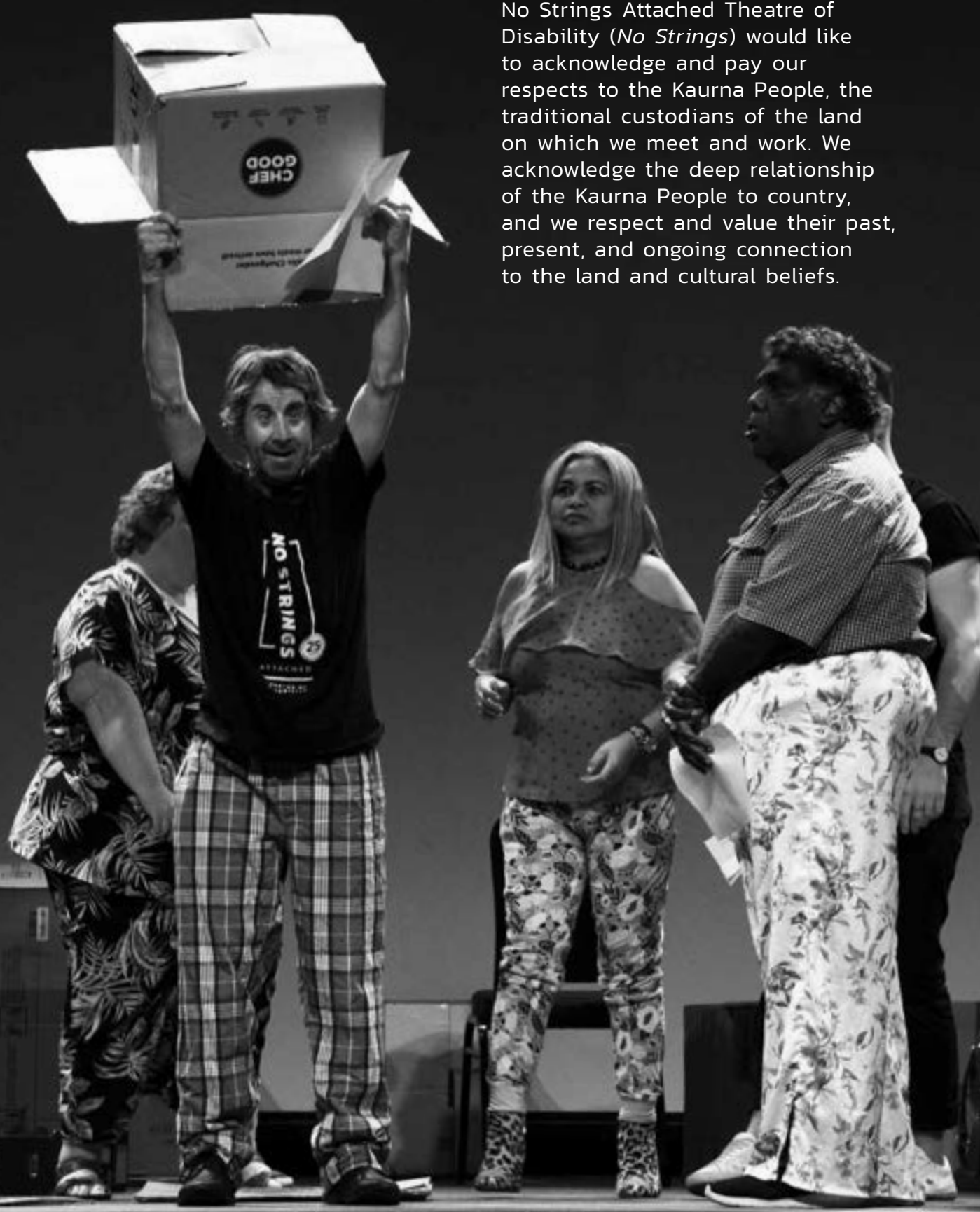
THEATRE OF
DISABILITY

2020



NO STRINGS ANNUAL REPORT

PHOTO CREDIT: FOURTEEN92 PRODUCTIONS
PERFORMERS: RACHEL HIGH, KYM MACKENZIE, LUCY LOPEZ RIVERA, JOHN MACK



No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability (*No Strings*) would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kurna People, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and work. We acknowledge the deep relationship of the Kurna People to country, and we respect and value their past, present, and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs.

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OUR HISTORY

In 1994 Helen Flinter-Leach founded *No Strings* on the belief that quality work in the arts can positively affect people's lives. That legacy continues, with *No Strings'* commitment to collaborative co-design of all content reflecting the lived experience of our performers living with disability, resulting in multi-award-winning productions that have toured nationally and internationally to broad acclaim.

RECENT PERFORMANCES

2019

Ignition Point

- Adelaide Fringe Festival, Tandanya Theatre

I Forgot To Remember To Forget

- Adelaide Festival Centre, Space Theatre
- Korea Disability Arts & Culture Centre

2020

SAME-SAME

- Adelaide Festival Centre, Quartet Bar

ReConnect! 2020

- Woodville Town Hall, Woodville



PHOTO CREDIT: **FOURTEEN 92 PRODUCTIONS**
PERFORMER: **PAUL BENNIER**
PERFORMER SUPPORT: **MITRE KHAMMASH**



PHOTO CREDIT: FOURTEEN92 PRODUCTIONS
PERFORMER: PADDY FIRSTER



OUR PHILOSOPHY

No Strings is a world-class theatre company that proudly works exclusively with performers living with disability. Our people are the stars, not just support acts.

We produce award-winning productions with local, national and international tours that deeply move audiences to the point where disability disappears.

No Strings is leading the way to evolve the art form, providing opportunity and access to any role, at any level.

We believe in breaking the “fifth wall” - the barriers associated with disability. We entertain while we empower, and we celebrate ability while being committed to excellence and innovation.

Our theatre skills workshops are where experimentation meets talent. We uniquely co-design our programs with participants so all aspects are tailored to their individual interests. This allows for the greatest form of engagement and expression.

We present professional mentoring in a supportive environment, working in partnership with our artists to help them learn, grow, explore and reach their potential.

Drama skills are life skills. As people find their voice and develop their craft, they grow in leadership and independence, which creates exciting new employment pathways.

By letting ability shine through, we’re challenging expectations and educating societies to achieve true inclusion. Our theatre showcases the power of diversity and acceptance, where disability doesn’t define.

No Strings is about breaking down barriers, raising our voices, and showing the world what people with disability are capable of achieving.

No Strings
- the theatre redefining (dis)ability



PHOTO CREDIT: **FOURTEEN 92 PRODUCTIONS**

PERFORMERS: **TRICIA PUCKRIDGE, JESSICA AGIUS, DYLAN ZYTNIK, DAMIEN TURBIN**

PERFORMER SUPPORT: **TYSON OLSON, MITRE KHAMMASH**

FROM THE CHAIR

2020 was a year like no other. For *No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability*, working proudly with our performers, professional staff, volunteers and board members, it was a team effort to find voice and continue with craft. Nonetheless, we broke down barriers and created exciting new employment pathways.

While the world struggled to respond to COVID-19, our team of extraordinary staff and teaching artists worked towards achieving the five pillars of our strategic plan: creating theatre; providing NDIS services; partnering; advocating and educating; and growing. In spite of such wide-spread, sudden and disruptive change to weekly workshops, performers embraced the changes, settling into a “new normal.” They continued to be supported by our Artistic Associate, Jermaine Hampton, and our amazing team of Teaching Artists.

In the background, we further professionalised governance, with new appointments to the board; revisiting board processes and dynamics that resulted in a skills-based board taking *No Strings* forward in how it provides oversight, insight and foresight. Given how small we are as an organisation, and the part-time nature of most of our professional staff, this was no mean feat. I thank the board directors for their leadership in this difficult time of change.

Given governance changes brought about by COVID-19, we undertook our FY2019 AGM online: another new experience for *No Strings* board directors, professional staff, volunteers, participants and members. I wish to thank everyone who made such a rapid adjustment.

The organisation was restructured, resulting in the establishment of the new roles of CEO and Creative Producer. After a national recruitment process, the board appointed Kari Seeley as CEO, announced at *ReConnect! 2020*. Recruitment of the Creative Producer was undertaken early in 2021, outside the scope of this annual report.

In such a tumultuous year, we achieved so much in the creative space, both digital and in the physical world:

- We were able to hold *ReConnect! 2020* live, on stage, and in person, presented after only three weeks in rehearsal together;
- Almost all participants successfully transitioned to the on-line space, and those who did not, returned in time to step onto stage for *ReConnect! 2020*. We provided extra resources to ensure their continued participation—some required physical technology; others needed one-on-one support—to access the digital space;
- We established a brand new face-to-face weekly workshop program: The Creative Writing workshop,
- 2020 resulted in our first publication, an Anthology of Poetry and Prose, written entirely by the participants of the Creative Writing Workshop. The Anthology of Poetry and Prose was launched at *ReConnect! 2020*,
- We undertook an online, inclusive, international partnership through the Singapore International Foundation's Arts for Good program. A small group of our *No Strings* artists undertook a 3 ½ month collaboration with artists in Singapore.
- In a world-first, *No Strings* artists and Singapore artists co-created a new performance piece that was presented concurrently in Singapore and Adelaide, in-person and on-line, in real time. A video clip of the Adelaide-Singapore *SAME-SAME* performance is available on our website.
- We presented a performance season in the Adelaide Festival Centre.

Behind the scenes, our professional team increased support for our programs and projects, enabling our creative work to increase:

- We secured a number of partnerships and grants to support our theatre work;
- We doubled the number of hours that we engaged SA practicing artists; and
- We doubled our NDIS income through participant fees.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary work of all our staff, teaching artists, volunteers and members. Of course, none of this would be possible without the financial support of the Federal and State Governments, through COVID grants, which enabled us to retain all staff, and double the paid hours of South Australian creatives.

Our performers are central to *No Strings'* creative mission. We laud their support and their networks, which support them.

Each and every one of you is a star! You have acquitted yourselves with poise and determination through one of the most difficult years we have faced globally. Not only has *No Strings* survived, where many arts organisations have not, we have flourished and grown.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the role of the past chair of the Board, John Oster, who served *No Strings* ably throughout 2020. His leadership was instrumental in taking *No Strings* forward at a governance level. Thank you, John, for your dedication to *No Strings*.

Thank you to everyone involved. Thank you for your time, your commitment, your funding, and your support.



RUTH RENTSCHLER OAM

Chair of the Board

No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability

ARTISTIC ACTIVITY

Our weekly theatre skills development workshops started off “as usual”, but in mid-March the whole world changed! We cancelled the remaining in-person workshops for the rest of Term 1, and suddenly tried to work out what to do next! With the amazing support of our Artistic Associate, the whole Teaching Team, and all of our staff, we pivoted our approach and were up and ready to transition workshops to the online platform of Zoom from Term 2.

This was new territory for all of us! The Teaching Team had to devise new ways of connecting and engaging our performers through a small ‘window’ of Zoom, together but apart. Our performers, along with their families and support networks, had to learn new digital skills almost ‘overnight’! But together, we got there! Not only did every performer give it a go, most stayed connected throughout the year, and continued to collaborate creatively. A huge congratulations to each and every one of you for not only being adventurous for giving the online thing a go, but for successfully learning new skills and new ways of working together, to transition online, and then to return to rehearsals in person – all while maintaining our “new normal” of COVID-safe practices.

SAME-SAME

As people became more comfortable with being online, and as the world wrestled with the “new normal” – *No Strings* embarked on our first-ever online international collaboration.

A Singapore International Foundation Arts for Good project, this cross-border dance and theatre production focused on friendship – highlighting the experiences of differently abled performers in Singapore and Australia during COVID-19.

Directed by Jeffrey Tan with Emma Beech, in collaboration with Subastian Tan (Maya Dance Theatre) and Michaela Cantwell (*No Strings*). Concurrent performances were held in Adelaide and Singapore.

We also welcomed two Flinders University students on placement for the duration of this project – one in-person in Adelaide, the other online from Melbourne.



We are very grateful to our many partners that enabled the development and delivery of *SAME-SAME: Theatre Today* and DADC Dance Collective, along with SIF and Singapore Repertory Theatre (all based in Singapore), and Arts South Australia, Novatech, and Adelaide Festival Centre (all based in Adelaide). We are indebted to Terri Dichiera, Jane Baird, and all of the AFC team for their wholehearted support for *SAME-SAME*.

RECONNECT! 2020

It was such a joy to witness our return to the shared rehearsal space, and to ultimately see all our performer's step out onto stage for *ReConnect! 2020*. This show was created almost entirely online during the global pandemic!

The process and resultant performance season, live and on-stage at the Woodville Town Hall, provided a platform for all *No Strings* performers to explore and express their experiences of the COVID restrictions. Some felt like they were in a box, in Zoom, in their house, a social box of quarantine, or in their mind – and they wanted to break out of that box!

ReConnect! 2020 – Out of the Box! gave the audience an insight into the genuine lived experiences of our performers during a global pandemic. It also showcased their resilience and collective creativity, to bring this together after only 3 in-person rehearsals – truly a celebration of what people living with disability are capable of achieving, and a fitting way to once again celebrate International Day of People with Disability. As always, we could not put on such a fabulous show without the support of many sponsors and supporters, as well as all the families and staff who support our performers through rehearsals and multiple performances. Thank you for all you do! We couldn't do this without you.

We thank our Artistic Associate, Jermaine Hampton, and the whole Teaching Team for their artistic leadership and contributions throughout another amazing year of creativity and collaboration.

Congratulations on an amazing 2020 – truly a year like no other!

During this year like no other, the GM/Acting/CEO secured new funding of:

- **\$5,000** to purchase technology to support performers to transition online;
- **\$20,000** to nurture and grow partnerships with international creatives and undertake new online international performance collaborations;
- **\$40,000** to collaborate with South Australian creatives and venues to support new hybrid performance opportunities;
- In-kind support securing a **BIGGER VENUE** and delivering our **LARGEST RECONNECT! EVER**; and
- **\$10,000** to undertake the development and delivery of one subject in an accredited Cert III training course.

OPERATIONAL REPORT

2020 was an exceptional year of transition for *No Strings* in many ways. Nonetheless, as far as operational activity is concerned, *No Strings* staff worked hard to meet the goals in the Strategic Plan.

FUNDING

Our main funding body, Arts South Australia, through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, advised us of the need to restructure our funding streams, to become less reliant on grant project funding. The Board identified that funding through the NDIA—although ever-changing and challenging—held the most potential for *No Strings* to make that shift. In order to realise this potential income, it was necessary to grow the number and scope of our weekly theatre skills workshop programs.

To ensure that new funding streams were sustainable, the Board undertook a review of the organisation, and identified the need for a significant restructure to better suit the changing context in which we operate. The restructure included the development of the role of CEO, as well as that of Creative Producer, which informed the Board's development of the new Strategic Plan 2020-2022. With Arts SA support for the new Strategic Plan, including structural change and financial refocus, we were delighted to commence our second three-year funding agreement.

CHANGES DUE TO COVID

Then COVID hit! While the structural changes were in a state of flux, our immediate operational focus necessarily shifted to supporting our performers and our staff and Teaching Team to respond to the global pandemic by pivoting our in-person workshops to the online Zoom platform.

The operational leadership of the organisation continued to pursue the Strategic objectives of creating opportunities for our performers to create and perform world-class theatre, while also growing our NDIS-funded services. In the context of COVID, this required significant creativity and changes for our Artistic Associate and our Teaching Team, in order to successfully pivot our service delivery, taking it online, and supporting our performers in that journey.



PROFESSIONALISATION

The GM/Acting/CEO also delivered on the Board’s Strategic Plan to grow the workshop program, by engaging new creatives to support the development and delivery of the first-ever Creative Writing workshop, resulting in the first-ever *No Strings* publication.

Another element of the professionalisation of the organisation saw an Employee Assistance Program established, offering confidential free counseling for all staff. This was especially important in the context of the global pandemic and all the unexpected pressures and changes that brought, and it reflects the organisation’s commitment to caring for our staff ongoing.

COVID SUPPORT

Significant financial COVID-19 support, in the form of Job Keeper from the Federal Government, and Business Support grants from the State Government, ensured that we were able to retain all staff throughout the year. This was a significant achievement in a disruptive world where many arts workers and artists were not able to obtain such support. At the same time, we were able to double the hours for which we paid SA practicing artists on our Teaching Team, enabling them to provide even more performer support for online workshops. We were then also in a position to continue those extra hours, even after returning to in-person workshops. We also significantly increased our largely part-time staff team from 2.1FTE to 3.9 FTE.

**Congratulations to all
involved for an extraordinary
year, one in which *No Strings*
not only survived, but thrived!**

**And it's always a pleasure to
acknowledge all of our continuing
sponsors and supporters, without whom
we could not do what we do:**

Arts South Australia, through the Department
of Premier and Cabinet;

Bendigo Bank West Beach, especially for the
Community-POS machine for our events;

City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters,
for significant rent assistance;

Jessie Showell, for fabulous design work;

Community Bridging Services,
for financial and organisational support;

Seeley International,
for continuing financial support;

eLearning Creations, for in-kind web support;

Kathryn McGowan PR & Events,
for extensive media and PR networking
support.

**And finally, to you, our many donors,
supporters and members, who continue to
invest financially to underpin the ongoing
viability of *No Strings*.**

Thank you, one and all.

The organisation thanks Kari Seeley, for her
organisational leadership throughout a truly
extraordinary year.

SAME-SAME

“

But, without fanfare, it was from Adelaide that Zoom theatre took flight. Ever so quietly, history was made and a new edge of technology was cut as No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability suddenly leapt across the apparent limitations of Zoom theatre.

Samala Harris, *InReview*

”

SAME-SAME is an online, inclusive collaboration between *No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability* (Adelaide, Australia) and Diverse Abilities Dance Collective, DADC (Singapore). A Singapore International Foundation Arts for Good project, this cross-border dance and theatre production focused on friendship – highlighting the experiences of differently abled performers in Singapore and Australia during COVID-19.

How can we connect online?

How are we the same?

How are we different?

How can the arts bring us together?

Over the course of three and a half months, seven performers (actors and dancers) from both countries, got to know each other and explored the idea of *SAME-SAME* online. Their roles evolved from performers to reveal the sameness of what it means to be human. And beyond COVID-19, what remains similar? What is different? How can we overcome differences to connect?

Concurrent performances were held in person in Adelaide, Australia and online in Singapore.

ARE WE SAME-SAME?



REVIEWS:

“SAME-SAME, it’s a lovely show to get to know some friends in both Singapore and Australia, how they’ve kept up with their lives during Covid and how everyone’s experience is so relatable so you know you’re not alone out there.”

Ms. Layana Salim, Audience Member

“This is a brave and beautiful use of the tools of the moment with a very positive and beautiful outcome. Three cheers.”

Samala Harris, Barefoot Review

“SAME-SAME is essentially a heart-warming experiment of a production, enabling these performers to present their skills to a live audience, and that they too, are capable of producing art from a unique perspective.”

Bakchormeeboy

“In Adelaide, this was a low-key COVID-safe production in the Festival Centre’s Quartet Bar. With their cameras on, the Adelaide cast sat at the front of the venue beneath a big screen with their audience stretched out into the darkness. Simultaneously, the Singapore cast, complete with Maya dancers and audience, were doing the same. And, 5400km apart, they met on the big screens, together in real time, taking turns in telling their stories and showing their dances – and the audiences far and near laughed and clapped and marvelled at this joy of technology and friendship.”

Samala Harris, InReview

JACK SADLER

Jack's humour and focus are hallmarks of his performances with *No Strings* including *Godzilla Vs No Strings* (Adelaide Fringe), *Ignition Point* (Adelaide Fringe) and *SAME-SAME*. You will also most likely see Jack in his Taekwondo uniform called a dobok.

KOBI TAYLOR

Kobi is the queen of "one-liners" and always brings irrepressible joy when performing with *No Strings*. She exudes charisma so much so that the crew as well as the audience falls in love with Kobi. She has performed in *Ignition Point* (Adelaide Fringe) and now *SAME-SAME*.

ZOE WALKER

Zoe expresses herself through dance and movement. When you see her on stage its enchanting. Over the last two years with *No Strings* her performance skills have broadened, and she loves being on stage, with performances in *Ignition Point* (Adelaide Fringe) and now *SAME-SAME*.

MICHAELA CANTWELL

As well as being a professional theatre and film actor for decades Michaela was a founding member of the iconic Brink Productions here in Adelaide. More recently Michaela has toured internationally in 'I Forgot to Remember to Forget' Singapore 2018, Adelaide 2019 and Korea 2019.

EMMA BEECH

Since 2000, Emma has worked in theatre, screen and has established a practice developing theatre shows from conversations with strangers, talking about the banal, funny, personal, and meaningful. Emma then collects these moments to make theatre shows and is constantly seeking to replicate the joy of great conversation on stage.

ADELAIDE PREMIERE

DATES: 13 & 14 NOVEMBER 2020

PERFORMANCES: 5

AUDIENCE ATTENDEES: 408 ONLINE
117 IN-PERSON

VENUE: QUARTET BAR, ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL CENTRE

SINGAPORE PREMIERE

DATES: 13 & 14 NOVEMBER 2020

PERFORMANCES: 5

AUDIENCE ATTENDEES: 408 ONLINE

VENUE: THE LOFT, HAVELOCK II

Creative Team

CO-DIRECTORS

Jeffrey Tan & Emma Beech

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Subastian Tan, *MAYA DANCE* &
Michaela Cantwell, *No Strings*

TECHNICIAN

Brad Thomson

A Singapore International Foundation,
Arts For Good Project.

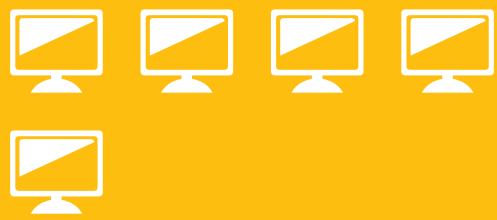


2020 SNAPSHOT

PERFORMANCES

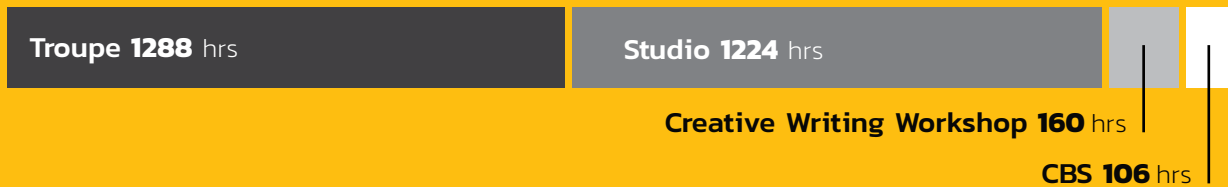


8 Local



5 International/Online

WORKSHOP HOURS BREAKDOWN (PERSON HOURS)



SAME-SAME ZOOM HOURS



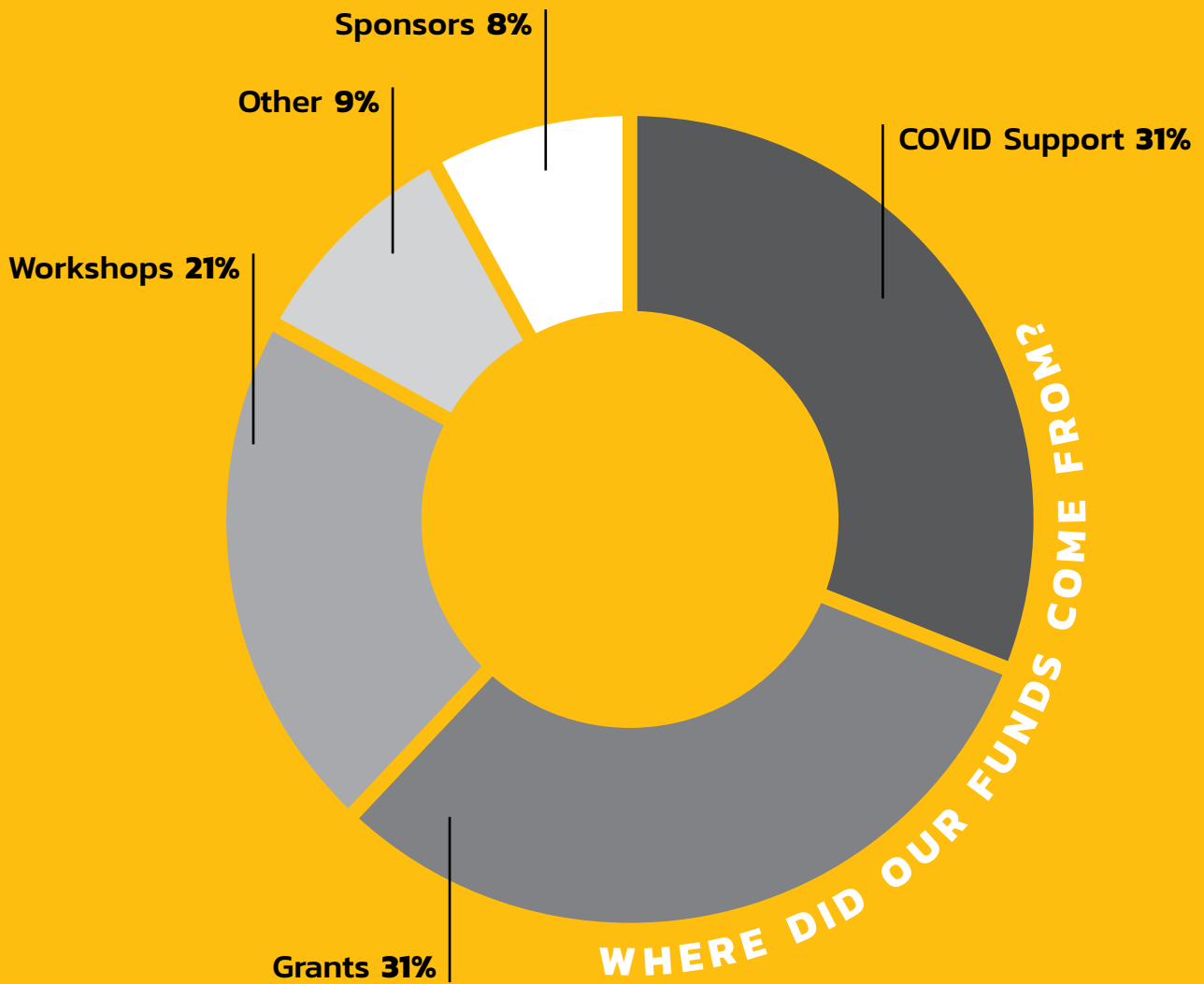
2868
TOTAL
WORKSHOP
HOURS



53.5
SAME-SAME
ZOOM
HOURS



701
THEATRE
TICKETS
SOLD



1282

IN-PERSON HOURS

VS

1230

ZOOM HOURS

STRATEGIC FOCUS & ARTISTIC RATIONALE

Locked down but still growing

Almost 1 in 5 Australians live with a disability. Yet the lived experience of disability appears very rarely in contemporary theatre and film. When it does however, roles for characters who have a disability are often cast with actors who do not have a disability.

Aligned with the goals of the Arts & Culture Plan for South Australia 2019-2024 recently released, the work of *No Strings* values and invests in the stated Values of visionary leadership, strategic collaboration, embracing diversity, and courageous experimentation.

No Strings has an innovative, inclusive and ambitious program. We create world-class theatre that reflects the lived experience of disability, **ensuring access to diversity of stories, demographics, cultures, experiences, practices and performances, through exchanges and partnerships (GOAL 1).***

We generate jobs, training, performance and exciting artistic opportunities for our performers, to our mentors, teaching artists, placement students and creative artists, all of whom bring their amazing skills and expertise to the Company.

Our program has a focus on ability. We have created a cohesive methodology for training the teaching artists that collaborate with the Company. **We collaborate across art forms and industries, to create space for conversations, ideas generation, for testing & exploring. We foster cultural ambition through connections that help reshape the identity of disabled artists & their role in the broader ecology. We support disabled artists to flourish, grow, & reach their full potential (GOAL 2).***

Everything at *No Strings* starts in a workshop where theatre experimentation & (dis)ability meet. Some participants seek more frequent and intense engagement. When it becomes clear (to them and to us) that a participant has more serious interests in the Performing Arts, *No Strings* creates specialised projects and workshops to respond to participant interest.

Through regular and comprehensive consultation with participants, we identify and plan for future needs of the community of disabled artists and seek out and nurture opportunities for meaningful engagement and the cultivation of fresh ideas. We also advocate on behalf of people living with disability in terms of changing expectations in relation of access, to services and to cultural participation (GOAL 5).*

Outcomes of our proven artistic rationale include:

- Creating world class theatre that spotlights signature strengths and specialist areas to reach new local, national and international recognition and prominence (GOAL 4).*
- Building our reputation as an outstanding provider of NDIS services in line with the National Standards for Disability Services.
- Building and nurturing long lasting partnerships with other organisations, academic institutions, and local, national and international government bodies, identifying existing opportunities for collaboration by integrating (disability) arts and culture into education (GOAL 6).*
- Advocating for an inclusive society
- Building infrastructure and improving financial security

No Strings brings diversity to Australian theatre by putting the humanity of disability centre stage and by providing professional work for theatre artists living with disability. The more often professionally trained artists with a disability are working, the more often disability culture is authentically reflected on stage.

The unique perspectives of No Strings artists add new vocabularies to the physical and contextual languages of contemporary performance in Australia. Those vocabularies are not limited to workshops and major productions. A typical year also includes community events, projects in creative development, touring, conferences and forums.

* Aligned with the Government of South Australia's Arts and Culture Plan South Australia 2019-2024.

PHOTO CREDIT: FOURTEEN92 PRODUCTIONS
PERFORMER: LUCY LOPEZ WITH HAZEL



RECONNECT! 2020

ReConnect! is an annual showcase of original performances created by workshop participants in collaboration with our Teaching Team. It's an opportunity for family members, friends and supporters to witness some death-defying feats of imagination – and it's a celebration of the year that was!

In a year like no other, each and every *No Strings* performer stepped onto stage, showcasing what they had been working on during weekly theatre skills workshops throughout the year.

As is the case with so many during the year *No Strings* took their weekly face to face theatre skills workshop program on-line.

Challenging for both performers and the teaching team alike, they learned to adapt to online classes including learning a whole new collaborative vocabulary and developing a new digital creative arts practice.

What the performers and Teaching Team created together, even with these challenges, is remarkable!

DATES: 9 & 10 DECEMBER 2020

PERFORMANCES: 3

AUDIENCE ATTENDEES: 176

VENUE: WOODVILLE TOWN HALL,
WOODVILLE

This year's ReConnect! highlighted *No Strings* dedication to creating great theatre in a collaborative way, giving voice to the lived experiences of our performers – continuing to provide access and opportunity for actors living with disability to step into the spotlight and to tell their stories in their own voices.

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP & ANTHOLOGY

No Strings encourages input from all participants in shaping the skills development workshop programs. *No Strings* supports each participant to express, explore and challenge their own personal areas of interest, so that together we can create award-winning theatre.

In the middle of a global pandemic, in response to participant interest, we started our first ever Creative Writing Workshop. This resulted in *No Strings* first-ever publication – an Anthology of Poetry & Prose – penned by *No Strings* participants, who are now published authors, launched at *ReConnect! 2020*, and dedicated to our late founder, Helen Flinter-Leach.

The anthologies were for sale at our *ReConnect!* performance along with our COVID-Create bags designed by our participant Dylan Haines-West.



PHOTO CREDIT: RADHÉ OSBORN



PHOTO CREDIT: FOURTEEN 92 PRODUCTIONS
PERFORMERS: RACHEL HIGH, RYAN ROWLAND, ALEXANDRA HILL

VALE HELEN FLINTER-LEACH



2020 also saw the passing of our Founder Helen Flinter-Leach. Helen had a lived experience of disability, and strongly advocated for others living with disability to have access to performance training and opportunities.

We continue her legacy in our commitment to working exclusively with people who live with disability. We welcome all people who live with disability to join us in this important work. By letting ability shine through, we're challenging expectations and educating societies to achieve true inclusion.

EMMA HUNT

PHOTO CREDIT: KARI SEELEY

EULOGY BY EMMA

(HELEN'S DAUGHTER)

Mum describes her life as checkered with drama – in both senses of the word!

We remember when, despite her ill-health and single parent responsibilities, whilst working full time, Mum took on a drama degree at Flinders University in the mid 1980s. She excelled, gaining distinctions in playwriting and directing. Mental ill health intervened before she could finish it. Instead she learnt sign language. This led to her establishing two theatre companies over the next 15 years. One was "Gestures", a theatre for the deaf and the other "No Strings Attached" a theatre for people with disabilities. SBS made a documentary about Gestures and it aired in 1988 including in the UK and it won three international awards. No strings has just celebrated its 25th anniversary

<https://www.nostringsattached.org.au/>

She established these not for profit theatre companies, applied for government arts grants and co-wrote plays and acted in several successful shows, Lavenders Blue, Ability Rules OK, and Stories with her second husband and collaborator, Andrew Leach, who was paraplegic from a car accident.

The website says:

No Strings Attached was established in 1994 by performer, writer and entrepreneur Helen Flinter Leach. Our mission is to lead the way in training, services and opportunities for disabled artists by creating world class theatre, and we support members to develop career paths in the performing arts. We value entertainment and advocacy, individuality and community, unity and diversity. And we especially appreciate humour.

A quarter of a century later it has become an innovative South Australian institution with a pool of 60 performers. Mum and Andy were a creative force. She described herself as a campaigner for arts funding, (she wrote: "The arts is put on a par with wine, that is, good stuff, but a non-core luxury"). She believed quality work in the arts can affect people's lives. She was a community arts organiser, producer, administrator and actor.

POEM BY JUSTIN

(HELEN'S SON)

From you we came
Now we say good-bye
The essence of our being
From womb and bosom

Those joyous early days
You were the making of us
The central pillar of our world
But something else was there

The joy and the struggle
So perfectly matched
As if, equal parts had to be
But, this is life and we are the living

You endured and so must we
We do not forget your struggle
It is and will always be ours too
We have been shaped in beautiful
ways my sister and I

Beyond the grief
The breadth of your long life comes
surging back
So many memories

Your great belly laughs
The fine cooking smells of your raucous
dinner parties when we were kids
The brightness of your blue-eyed smile
Your warm and loving embrace (prolonged)
The brilliant creativity of the artistic director
The great conviction and scholarship
of your conversion

Larger than life
You were
The grand ideas, you made them reality
Sheer determination

The irreverent
Out of nowhere
The predictable unpredictability
Why so?

Strong character
Good humoured always
Child-like naïveté despite life
How rare
How refreshing

The will
The challenge met
The search for meaning never stopped
The light always burnt so brightly

The challenge met
To live this life
And that you did
What a journey it was

Ha`makom yenaheem etkhem betokh shear
avelei Tziyonvi`Yerushalayim

Justin Hunt



RUBY AWARDS

The Ruby Awards highlight the diversity and creativity of South Australia's arts and culture sector while honouring the best. The awards were presented across 11 different categories – encompassing festivals, shows and individual achievement.

We had the honour of accepting the Premier's Lifetime Achievement Award for our late founder Helen Flinter-Leach. Our CEO Kari Seeley read a beautiful speech delivered on behalf of Helen's children Emma and Justin. Since then Emma has come to Adelaide and was able to see this amazing Ruby Award in person! We are delighted to have that on display in the *No Strings* office.

We are so grateful for Helen's trailblazer spirit. If not for her we wouldn't be able to do what we love, which is creating great theatre to the point where (dis)ability, disappears.

On behalf of Helen's family, Emma and Justin's acceptance speech:

Thank you so very much for this incredible honour of a Lifetime Achievement Award for our mother Helen Flinter-Leach. We are very sad we could not be there from Melbourne to attend the Ruby Awards and receive this Lifetime Achievement Award on her behalf.

An Adelaide Review article in December 2019 reported about Mum:

"Helen's a tremendous force that wanted to do theatre, and when she went to many different companies looking for opportunities for her and her husband, who had a physical disability, they couldn't find what they were looking for. A lot of people were offering them opportunities backstage and front of house, but not necessarily onstage. That's when she started No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability."

A quarter of a century later it has become an innovative South Australian institution with a pool of 60 performers.

Mum was so proud of No Strings and all that it has gone on to achieve.

“

In a year of disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that we continue to celebrate the events, activities and projects that make South Australia great.

”

Premier Steven Marshall,
in congratulating the finalists.



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Teaching Artist	ROEL VOORBIJ

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

The Troupe

JESSICA AGIUS

MARC BERRY

MICHAELA CANTWELL

PETER CASTRIQUE

AIMEE CRATHERN

DYLAN HAINES-WEST

RACHEL HIGH

ALEXANDRA HILL

CHRIS KARAMOSHOS

JOHN MACK

KYM MACKENZIE

ANTON SAGRILLO

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RACHEL HIGH

ALEXANDRA HILL

RYAN ROWLAND

BECKY VAN LEEUWEN

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JESSICA AGIUS

PAUL BENNIER

DAVID BUZZACOTT

PADDY FIRSTER

KATHRYN HALL

COOPER LUMSDEN

KYM MACKENZIE

FIONA BAKER

TRICIA PUCKRIDGE

RYAN ROWLAND

JACK SADLER

ANTON SAGRILLO

RICHARD SAMAI

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BEN WISHART

DYLAN ZYTNIK



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KATHRYN MCGOWAN

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PHOTO CREDIT : FOURTEEN92 PRODUCTIONS
PERFORMER : AIMEE CRATHERN



No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability

ABN 30 433 646 981

+61 8 8363 5970

contact.us@nostringsattached.org.au

www.nostringsattached.org.au

66 Nelson Street, Stepney SA 5096, Australia



@NSATheatre



@NSATheatre



@nsatheatreofdisability