Annual Report

For Year Ended 30 June 2013

Barking Spider
VISUAL THEATRE

www.barkingspidertheatre.com.au

Contact

Artistic Director/CEO
Penelope Bartlau
T: 03 9481 8849
M: 0419 590 630
penelope@barkingspidertheatre.com.au

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Chart A – Barking Spider Visual Theatre Audience Attendance Chart

Chart B – Barking Spider Visual Theatre Timeline

Barking Spider
VISUAL THEATRE

PURPOSE

Barking Spider Visual Theatre's (BSVT) purpose is to develop and create theatrical stories through a combination of art forms: puppetry, percussion, installation and live theatre. Our mission is to interpret history and place, as well as community and individual narratives, through remarkable visual theatre that is the outcome of a collaborative creative process between audiences and artists. In this way, BSVT creates platforms for the stories of others to be heard. We generate beautiful, lyrical and powerful events that challenge people's perspective of theatre and of life.

BSVT transforms the way people experience the familiar and encounter the unfamiliar - in museums, galleries, theatres, communities, schools, festivals, residencies and workshops.

Why does what we do matter? In an age where personal narratives are trivialised by status updates, and interactivity happens more on-screen than in person, BSVT leads an urgent call. It is time get back around the fireside to share stories: we re-awaken audiences through re-connecting people in extraordinary ways.

GOALS

1. Museums: To be locally, nationally and internationally recognised as a key provider of specialised creative interpretations of history and visual arts via the development and presentation of theatre-events created through puppetry, percussion and art installation in the museum sector.

2. Communities: To provide an accessible program that enables local history to flourish by introducing new art forms and approaches, promoting stories to be shared within and beyond local communities.

3. Young People: To have a demonstrated artistic rationale of working with young people as collaborators and equal innovators in the majority of works across our programme.

4. Theatre: To be a leader in creating original productions in theatres and in site-specific spaces, presented interactively with audiences, and using unique art from combinations.

5. Roving Works & Workshops: To have an in-demand, expansive and inventive program of roving works and workshops for our local, national and international markets.

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Artistic Rationale

BSVT includes audiences in the development of our work, breaking down the barriers between artists and audiences and engaging our audiences physically, mentally and emotionally.
BSVT curates programmes in the following streams:

- Museums and Galleries
- Theatre
- Communities and Schools
- Workshops
- Roving Works (mobile performances entertaining at festivals etc.)



The Barking Spider Board

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As of November 2012, Barking Spider is proud to have a change in our governance. We have a very strong, energized group to lead the company into the future. All board members are Melbourne-based and are the only members of the incorporated association.

MARK CREES – Acting Chair

General Manager at Theatre Works: Producer / Arts Administrator / Arts Consultant

JIM LAWSON – Chair (currently on leave/overseas)

Most recently worked as CEO of Young People and the Arts Australia, as Manager of Outreach & Access Programs with the Arts Centre Melbourne, and as Director of Drama Victoria. Jim is an Actor, Writer, Director, and Arts & Education Consultant.

SOPHIE SIPIDIAS – Treasurer

Senior Manager, Group Finance, NAB

PETRA KALIVE- Secretary

Theatre director, actor and dramaturge.

PENELOPE BARTLAU – Artistic Director & CEO

Theatre & Events Creator/Producer/Arts facilitator/Puppeteer/Writer/ Director

LEAH SCHOLES - Artistic Associate

Freelance percussionist.

JANET WELLS

Marketing & Communications Consultant (most recently at Melbourne Festival, Heide Museum & the Arts Centre)

JOHN DICKIE

Criminal Law Barrister.

JOHN BARCHAM – Advisor to the Board

General Manager at Creature Technology Company



Artistic Director/CEO's Report

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This last year has been one of great change for the company, with the heralding in of a new board. The new board members, coming from a spread of professional backgrounds and experience, have come in at a critical time in the company's life. The saying goes that arts organisations often implode and collapse at the 6-7 year mark. The reason for this is usually burnout of key personnel, who are often drastically under-resourced and often working for little or no remuneration. September 2012 marked Barking Spider Visual Theatre's 6th birthday: it was around this time that the two key company members, myself and Leah Scholes, discussed the idea of finding a new board, as the running of the company was becoming intensely difficult and unsustainable. Our past board members – who had their hearts in the right place – were mostly practicing artists and effective contribution in a business sense was minimal. The old board was happy to step down, in order to inject a new energy and focus into Barking Spider Visual Theatre. As we approach our 7th birthday, with the steerage and hands-on practical commitment of our new board, I am very proud to say that my vision for this company to have a long and sustainable life, feels attainable, and much closer than it was a year ago - or indeed - closer than it has ever been.

The new board came in late last year (2012), just as the first rounds of the Arts Victoria Organisation Investment Programme (OIP) were announced: Barking Spider was successful in this first round and invited to apply for triennial funding - a major application, and one which we were not truly prepared for. The company, up until this point had a very strong artistic output and arts track record, but in terms of business structure and record-keeping, we were lacking. The OIP application – even for developing companies like ours – demands a well articulated and demonstrated company history and structure: financial, legal and artistic. The Barking Spider board assisted Leah Scholes and myself to clarify and substantiate the company in all these measures. As a part of this, we created two charts: one of which shows our key audiences, and output and reach to these audiences (Chart A – Barking Spider Visual Theatre Audience Attendance Chart) and the other represents

our (then) 6-year history graphically (Chart B – Barking Spider Visual Theatre Timeline). These charts are attached as an appendix at the end of this document.

With the new board, we have refined and clarified the company's vision, purpose and philosophy, which in turn has spurred me on to develop more strategic partnerships, and a far more directed manner, than ever before. In particular, Chair Jim Lawson noted that the company's real point of difference from other arts organisations is our work with Museums and Galleries. I have taken this observation and worked with it, purposefully and ambitiously.
In the first 6 months of 2013, through broadening the scope, scale and type of works we are providing, I have deepened Barking Spider's existing relationships with Heide Museum, Albury LibraryMuseum, and Heritage House Museum (Dandenong). Simultaneously, I have established new relationships with TMAG (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery) and the National Museum of Australia (Canberra), having secured a month long residency at the former in 2014, and developing and presenting a work for the latter, for which we were awarded an Honorable Mention at the museum's industry MAGNA Awards in May, 2013. Additionally, we have been awarded a Dome Centenary Fellowship with the State Library of Victoria, for which we will create a major work in 2014. We will be developing up to three public programmes for the Ian Potter Gallery in 2014. We have also seeded relationships with a number of other local, interstate and international museums. Barking Spider is definitely gaining traction and attention in this sector.

During the last financial year the company successfully completed an Arts Victoria and Australia Council funded Extended School Residency (ESR) at Dandenong West Primary School (DWPS). This was an immensely successful project, in terms of the stakeholders' vision and wishes as well as artistically. Most significant was the impact the project had on the lives of the children we worked with at the school, making a marked difference to many kids - socio-psychological wellbeing at the top of the list - as the school attests. Additionally, Barking Spider arranged with Heide Museum, to bring the 90 key children from DWPS to Heide, for a day of: art viewing and exploration, history, art creation and play, in Heide's gardens. Many of these children - especially refugee kids - had never left the suburbs of Dandenong and this excursion was their first experience of how beautiful Australia can be.

Barking Spider had a 2nd residency in 2012-13, at Fitzroy High School (FHS). This residency was supported by the Ian Potter Foundation, and included 9 various theatre-arts workshops plus an on-site creative development of a professional theatre work, *The Memorandium*. The artists worked with young people from years 8 and 9 intensively in the creative development, and students up to year 12 were engaged in the workshops. The students and their families were invited to the preview of *The Memorandium* at Theatre Works, in August 2012. As a result of this residency, two Barking Spider artists were invited back to FHS to develop two different programmes: one in

theatre making and the other in percussion. Barking Spider then went on to have a second residency this financial year, with the development and presentation of theatrical work *The Lucien Swift Chronicles*.

As a major company focus is on working with young people, we are delighted with these two residencies and their outcomes, especially in our being able to negotiate and provide a relationship for/with the schools after the official close of these residencies. Across the end of this last financial year we have been successfully applying to Arts Victoria for another Extended School Residency in 2014. (Outcome is yet to be determined).

One other "spin-off" from the ESR was the development of a puppetry workshop "Snap Crackle Pop", using biodegradable bubble wrap. This workshop is available through the website, and has been presented at schools and one festival. We have been sponsored by Bubble Pack for all our bubble wrap requirements across the ESR and the workshops also.

We facilitated and presented two community works this financial year, the first being a community street party, produced by Explosive!media. We created a giant postcard for locals to write memories of their street, and a series of banners developed and designed with the community. The second community work was for Harmony Day, in conjunction with La Mama Theatre, creating *Weaving Trees* with families from the Carlton Community High-rise housing estate. In both of these projects, through the well-developed artistic design and planning, each community was able to explore art making and self-expression, and through interaction with other locals, a deeper connection, engagement and experience of their neighborhood, neighbors and locality. We aim to generate more community works in the future, wherever possible.

With regard to theatrical presentations, we produced a very successful, critically and audience acclaimed season of *The Memorandium* at Theatre Works across August-September last year. Theatre Works is a long-term partner with Barking Spider and the production further strengthened our relationship. The work was presented at Showcase Victoria in March 2013, and whilst not securing a tour, gained interest from local and regional presenters and a season and tours (regional and interstate) are being negotiated. *The Memorandium* and other Barking Spider work *Short Pants No Holes* have been accepted into Regional Arts Victoria's "On Call" 2014 programme. This is excellent news, further ensuring the longevity of each production whilst extending our reputation as a company within the Victorian School system, a target market for workshops and residencies in addition to these productions.

We also produced a short season of "The Lucien Swift Chronicles", premiered at Northcote Town Hall for the 2013 Melbourne Magic Festival. This work was a collaboration between the company and magician and historian Jo Clyne.

We have begun development of four works: *Unearthing the Hill* - for Dandenong's Heritage Hill Museum, *Ex Libris*, for the Athenaeum Library, *Through Their Eyes,* for the launch of the new Hawthorn Arts Centre, and *Liberty of the Press*, through a Dome Centenary Fellowship at the State Library of Victoria. Each of these works will be presented in the next financial year.
Each of these works crosses into heritage and/or community engagement in terms of their focus and development, and each will have a multi arts platform outcome.

Lastly, the company has developed one new roving work: *Anastasya the Bold*, a solo roving performance, engaging audiences in curious objects and stories. As mentioned, we have one new workshop this financial year: *Snap! Crackle! Pop!* Which has been presented in schools, primary and secondary, and at one festival. Additionally, our workshop *Scratch Trash Orchestra* is currently on the RAV "On Call" list.

It has been a busy – if not frenetically paced – year for the company, with many positive changes: not least of which is our new website which launched last September. We can proudly say we have employed 43 artists over the last two financial years.

We anticipate flourishing growth and continuing development of Barking Spider Visual Theatre. Expansion – coupled with artistic integrity and success, and financial success accordingly. Leah Scholes was announced as the company's Artistic Associate, as decided upon by the new board, and my title was shifted from Artistic Director to include the title CEO. These changes are indicative of the greater shifts the new board has brought - and continues to bring in – to the company. Thank you to all our supporters and stakeholders over the last financial year: you make all the difference. This is still a time of great change for Barking Spider Visual Theatre: we are excited about the future, and we are very clear and passionate about where we are going and how we are going to get there.

Penelope Bartlau
Artistic Director/CEO

Barking Spider
VISUAL THEATRE

Funders, Supporters, Sponsors and Awards:

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Funders

Arts Victoria
Ian Potter Foundation
City of Melbourne
Sidney Myer Foundation
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
Australia Council

Supporters

Magnum IP Legal Services
Regional Arts Victoria
La Mama Theatre
Theatre Works
Fitzroy High School
Auspicious Arts Incubator
Arts Hub
Streaka

Sponsors

VISY Specialties
Bubble Pack
Arnott's
Northcote Pottery Supplies
Northcote Pets

Awards

- Dome Centenary Fellowship, State Library of Victoria
- MAGNA Award – Honorable Mention, Big Objects On Show at the National Museum of Australia
- R.E. Ross Playwright's Script Development Award
- Handspan Visual Theatre Travelling Scholarship
- Friends of The VCA
- Theatre Works "In the Works"

Barking Spider Visual Theatre is a not-for-profit incorporated association with both DGR and TCC status for tax purposes.