Barking Spider
VISUAL THEATRE

Annual Report
2020-21 Financial Year



Wood Wide Web
ArtPlay New Ideas Lab
Photo courtesy of ArtPlay

In FY 2020-21 Barking Spider Visual Theatre presented

57 events

34 delivered face-to-face + **27** delivered online

To a total audience of **7218**

Online audience **6499**

Live audience **719**

including

Online young audience **2586**

Live young audience **154**

In adapting our practice, we used social media to co-create with online communities

Online community co-creation engagement via social media - **15,414**

Barking Spider Visual Theatre generated **79** jobs for artists.

The company presented across Victoria, nationally and internationally.

We were **Nominated for Best Comedy** at Melbourne Fringe Festival for *The Biscuit Readings Online*



Grandmother Moon
Creative Victoria Learning Partnership Maharishi School
Photo: Oleksandr Pogorilyi
Umbrella Parade



Grandmother Moon - Creative Victoria Learning Partnership Maharishi School Photo: Oleksandr Pogorilyi
Planet Installation



The Object Monologues - Geelong Partnership with Creative Geelong
Photo: Sarah Walker

Artistic Director's Report



Penelope Bartlau, Artistic Director, Barking Spider Visual Theatre

This financial year has been a hectic ride. The lockdowns provided opportunity for funding applications and we made over 60 applications, some taking only 5 minutes, and some weeks of work - so a whole range. I dreamed up all sorts of projects for the lockdown period, some of which were funded and have grown, such as The Object Monologues. This project initially had one funded creative development iteration, but was followed by three fully funded, realised projects across diverse locations in Victoria. This particular project also made it to pitching rounds with 3 festivals - 2 of which were interstate. While we didn't make the final cut with the festivals, this proves the strength of the concept and how attractive, relevant and dynamic this project is. Other projects never made it across the funding line, but remain as legitimate and well developed concepts with future potential. Please visit our Art in COVID-19 webpage to see the body of works.

Overall, this year has been intense. As grant writing wrapped up around December 21, the projects began. There were projects rolled over from the last financial year into this, such as the hugely successful Creative Victoria Creative Learning Partnership Grandmother Moon; projects that were successfully funded from the grant writing phase, such as Wood Wide Web at ArtPlay, and then other projects that just started popping up - the phone began ringing, such as Black Rock Phantasmagoria, to be realised in the 21-22 financial year. It has been nothing short of a creative explosion fuelled by many months of hard-yard grant writing.

Meanwhile, at the back end of this, my burnout has become palpable. I floated the idea with the Board about dismantling BSVT as an incorporated association. To assist in making a clear and informed decision, with funding from Regional Arts Victoria, we worked with Debby Maziarz to create a report. This report was to include a thorough company analysis, to assist in understanding Barking Spider Visual Theatre and its position in the current climate. Through this consultation process, we are determining that the best way forward. No matter what the decision, Barking Spider Visual Theatre will keep creating, generating and producing beautiful, meaningful and awe inspiring works for years to come.

Chair's Report



Sue Westwood, Chair of Barking Spider Visual Theatre Board

Reflecting on the past year I'm reminded of how quickly Barking Spider Visual Theatre's creative team, so ably lead by Artistic Director Penelope Bartlau, adapted to the changing landscape that Covid-19 presented. Demonstrating the very fine art of pivoting, adapting, being flexible and nimble, while constantly reviewing and reshaping how Barking Spider would present its annual program occupied much of her time.

Barking Spider Visual Theatre is Penelope Bartlau. In 2020, she transformed the organisation by permanently relocating it in the Victorian region of Colac-Otway. Downsizing the footprint of the organisation's creative presence in Melbourne has led to smaller, intimate and site specific (and online) creative outcomes this year. Barking Spider's output reflects Penelope's capacity to reframe her creative energy in a small, but highly targeted and nuanced way.

The company's work was not restricted to regional Victoria. Firstly I would like to acknowledge two major works, Wood Wide Web, hosted by ArtPlay's New Ideas Lab and supported by City of Melbourne, and Grandmother Moon, a Creative Victoria Creative Learning Partnership with the Maharishi School. These two works demonstrate how Barking Spider has continued to provide valuable and meaningful creative outcomes for artists and audiences within such a restricted landscape.

However, the impacts of Covid-19 have been felt. With a program planned at Hawthorn Arts Centre thanks to City of Boroondara and Balwyn Rotary funding, Barking Spider was able to plan, but was forced to cancel a series creative experiences for older community members through its program Add Art to your Years. For the first time in the company's existence we had to return the funding. However the company was able to deliver a creative workshop for Boroondara young people in June this year. Other project's emerged during the lockdowns, as the company adapted its practise and form to create online. Some highlights of this are included in this report.



Grandmother Moon - Creative Victoria Learning Partnership Maharishi School Photo: Oleksandr Pogorilyi
Large Scale Bunraku Puppetry

Penelope continued with her detailed smaller audio and geo-located experiences through The Object Monologues. Taking both landmark and quirky community sites throughout the cities of Darebin, Colac-Otway Shire and now Geelong, Barking Spider has brought to life the personality, idiosyncrasies, the loves and losses of iconic landmarks. Each iteration of this project engaged community through social media, by garnering feedback, opinion and personal stories to develop and create each of the 17 monologues.

The Biscuit Readings enjoyed a renaissance as a personalised, online, interactive performance during Melbourne Fringe 2020, and was recognised as an award finalist in the Comedy section. The performances resonated with audiences because of our somewhat remote and presently disconnected Covid lives. Again, taking ordinary objects and creating personal connections with these 10 minute “readings”, Penelope has managed to tap into a need for some creative, meaningful and entertaining engagements where a biscuit reveals who you really are. For the first time, The Biscuit Readings reached international audiences, with online perfomances in the UK and the USA.

The pandemic has also given Barking Spider Visual Theatre time to reflect on its fifteen year history and to plan for its future. To remain agile and responsive to community needs, Penelope (along with the organisation’s incredibly capable bookkeeper, Emma J Hawkins) has completed a deep dive into the organisation’s structure, with the support of arts leadership mentor Debbie Maziarz. This was supported through funding provided by Regional Arts Victoria.

It’s been an incredible year for us all, but the arts has struggled without audiences, and in some instances government support. As Julia Chuah McNamara noted in an Arts Hub story in June 2020, “supporting the arts does more than support individuals or a single sector. Supporting the arts can support more resilient communities, in turn strengthening our ability to respond.” I’d like to thank the Barking Spider board for their engagement with and support of Penelope through this period of significant change and transformation.



Postcards from the North - Photo: Klari Agar

Partnerships & Stakeholders

Across this financial year, Barking Spider Visual Theatre has kept developing relationships with existing partners & presenters: ArtPlay, City of Melbourne, Creative Victoria - Creative Learning Partnerships, The National Wool Museum, Regional Arts Victoria, Monash Uni Student Theatre (MUST), City of Boroondara, Mooney Valley City Council/Incinerator Gallery, City of Glen Eira, Colac Otway Arts Trail, Colac Maker's Space, Red Rock Regional Gallery Theatre, The Maharishi School, Arena Theatre and the Inner North Community Foundation.

We have new relationships with: City of Greater Geelong, Creative Geelong, ACCIONA's Mount Gellibrand Wind Farm, Beeac Primary School, Colac Otway Shire, City of Darebin, ITAC5 (The Fifth International Teaching Artist Conference - Korea), Melbourne Fringe Festival, Colac Health, Victorian College of the Arts School of Film & TV | Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, City of Bayside, Ballarat Heritage Festival and White Night Geelong.

Art form practices

Geo located sound
Installation
Visual art
Sound design & composition
Puppetry
Poetry
Comedy
Creative writing
Online community co-creation engagement via social media



So Iso Right Now - Photographic Series

New Works

- Grandmother Moon - Creative Victoria, Creative Learning Partnership in partnership with The Maharishi School, Reservoir (face to face project).
- Wood Wide Web - ArtPlay New Ideas Lab, supported by City of Melbourne (face to face project).
- The Object Monologues - 3 discreet project created for local government areas of Darebin, Colac and Geelong. Co-created online via social media, presented as geolocated sound works.
- Postcards from the North - Online community project developed with funding from the Inner North Community Foundation generated during lockdown and shared via social media.
- So Iso Right Now - Photographic series generated during lockdown and shared via social media.
- Arty Tales - Delivered online, a visual arts programme for babies and families, Incinerator Gallery.
- Black Rock Phantasmagoria - Shop front visual installation series developed across April to June, for face-to-face delivery later in 2021. Supported by City of Bayside.

Plus additional new workshops and professional development sessions in story creation, character development and voice work, visual arts and puppetry for diverse sectors and stakeholders.



Beardo - A Tableaux Vivant: Ballarat Heritage Festival

Remounts & Reinventions

- The Biscuit Readings - Reinvented for interactive online distribution. Nominee "Best Comedy" Melbourne Fringe festival 2021
- Incy Wincy Babies – Reinvented for online delivery, this is a visual arts programme for babies and families, Incinerator Gallery
- Beardo - A Tableaux Vivant (presented face-to-face)
- All Hands on the Puppet workshops (presented face-to-face)
- Shadow Puppetry workshops (presented face-to-face)

A sample of our works this year

The Object Monologues

Socially engaged , geo-located sound works presented across Victoria.



The Object Monologues - Geelong
Partnership with Creative Geelong
Photo: Sarah Walker

Grandmother Moon

Installation, live performance, music & puppetry based on Aboriginal astronomy & using Auslan.



Grandmother Moon - Creative Victoria Learning Partnership
Maharishi School
Photo: Oleksandr Pogorilyi
Silhouette Walk

The Biscuit Readings

Online, interactive live performance reaching local and international audiences



The Biscuit Readings - Online
Nominee for Best Comedy, Melbourne Fringe Festival 2021
Photo: Sarah Walker

Arty Tales & Incy Wincy Babies

Online workshops for babies and carers



Incy Wincy Babies & Arty Tales presented online for Incinerator Gallery
Photo courtesy of Incinerator Gallery

Some of our feedback...

'"The profile of BSVT is remarkable in its significance to:

- *Explore and present artistic work across such a diverse scope of artists and creative practices*
- *Initiate relationships and build partnerships with local, regional, state, national and international government, education sectors across pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors and cultural agencies*
- *Commit to sharing together and promote our Australian sense of communities and how this is inclusive These distinguish our BSVT qualities and achievements."*

Bobbie Hodge, Barking Spider Board Member

"The most beautiful night and creative explosion that got me right in the heart....inspiration is alive!"

Pilar Tronzik, Parent at Maharishi School, Grandmother Moon

Just a quick email to let you know this morning I received a phone call from a woman asking where she could find more Incy Wincy Baby videos! She really enjoyed introducing her baby to the most recent June video and she wanted to know if there were more. She thought the videos were wonderful and she will subscribe to the gallery e-newsletter so she knows when new videos are released and when she can get a ticket! Thank you for a wonderful job with the videos – people (and I) really appreciate them.

Christine Healey, Curator Education & Community Learning, Incinerator Gallery

The Object Monologues "bring to life some of the most loved parts of the city...yet another clever and creative way that artists are reimagining places in Geelong"

Deputy Mayor of Geelong,Trent Sullivan
The Object Monologues - Geelong

"You will be spooked at Betty's insights and the way she matches your character and abilities to your particular biscuit. Astounding! Amazing!"

Michael Brindley, Review excerpt The Biscuit
Readings Online in "Stage Whispers"