

ANNUAL REVIEW 2013



CHANGING THE STORY OF HOMELESSNESS

ABOUT US

Milk Crate Theatre works with an Ensemble of artists who have experienced homelessness or social marginalisation to create theatre that creates change. We provide a safe, creative space for the Ensemble to build confidence and make positive changes in their lives.

Our work embodies the experiences and artistry of the Ensemble to showcase their uniqueness as contemporary storytellers and to create authentic and transformative theatre that challenges audiences and brings communities together. These stories are brutal yet beautiful, savage yet seductive, tenacious yet tender but most of all they are real: born from the experiences of those who create them.

We believe that by bringing communities together and sharing the real stories of people who have experienced homelessness or social marginalisation, we can inspire action and work towards an inclusive future where everyone feels valued.

CORE VALUES: AUTHENTICITY EXCELLENCE CREATIVITY INCLUSIVENESS

HOMELESSNESS IN SYDNEY

Homelessness is not just 'houselessness'. Experiencing homelessness means not having stable, secure housing or a place to call home.

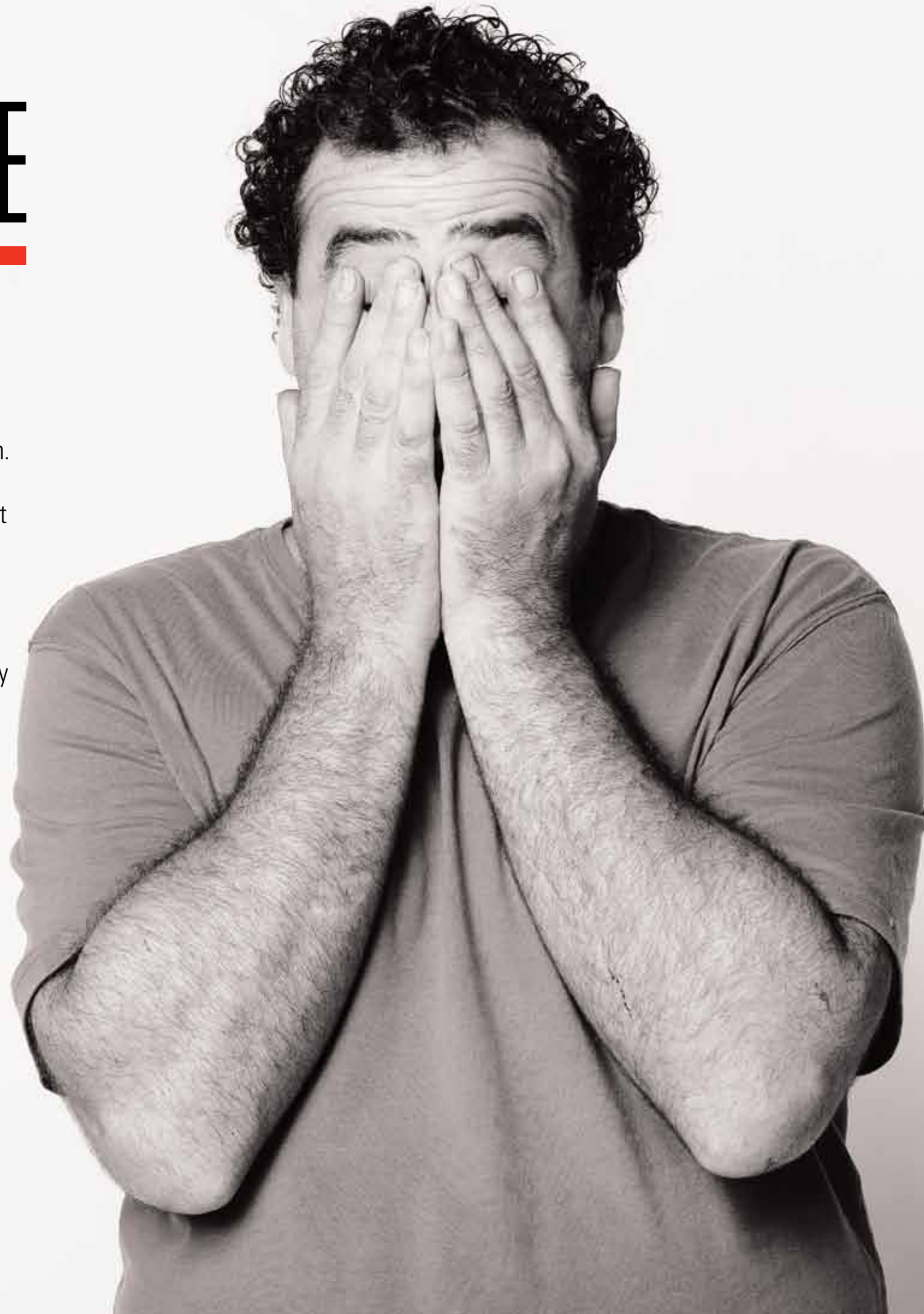
Homelessness comes in many guises and people become homeless for a range of reasons. Informed by this, Milk Crate Theatre works across sectors towards a socially inclusive community. For us, working towards social inclusion means working with people who are at risk of homelessness or who currently experience social marginalisation.

This includes but is not limited to people with experience of health and mental health issues; physical, intellectual or learning disabilities; low incomes; experience of the care and criminal justice systems; substance misuse and abuse; disrupted education; domestic violence and abusive relationships; refugee or asylum seeker status; and Indigenous Australians.

Sadly, homelessness is on the rise in Australia. As a result we have seen an increased need for our services from our current welfare partners. We have also seen an increase in new welfare services wanting to access our programs seeing us expand our geographical reach across Greater Sydney.

THE ENSEMBLE

The Ensemble cannot be easily categorised or described. As a starting point, the Ensemble self-identify as having the lived experience of homelessness or social marginalisation. They are people who have joined us in an activity and as a result, form part of our creative community. In 2013, we had Ensemble Artists participate in workshops, performances, as stage assistants and office volunteers. They were playwrights and performers, they were employed through The Milky Way; our social enterprise, they were students, conference presenters, representatives at board meetings, audiences, friends and advocates.



123 ENSEMBLE ARTISTS
PARTICIPATED WITH MILK CRATE
THEATRE IN 2013.

84% OF THE ENSEMBLE ARTISTS
ATTENDED MORE THAN 50% OF
THE TIME.

65% OF THE ENSEMBLE ARTISTS
ARE MALE AND 35% ARE FEMALE.

85 NEW ENSEMBLE ARTISTS JOINED
MILK CRATE THEATRE IN 2013.

LISA'S STORY

Lisa first encountered Milk Crate Theatre during a challenging time in her life. Living in a women's refuge, she was invited to a community show at Parramatta. Although Lisa arrived as an audience member, before the end of the show she was participating in a scene. Following this, Lisa immediately signed up for Milk Crate Theatre workshops. She describes her initial attraction to theatre workshops as driven by escapism: *"I was in a bad way because I was at the refuge and it was a good opportunity for me to be someone I'm not."*

GETTING TO KNOW OTHER PEOPLE THAT HAVE HAD SIMILAR EXPERIENCES,
I JUST ENJOY IT, I LOVE IT,
IT'S WHAT KEEPS ME GOING, I GUESS.
IF I DIDN'T HAVE MILK CRATE, I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'D BE.

While she has experienced periods of homelessness and hospitalisation in the past, Lisa's current involvement with Milk Crate Theatre has coincided with increased housing stability. *"This year I was pretty lucky to have been offered a place at the Department of Housing and now I'm happy because I'm stable,"* she says.

Lisa has now performed in several Milk Crate Theatre shows and considers her regular attendance at weekly workshops as a significant activity, *"It's like going to Milk Crate each week... it's something I'm looking forward to, I've got a structure and you know I get up early and I get dressed and walk to the station. It doesn't sound like much to other people – getting up early and going to the station – but it's a big step for me."* A sign of her commitment, Lisa travels two hours each way to participate in Milk Crate Theatre activities. *"I know I've changed on the days that I go to Milk Crate because I'm a happier person."*

For someone who usually *"keeps to herself"* and doesn't have many friends, Lisa's involvement with Milk Crate Theatre has seen her form new

friendships and become part of a community. *"Getting to know other people that have had similar experiences, I just enjoy it, I love it, it's what keeps me going, I guess. If I didn't have Milk Crate, I don't know where I'd be,"* she says.

Lisa's increased engagement with Milk Crate Theatre has seen her become involved in developing and showcasing a performance piece on women's health, commissioned by the Australian Women's Health Conference. Organised through The Milky Way, Milk Crate Theatre's social enterprise, Lisa describes the performance as a personal turning point, as it *"put a lot of positive energy into me."* According to Lisa, others have also noticed the changes in her, with old friends and acquaintances commenting:

"What is it in your life that's changing you at the moment? You turned into a better person, you're a happier person' ... It's Milk Crate."



THE CHAIR REPORT

Milk Crate Theatre has had a terrific consolidating year, continuing to implement the Strategic Plan through Stage Door, Main Stage, Back Stage and The Milky Way programs, embracing digital content and technology. This has been made possible through the dedication and expertise of our small team of staff and volunteers managed with excellence by our joint-CEOs Maree Freeman and Siena Balakrishnan in collaboration with the Ensemble, Associate Artists, welfare, arts and education partners.

The exciting focus on the 2015 large-scale production, *This House Is Mine*, is gathering momentum and will be a significant showcase and advocacy for both the Company and for those who have experienced homelessness and social marginalisation.

The Board has welcomed Victoria Turner, Michael Sirmai and Lenore Robertson as new Directors. They bring important complementary skills including marketing, legal, theatre and philanthropy. We farewellled Julie Rosenberg who had served Milk Crate Theatre since incorporation in 2010. Matthew Zander concluded his tenure after the final meeting of the year. Matt brought strategic skills, professionalism and objectivity at a time of significant growth and change for the Company. Elizabeth Giles has taken leave of absence and we look forward to her return, bringing a deep understanding of the issues and organisations around homelessness. I thank my fellow Directors for their insightful contributions throughout the year and our engaging and effective Board meetings.

The Board welcomes the Ensemble's contributions in the governance of the company, and will continue to build on this in the year ahead.

My sincere thanks to our joint CEOs Siena Balakrishnan (General Manager) and Maree Freeman (Artistic Director) who have embraced their positions with enthusiasm and provided the company with stability, excellent leadership and authenticity focused on the best outcomes for our Ensemble.

This will be my last letter as Chair as we have embarked on a search for a successor, having served in the position since incorporation in 2010. It will provide the Board with an opportunity for renewal, and I will continue as a Director. It has been an honour and privilege to serve as founding Chair at a significant time in the growth of Milk Crate Theatre. I look forward to my ongoing involvement and thank all our supporters who provide the lifeblood that allows this unique company to serve the community,

ANGUS WHITE
Chair

THE CEO/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR REPORT

From digital explorations to creative developments of new work, from packed workshops to social enterprise pilot projects... 2013, you have been an exciting year.

The Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble have once again amazed and inspired me throughout 2013 with their tenacious approach to new challenges and their open-heartedness in collaborating to share and tell stories that speak a truth not often seen on our stages. We've spent more time developing new work in 2013 than ever before and I believe this has paid off enormously in the depth and breadth of the work that has been created.

We've once again had a packed Stage Door workshop program delivered across Sydney in Parramatta, Woolloomooloo and Newtown and we've seen some wacky, wild and sometimes even downright weird short performances evolve from these during *Road Test: Works In Progress*. We've created two new forum theatre community shows, *You Are Here* and *Full Circle* and had huge success presenting these works to a high-school aged audience in Parramatta. We've introduced new artistic expression into our work through our forays into the digital realm and have seen this blended with live performance to create highly accessible and integrated offerings such as *The Things That Are Left Behind*. We've piloted *The Milky Way*, the Company's social enterprise and delivered digital art, workshops and performances on a national scale. We've begun development on our next company production; *This House Is Mine*. In, amongst and through all of this we've been to see some fantastic theatre across Sydney, undertaken scholarships with our partners at NIDA, sent out a monthly Ensemble newsletter, developed a Social Leadership Team, read a bevy of plays through our *Street Salon* play-reading group and even found time for a weekly social cuppa at the office.

It's been so exciting to see and meet so many new faces at Milk Crate Theatre this year and also to see those who have been with the company for a period of time rise to new challenges and embrace new ways of working. The collaboration that I have witnessed throughout the program this year has reminded me what good theatre making is all about: trust, respect, risk taking and bravery, and I thank everyone who has given of themselves so completely in this fashion – this is how we make good work. To the Board, staff, Associate Artists, volunteers and of course the Ensemble, thank you for your collaboration: your trust in and respect for each other and your bravery in taking risks to explore the unknown. The work that we have made in 2013 has been achieved through your combined efforts.

The work that we make is only possible due to our strong partnerships in both the welfare and arts sectors and we are continually excited by the ideas, offerings and commitment that these partners bring to our creative process. 2013 has seen many artists collaborate with the company and it's also seen Sarah Emery bring her digital skill set to the role of the Associate Director as well as seeing long standing staff member Beck Ronkson finish her time with Milk Crate Theatre. Beck has given the company six years of creative ideas and energy and has left a legacy with Milk Crate Theatre that will be felt in the years to come. To all the artists who have worked with us in 2013, I thank you for your dedication to Milk Crate Theatre and the artistry you have brought to us.

And my reflections on the year wouldn't be complete without a final word to the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble; your creativity, insights, unique perspectives and passion for this company make it what it is – I'm looking forward to 2014 and more new ideas, fresh approaches, passionate discussions and creative collaboration.

MAREE FREEMAN
CEO/Artistic Director

THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

This year, on a visit to the United States, I heard leading arts managers comment positively on the work we do and the impact it has. What I brought home was an affirmation of the uniqueness of our work on an international scale. Within Australia, we were also acknowledged for our unique artistic contributions and social innovation. In 2013, through funding from the Westpac Foundation and a Social Innovation Award from the Macquarie Group Foundation, we have been able to support two programs, The Milky Way and our Community Shows, both demonstrating that art can create social change, along with enterprise and employment. We were delighted to be announced as an Australia Council for the Arts, Community Partnerships Key Producer, which acknowledges our leadership in the community arts and cultural development sector. With this comes multi-year government support and an opportunity to broaden our visual aesthetic, touring and advocacy.

We can't achieve this without the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble and our audiences. But, behind the scenes I want to acknowledge the work of our staff, of which we welcomed Sarah Emery as Associate Director and farewelled Amrit Gill our Social Enterprise Manager and Beck Ronkson our Special Projects Manager. I would like to thank each of our 16 passionate volunteers, our three talented interns and our eight Directors especially our Chair, Angus White for their contributions and commitment to our ever-evolving company.

This year we have maintained strong relationships with many of our longer term individual donors, and philanthropic and government partners; in particular, Nelson Meers Foundation, Sydney University Medicine Revue, Thyne Reid Foundation, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and W & A Johnson Family Foundation have continued to support us and our creative aspirations for several consecutive years and we are hugely grateful for this long term support.

In 2013 we delivered a robust program with expenses totalling \$413,695 and built on our reserves with an operating profit of \$130,401. This provides a strong foundation as we go into a year of development and delivery for This House Is Mine.

With support from Herbert Smith Freehills, we introduced some crucial new policies including

our Intellectual Property Policy. We commenced a new partnership with Booz & Company to create the Company's first Strategic Marketing Plan. Marketing will be a key operational focus in 2015 and 2016, strengthening audience engagement. Even with our largest audiences to date, and with the growing passion and understanding for what we do, we aim to grow audiences nationally and maintain connections through a well-resourced, strategic approach.

Measuring our impact is important to us and in 2013 we conducted our most rigorous evaluation and data analysis to date, reviewing three years of information and collecting Ensemble case studies that span up to five years of participation. In addition to this, we conducted evaluation of The Milky Way pilot project and presented on this at the Vivid Festival of Lights, Music and Ideas.

We have a beautiful and complex community that grows and changes each year. I realise that the Ensemble, our processes, the art, the commitment of our partners and our operational integrity, combined, make us quite unique and extraordinary. For this, as we celebrate the year that was, I say a huge thanks to everyone involved with us in 2013.

SIENA BALAKRISHNAN
CEO/General Manager

2013 ARTISTIC PROGRAM REPORT

In 2013 Milk Crate Theatre had 123 Ensemble Artists participate in the annual program, with increased overall attendance rates from 2012 of 84% of people attending more than 50% of the time. We had 2,078 attendances in a creative activity by a single Ensemble Artist and delivered 225 creative opportunities (for example a workshop, rehearsal, performance) with a stronger focus on the depth of engagement and accessibility. We partnered with 14 welfare partners, 13 arts and cultural partners, eight education partners and four social enterprise customers during the year. We employed 13 Associate Artists and 13 Ensemble Artists. We held 11 performances for 1,604 audience members.

We successfully delivered four programs; Stage Door, Main Stage, Back Stage and The Milky Way alongside our organisational priorities of research, evaluation and organisational development.

STAGE DOOR

Stage Door is our inclusive workshop program. In 2013 it provided opportunities to develop theatre and life skills including actor training, imaginative play, ensemble building, literacy, social networking, personal development, general fitness, self-awareness, mental health and wellbeing. Projects in 2013 were our Hub Workshops (Wolloomoolloo, Newtown and Parramatta), Outreach Workshops, Street Salons, Street Library, a Playwriting Master Class, a Joking Master Class and Edge of Your Seat.

MAIN STAGE

Main Stage is our performance program. In 2013 the program was open to Ensemble members who had shown a commitment and desire to expand upon their creative skills through performances at welfare services, in arts venues and for the general public. Projects in 2013 were *Road Test: Work In Progress*, *Full Circle*, *You Are Here*, *The Things That Were Left Behind* (Digital Storytelling), *Digital Suitcase* (Creative Development One for *This House Is Mine*).

BACK STAGE

Back Stage offered extension beyond our Stage Door and Main Stage programs and supported the professional development of Ensemble Artists both prior to and following their involvement with The Milky Way. Activities were tailored to the interests and skills of the individual. Initiatives in 2013 were The Social Leadership Team, External Extension and Advocacy.

THE MILKY WAY

The Milky Way is our social enterprise. In 2015 it provided meaningful employment opportunities to Ensemble Artists at the same time as services for customers in three key areas: training workshops, performances and videos. Customers are able to deliver creative products to their stakeholders whether they be staff in training situations, delegates at their conferences or audiences, including school students – all in a socially responsible way. Projects in 2013 were the *Floating to Earth* Performance, Executive Leadership Teamwork Workshop, *Full Circle* Interactive Performances and the *Homefull* Video.

I'VE HAD AN EPIPHANY AROUND ART BEING
THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO TELL STORIES
—WHAT BETTER WAY TO UNDERSTAND
SOMETHING THAN TO SEE AN ART WORK
ABOUT IT? NOTHING IS MORE EFFECTIVE.

Ensemble Artist



STAGE DOOR

WORKSHOPS

In 2013 Milk Crate Theatre offered 98 workshop opportunities at our hubs in Woolloomooloo, Parramatta and Newtown and in outreach locations Glebe and Granville, and two specific workshops targeted at women in crisis in Parramatta and Woolloomooloo.

Our newly developed training modules provided structure to our processes and we explored digital media, women's health, non-verbal storytelling as well as already developed modules including improvising and devising and approaches to acting.

We worked with 98 Ensemble Artists in our workshop program, many of whom went on to take part in our performances, extension programs and The Milky Way. Despite our programs being run as 'drop in drop out', 66% of Ensemble Artists who attended a workshop had an attendance rate above 50% (this is an increase of 18% from 2012).

STREET SALONS

Four Street Salons were delivered in partnership with the Surry Hills and Parramatta Libraries and saw 11 members of the Ensemble delve into the genres of absurdism, documentary, Australian contemporary and classic European plays.

EDGE OF YOUR SEAT

Through the seven Edge of Your Seat performances, 26 Ensemble Artists saw some of the best cutting edge theatre Sydney has to offer, including *The Floating World* at Griffin Theatre, *Waiting for Godot* at Sydney Theatre Company and *I'm Your Man* at Riverside Theatre.

MASTER CLASSES

We ran six Master Classes, extending the Ensemble's artistic skills in playwriting, (delivered in partnership with Playwriting Australia) and Forum Theatre Jokering (run in-house). The playwriting Master Class enabled an Ensemble Artist to be a storyteller for *You Are Here* and a contributing playwright for *Full Circle*. In 2014, an Ensemble artist will undertake a structured mentorship and joker *You Are Here* alongside an Associate Artist.

MAIN STAGE

2013 saw the Ensemble challenged by several Main Stage projects. The year's successes focussed around the introduction of digital media in order to increase accessibility and create longevity in our theatre-making practice. Through our Community Shows we also saw the diversification of audiences into the education sector - we held our first education season at Riverside Theatre and our 2012 text, *Fearless*, by Mirra Todd, was programmed on the NSW Board of Studies HSC Drama Syllabus. To ensure greater collaboration and authenticity of the stories being told, we focussed more than ever on the creative development of new work.

COMMUNITY SHOWS

Our award-winning Community Shows provided a deeper Ensemble engagement with opportunities to write, act, stage assist, MC and contribute original music. In 2013, we created three new shows, *Road Test: Works In Progress*, *You Are Here* and *Full Circle*. 34 Ensemble Artists were engaged in the creative process with 95% average attendance in 152 creative engagements and 100% of Ensemble Artists said their involvement in the Community Shows helped them make significant positive changes in their lives.

Our first Community Show *Road Test: Works In Progress* was performed by Chris C, Sarah, Dane, Tim B, JohnW, Michael S, Margot, Carla, Rui, Lisa, Deb, Alan, Michael, Abdul, Cathy, Graeme, Barry, Michael G, Gordon, Matthew, Tim T, Owen, Adrian, Leanda, Sara and Bridget. Our second Community Show *You Are Here* was directed by Maree Freeman; written by Maree Freeman with Ensemble storytellers Bridget, Michael W, Tim T, Chris, Angaelee and Brendan; and performed by Beck Ronkson, Leanda, Sean Barker, Deb W, Sarah Woods, Adrian J and Grace Partridge. Our third Community Show *Full Circle* was directed by Maree Freeman; written by Maree Freeman with contributing playwrights Stephanie and Bridget; performed by Beck Ronkson, Leanda, Sean Barker, Goldele, Catherine Davies and Owen.

The Community Shows tour across Sydney to welfare venues: The Wayside Chapel, Parramatta Mission and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, with diverse audiences problem solving complex social issues using a Boal-inspired forum theatre process. Issues included mental health, homelessness, youth in crisis, alcohol and gambling addiction, fear of intimacy, crime, violence and sleeping rough.

THE THINGS THAT ARE LEFT BEHIND — DIGITAL STORYTELLING

The Things That Are Left Behind digital storytelling project creatively engaged and amplified the voices and theatrical opportunities available to the Ensemble. Digital storytelling has become an increasingly common, accessible and long-lasting medium of communication for many artists and communities, and in recognising its effectiveness and its suitability for the Ensemble, we partnered with the Information and Cultural Exchange to deliver this project and meet this community need.

28 Ensemble were involved in the project, including Adrian, Akira, Asia, Bridget, Carla, Chris, Flor, Gina, Goldele, Gordon, Graham B, Graham S, John, Kieran, Leanda, Lisa, Matthew, Michael G, Michael S, Michael W, Owen, Pee Wee, Peter, Ray, Rui, Sarah C, Stephanie and Tim B. The project's aim of breaking down barriers to engaging with new technology was met with 100% of Ensemble stating they enjoyed learning the digital process. Experimentation and high quality experiences were paramount in the process, one Ensemble stating "*I had done animation and film making but not with such sophisticated equipment.*" 100% of the Ensemble stated the project helped them make significant positive changes in their lives, with one Ensemble Artists stating "*It helps the mind. I liked the animation – I would like to improve on it and make it slower.*"

DIGITAL SUITCASE — CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

In September 2013 we ran *Digital Suitcase*, a three week creative development introducing digital artist Craig Walsh to the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble to experiment with digital ideas, narratives, images and skills that will directly contribute to the creation of the Milk Crate Theatre 2015 Company Production. *Digital Suitcase* resulted in the Ensemble and the Company gaining skills in the creation of digital content while also learning how to integrate this content into devised and scripted performance work. 12 Ensemble were involved in this project, including Asia, Chris, Flor, Goldele, Gordon, Graham B, Graham S, Gretta, Lisa, Matthew, Michael G and Pee Wee.

The creative development investigated mental illness, the journeys into and out of it and the relationship that individuals have with their minds. For *Digital Suitcase* a number of organisations were represented in the audience. The University of Sydney; The University of Technology, Sydney; The University of Western Sydney and The University of New South Wales all had delegates present, as did St Vincent's Hospital's 'Faces in the Street' Urban Mental Health Research Institution. These organisations expressed an interest in creating partnerships and ongoing relationships with Milk Crate Theatre as part of *This House Is Mine*.

BACK STAGE

In 2013 15 Back Stage meetings and attendances with the Ensemble took place. These included two Ensemble Meetings (led by the Ensemble for the Ensemble), Social Leadership Team meetings (which culminated in the delivery of *Floating to Earth* at the 7th National Women's Health conference), two scholarships at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, mentoring sessions and attendances at advocacy events including Parramatta Homeless Connect. In addition to this we distributed six Ensemble e-newsletters with over 80 creative opportunities listed.

THE MILKY WAY

In 2011 Milk Crate Theatre undertook a feasibility study to explore and design the concept of a social enterprise providing fee-for-service products to new and wider markets as well as meaningful employment for the Ensemble. The Milky Way, as named by Wayne, one of the Ensemble Artists, was piloted to measure both social and economic impacts for the Ensemble and customers alike. In 2013 we aimed to test customer reception to products and pricing and better understand the capacity for Milk Crate Theatre to manage the resource demands of delivery. A careful, staged approach to engaging Ensemble and customers was adopted.

In 2013 we delivered four activities to customers across the not-for-profit, corporate, arts and education sectors. These activities included:

PERFORMANCE: FLOATING TO EARTH

Milk Crate Theatre were commissioned by the Australian Women's Health Network to perform at the 7th Annual Australian Women's Health Conference. Special Projects Manager, Beck Ronkson, in her capacity as convenor of the Social Leadership Team brought together a group of four female Ensemble Artists to create a performance piece for this conference. The ten minute piece, *Floating to Earth*, explored the notion of women's health and bodies, control and loss of control, and the power of self-determination. *Floating to Earth* showed to over 300 conference delegates from the health and social services sectors. The project was hugely successful, receiving extremely positive feedback from Ensemble and customers. Income generated by the fee enabled us to pay all four Ensemble Artists for their performance.

7th Annual Australian Women's Health
Conference Delegates

"Highlighted the importance of a sensitive, collaborative, compassionate approach. The importance of creative and performing arts projects" and "The words used were words I hadn't always used or heard in my work. Giving me a different perspective from which I will view work."

DIGITAL WORK: HOMEFULL

The NSW Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) commissioned Milk Crate Theatre to produce a short digital piece exploring the concept of home. Seven Ensemble Artists created the digital piece which was screened as part of NSW CAG's presentation at the Mental Health Services Conference in Melbourne in August.

This project was a great opportunity for us to commence touring our work outside of Sydney. It also enabled the work to be seen by a large audience, and as a digital work, for it to have a lasting legacy. This project was profitable and had positive outcomes for the Ensemble and the customer.

The NSW Consumer Advisory Group

"People were very impressed and moved by the film, I believe it brought home many of the key messages in our overall conference presentation. We were also approached by some members of the audience with enquiries about the possibility of adopting the film, or something similar, into their training modules."

WORKSHOP: CHARTER HALL HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM

Milk Crate Theatre was engaged by consultants Veldhoen + Company to deliver a team building workshop for human resources staff at property management group Charter Hall. The objective of the workshop was to increase participants' awareness of their team dynamic and the working styles of their colleagues. The workshop fee and structure was profitable and had positive leadership outcomes for Ensemble and customers.

PERFORMANCE: FULL CIRCLE

Milk Crate Theatre's community show *Full Circle* had a three-performance season at Riverside Theatres in Parramatta from 28 to 29 August. An education resource was developed and distributed to teachers bringing their students to the shows.

In total, 193 paying audience members saw *Full Circle* at Riverside Theatres. Milk Crate Theatre performed for the first time to schools audiences, with 115 high school students from across Sydney experiencing the show and participating in the interactive elements of the piece, exploring mental health in the community. One schools show sold out, with the second near capacity. The general public show on 29 August was also near capacity with 78 paying audience members.

Compared to most of Milk Crate Theatre's performances, this project incurred a small deficit. However, the show was an integral part of Milk Crate Theatre's audience development in the education sector.

13 ENSEMBLE
ARTISTS WERE
EMPLOYED.

18 UNIQUE
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
PAID EMPLOYMENT
WERE OFFERED.

FIVE ENSEMBLE
ARTISTS WERE
EMPLOYED IN MORE
THAN ONE ACTIVITY.



INCREASED MY CREATIVITY,
DISCIPLINE, STRUCTURE AND
UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT
IS IMPORTANT IN MY LIFE. /

Ensemble Artist

REMINDED ME THAT I AM
CREATIVE, CONFIDENT,
SOCIABLE AND RESILIENT. /

Ensemble Artist

IMPACT



We define success in relation to transformation, be it incremental or substantial, within the Ensemble, welfare partners, our audiences and the wider community. Each year, through our evaluation process, we uncover several 'Key Learnings'. These are described in detail in the following pages.

Milk Crate Theatre utilises the creative process to promote and advocate for social inclusion and a better understanding of people experiencing homelessness or social marginalisation. We aim to inspire action on complex social issues on three levels:

- Individual - Building self-esteem, self-belief and the capacity to make changes in life
- Relationships - Increasing sense of community, group social skills and interpersonal cooperation, and working towards improved community dialogue
- Societal - Taking an active role in exploring social systems and dynamics, promoting social inclusion through high quality artistic productions that educate and engage the wider public on issues relevant to homelessness or social marginalisation

Ensemble Artist

"It got me thinking about why I want to do acting. Last year was all about survival and having something to look forward to every week and now it's become about how to tell a story and affect change."

Ensemble Artist

"Milk Crate Theatre has literally turned my life around in the past year. And later this year, I will be back into the workforce after six years. I can't wait."

	2011	2012	2013
Total number of Ensemble Artists involved in the annual artistic program	168	179	123
Total number of new Ensemble participating in a workshop	68	127	85
Average attendance rate over a workshop series	56% of Ensemble attended more than 66%	48% of Ensemble attended more than 50%	66% of Ensemble attended more than 50%
Total number of welfare partnerships	10	13	13
% of Ensemble who felt they had seen positive changes to connections within the Ensemble	-	72%	80%
% of Ensemble who felt they had seen positive changes to mental health	-	68%	85%
Total number of Ensemble involved in a Community Show	2	11	34
Total number of audience members	Approx. 1000	1506	1604
% of all the audiences who enjoyed the experience	-	90%	98.9%



99% OF THE ENSEMBLE STATED THAT THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN MILK CRATE THEATRE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES.

82% OF THE ENSEMBLE STATED THAT THEIR INVOLVEMENT HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

70% OF THE ENSEMBLE STATED THAT THEIR INVOLVEMENT LED TO MAKING POSITIVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY.



2013 KEY LEARNINGS

In 2011 Milk Crate Theatre engaged Regina Hill Consulting to formulate a logic framework for our evaluation. Over the last three years, Milk Crate Theatre has based its evaluation strategy on this framework and has utilised a responsive, individualised and strengths-based approach to monitoring, evaluating and making improvements.

Throughout the year, individual programs are evaluated and in November 2013 we conducted an annual evaluation across our services and artistic program with the Ensemble.

CREATIVITY IS CENTRAL TO ENGAGEMENT

Theatre in its many guises, whether it be playwriting, acting or digital art, creates an accessible and enjoyable platform for people to engage with us, and Milk Crate Theatre prides itself on offering a unique, creative outlet within the greater welfare service ecology. In this regard, we do not consider ourselves a 'front-line' emergency service provider, or an accommodation provider for homeless people, but a critical part of a journey to recovery, self-determination and building networks that move individuals away from homelessness and support them to retain stable tenancies and a balanced life. When surveyed, it was no surprise then that the key reason an Ensemble Artist became involved in Milk Crate Theatre was to do something creative (58%) and to learn new skills (52%). This is testament to the arts in attracting, engaging and creating participatory opportunities. In many of the qualitative answers the Ensemble referred to 'fun' and 'performing to audiences' as aspects of their involvement that they found most rewarding.

CHALLENGES MAKE YOU GROW

For many of the Ensemble, the first step of joining a Milk Crate Theatre activity is an act of bravery so it is always important for us to try to strike a balance between feeling safe and feeling challenged. According to evaluations this balance has been achieved and ultimately helps Ensemble Artists to grow.

94% of Ensemble Artists stated that they felt challenged by the activity they took part in, and several went on to state that digital technology, performing on stage and taking risks were key elements of this challenge. However, despite this challenge 100% of Ensemble Artists stated they would recommend the activity to someone else.

Indeed, the introduction of digital art into our theatre-making processes has proved a new but welcome challenge, with 100% of Ensemble Artists enjoying the digital process. It has also enabled the Ensemble to connect with technology in an accessible way.

POSITIVE CHANGE IN EVERY PARTICIPANT

Change is a significant part of the Milk Crate Theatre mission and purpose. 99% of Ensemble Artists stated that their involvement with Milk Crate Theatre has helped them to make significant positive changes in their lives. When asked what role Milk Crate Theatre played in this change, common words used were: 'inspired', 'motivated', 'challenged', 'boosted' and 'valued'. This confirms that Milk Crate Theatre creates change by providing a supportive and encouraging environment, tailored to developing each Ensemble Artist's individual needs and interests.

Ensemble Artist

"They are life lessons. Live on stage, things can go wrong and they do and they did. But it's not the end of the world. The training that we get, it helps you just move on and stay in that moment with the play. And that's something I've struggled with most of my life, being too knocked around by things and just finding it hard to get up, but I think that's changed a lot."

Ensemble Artist

"Acting has been a true passion as far back as I can remember, I love to perform. I truly feel inspired and on top of the world when I act."

Ensemble Artist

"It has strengthened my spine and I've emerged from under a blanket that fell over me from the exclusion that new technology generates for the unconnected."

Audience feedback from *The Things That Are Left Behind*:

"The Ensemble clearly enjoyed participating and valued the professional input from the staff, both creative and technical."



82% OF THE ENSEMBLE STATED THEIR INVOLVEMENT HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

79% OF THE ENSEMBLE FELT THEY HAD AN INCREASED SENSE OF WELLBEING.

70% OF THE ENSEMBLE FELT THEY MADE A POSITIVE CONNECTION WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

64% OF THE ENSEMBLE FELT THEY MADE FRIENDS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE ENSEMBLE.

39% OF THE ENSEMBLE FELT THEY HAD INCREASED THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH.

AUDIENCES & CUSTOMERS

In 2013 we had an overall audience attendance of 1604, up from 1505 in 2012. Of these audience members, 481 attended our three Community Shows, *Road Test*, *You Are Here* and *Full Circle*; 108 attended *The Things That Are Left Behind* and 926 attended The Milky Way events.

"IT'S SOLIDIFIED FOR ME THAT WE ALL HAVE VERY DIFFERENT STRENGTHS, AND IF USED AND ACKNOWLEDGED PROPERLY WE HAVE A VERY DIVERSE AND EFFECTIVE TEAM."

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

"PERFECT. THE AUDIENCE ON ALL SIDES WAS EFFECTIVE. THE ACTORS WERE AMAZING."

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Throughout our entire 2013 program we have seen high levels of audience retention from 2012. However we also had many new audience members who had been referred to Milk Crate Theatre's performances predominantly by word of mouth. 100% of new attendees confirmed that they had enjoyed the particular show they attended.

COMMUNITY SHOWS: in 2013 Milk Crate Theatre held six Community Shows with a total audience attendance of 481 people. A total of 270 attended the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre shows in Newtown, 156 attended The Wayside Chapel shows in Potts Point and 55 attended the Parramatta Mission shows in Parramatta. Of all audience members surveyed, 98.9% enjoyed the performances and 98.9% said that the shows had provided them with the opportunity to engage with issues about homelessness or social marginalisation.

THE THINGS THAT ARE LEFT BEHIND asked audiences to delve into the digital world and explore notions of belonging. These performances saw a total attendance of 107 people attend two shows, 54% of whom were new audience members. 100% of audience members enjoyed the use of digital media as a new element in Milk Crate Theatre's work.

"WATCHING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ACTORS, I COULD REALLY RELATE TO THE CHARACTERS AND FELT LIKE I KNEW THEM."

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

THE MILKY WAY provided the company with new audiences and was, by far, the program in 2013 that reached the most people, predominantly through large conference presentations. We held four social enterprise offerings with a total audience attendance of 926 people. 63.5% of audience members surveyed said that their attitudes towards the issues presented to them changed as a result of experiencing a Milk Crate Theatre performance; 91.5% of audiences surveyed said they gained unique insights into the issues presented to them; and 73% of workshop participants reported increased personal awareness as a result of their experiences in Milk Crate Theatre workshops.

Floating to Earth conference delegate feedback: "It was very real! Diverse range of women, it rang true, it represented many women I met. Very professional performance. Well done – it made me cry."

Full Circle was performed at Riverside Theatre for secondary school students and the local community. The production saw a total audience attendance of 193 people.

The Charter Hall workshop saw five members of their executive and human resources team undertake a workshop with members of the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble. 100% of the participants reported that they had enjoyed the workshop.

The digital work *Homefull* was screened at the Mental Health Services Conference held in Melbourne in August 2013 to an audience of 300 people.

"YES [I ENJOYED THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY], THE LOVELY ANIMATIONS AND THE WAY THE VIDEOS SLOTTED INTO THE STORY OF THE PERFORMANCE."

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK



PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

ASSOCIATE ARTISTS

The Associate Artists who work with us are a special kind of creative. They are people who are highly trained arts practitioners with a passion for community development. The work that we make is a testament to the skills of the Associate Artists as they work with the Ensemble to generate, enliven and distill the stories that we tell. Associate Artists learn and gain valuable skills and experience from the process of working with Milk Crate Theatre and the Ensemble. In 2013 we worked with 13 Associate Artists.

“[I HAVE A] FURTHER RESPECT FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ALWAYS ABLE TO DISPLAY TALENTS OR SKILLS IN EVERYDAY SITUATIONS.”

WELFARE PARTNER

Milk Crate Theatre is a unique theatre company as it works with both arts companies and welfare organisations to generate the work that we create and the programs that we run. In 2013 Milk Crate Theatre continued to cultivate an exciting mix of welfare and arts partners.

ARTS AND CULTURAL PARTNERS

We are committed to artistic excellence and appreciate that this comes through strong creative partnerships. Our 2013 arts partners included Accessible Arts, Carriageworks, PlayWriting Australia, Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir Street Theatre, Darlinghurst Theatre Company, Riverside Theatres, Griffin Theatre, NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art), Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE), Currency Press, City of Sydney Library and Parramatta Library.

WELFARE PARTNERS

Milk Crate Theatre works in the inner city and western suburbs of Sydney. We engage the Ensemble through the support of a complex network of welfare services. 2013 partners included: Parramatta Mission, Cardinal Freeman’s Centre, The Wayside Chapel, Hope Street Glebe, Kirketon Road Centre, MISHA (Mission Australia), Edward Eagar Lodge, Mission Australia Centre, Ozanam Learning Centre, Newtown Neighborhood Centre, NSW CAG, Homeless Connect, Kelly’s Cottage, Anglicare. We are also supported through our membership with Homelessness NSW.

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL RESULTS

In 2013 Milk Crate Theatre delivered an extensive program to an operating surplus of \$130,401. Total expenses were \$413,695 and total revenue was \$544,096.

WHERE ARE OUR FUNDS FROM?

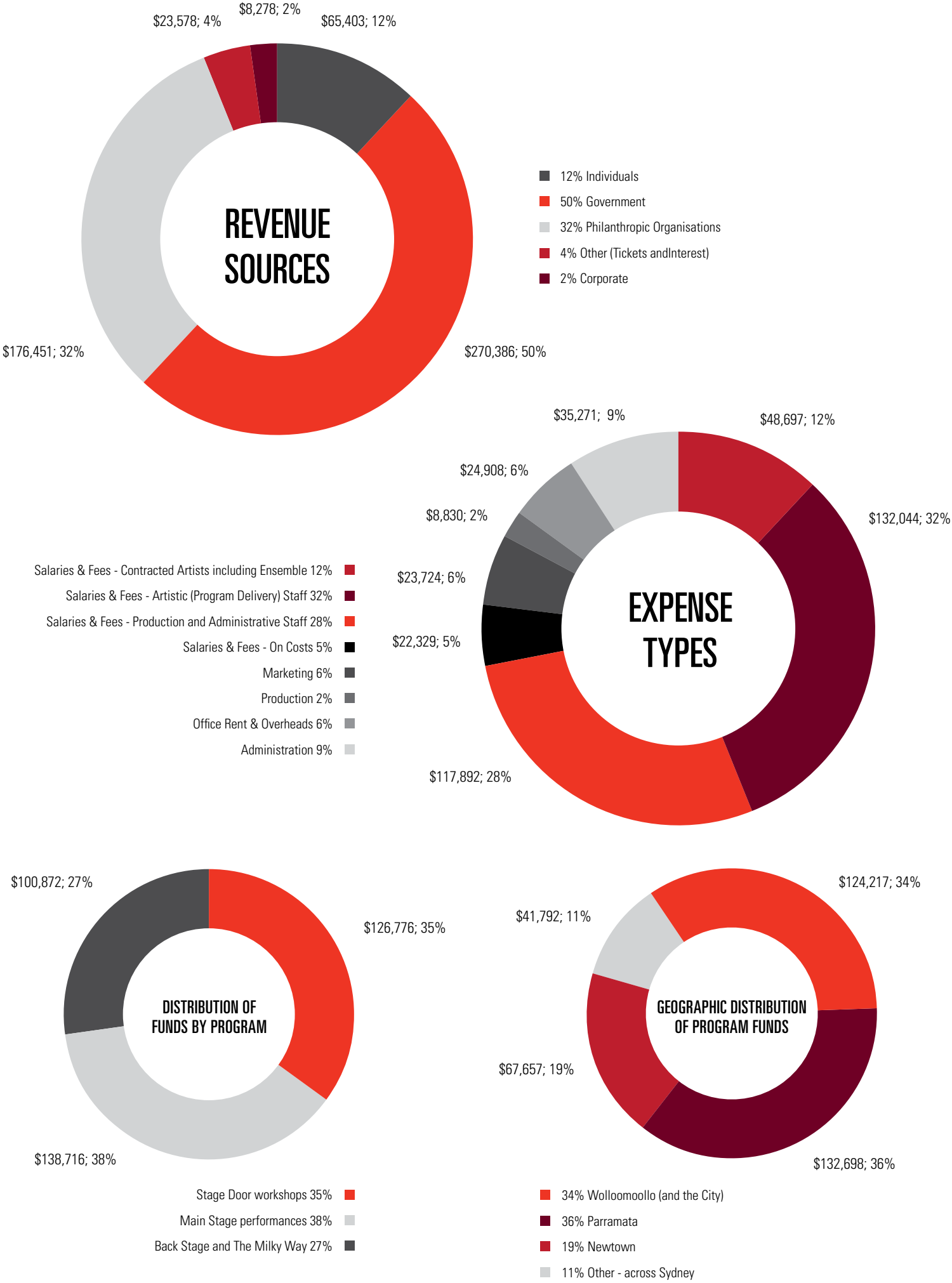
INCOME	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Individuals	\$800	\$50,350	\$50,000	\$51,490	\$54,156	\$64,509	\$65,403
Philanthropic	\$6,000	\$21,800	\$48,000	\$136,500	\$382,045	\$202,266	\$176,451
Corporate	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$38,103	\$13,836	\$8,278
Government	\$52,710	\$29,930	\$52,500	\$95,560	\$138,227	\$232,674	\$270,386
Other Income	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,500	\$11,696	\$30,161	\$23,578
TOTAL INCOME	\$59,510	\$102,080	\$150,500	\$289,050	\$624,227	\$543,446	\$544,096

WHERE DO WE SPEND OUR FUNDS?

Milk Crate Theatre’s spending focussed on the delivery of its four artistic program areas with a majority of costs attributed to wages including the payment of artists, arts workers, core artistic staff and the Ensemble.

Funds specifically allocated to program delivery totalled \$366,364, with \$47,331 provided to core organisational administration costs.

Milk Crate Theatre delivers its programs, some of which are focussed on geographic delivery, in ‘hubs’ across Sydney. Of these geographically oriented programs, Milk Crate Theatre funded a high proportion in the Woolloomoollo (City) hub, with nine projects delivered in this location. In 2013, more so than ever, Parramatta also saw a significant amount of activity with six key projects delivered, some existing and some through new programs like The Milky Way.



BOARD

Angus White (Chair), Matthew Zander (Treasurer until November 2013), Natalie Devlin, Elizabeth Giles (from July 2013 was on extended leave), Lenore Robertson, Julie Rosenberg (until April 2013), Michael Sirmai (Treasurer from November 2013) and Victoria Turner.

STAFF

Maree Freeman	CEO / Artistic Director
Siena Balakrishnan	CEO / General Manager
Beck Ronkson	Special Projects Manager (until December 2013)
Sarah Emery	Associate Director
Amrit Gill	Social Enterprise Manager (until August 2013)
Kate McBride	Creative Producer
Jocelyn Payne	Financial Consultant

ASSOCIATE ARTISTS

Sean Barker, Patrick Boland, Catherine Davies, Adam Dunn, Sarah Hone, Michael Moebus, Graeme Rhodes, Adam Rosenberg, Cristabel Sved, Gill Thomas, Craig Walsh, Kip Williams and Sarah Woods.

VOLUNTEERS

Samantha Chan, Stella Fang, Carmen Fu, Zoe Hogan, Lisa Hung, Sorrel Kesby, Carmel Mussap, Grace Partridge, Erica Roberts, Caitlin Scarr, Domenique Sherab, Emma Silvester, Tim T, Lisa Walton and Emma Zaia.

ENSEMBLE

Abdul, Adam C, Adrian, Akira, Alan, Alan C, Alan J, Alise, Alexander, Allan, Amanda, Angelee, Angie, Ann, Anne, Aru, Bella, Brad, Brendan, Brian, Bridget, Carla, Carmel, Cathy, Cecile, Chris, Christine, Colin, Craig, Dane, Danny, Damon, Dave, David F, Dean, Deb, Dennis, Fabi, Falah, Flor, Frank, George, Gillian, Gina, Glen, Goldele, Gordon, Graeme, Graeme B, Graham, Graham S, Gretta, Harry, Helen, Helene, Ian, Idaho, Jack, James, Jane, Jeanne, Joasia, Jo, John A, John B, John L, John M, John W, Jon, Josh, Julie, Kelly, Kennedy, Kenny, Kieran, Laurence, Leanda, Lisa, Lilly, Manuel, Margot, Mark, Mark B, Marla, Matthew, Michael G, Michael G, Michael L, Michael S, Michael W, Nadia P, Nathan, Nick, Nuku, Owen, Patricia, Pee-Wee, Peter, Prema, Rachel, Ray, Raylia, Rick, Rob, Rui, Said, Sara C, Sara D, Sash, Scott, Shannon, Simon, Siteni, Sonja, Stephanie, Squizzy, Thomas, Tim B, Tim T, Toby, Troy and Wayne





OUR SUPPORTERS



PRIVATE DONORS



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SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY
MEDICINE REVUE



W&A
JOHNSON FAMILY
FOUNDATION

MEDIA

In 2013, Milk Crate Theatre was featured in Parity Magazine (Council to Homeless Persons official publication) and Right Now Magazine (an Australian human rights advocacy publication) and the *Full Circle* five minute video was shown on Foxtel's Aurora Channel. We also worked with a publicist to secure articles in major national newspapers and coverage on Radio National. Further, Milk Crate Theatre's Facebook and Twitter channels continued to attract large numbers of new followers. We presented at a number of public events including Vivid Festival of Light, Music and Ideas.

YOUR HEART CREATES THE CHANGE

EACH YEAR MILK CRATE THEATRE CONNECTS WITH OVER 250 PEOPLE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS.

We use a fun and creative approach to build confidence and social connection; to support people to make plans; to assist people to explore possibilities for education or employment and ultimately to help people move away from homelessness.

OVER 95% OF OUR WORK IS GENEROUSLY FUNDED THROUGH GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

We rely on the generosity of individuals, philanthropists and businesses that believe in the creative potential of our stories.

BY PROVIDING A DONATION YOU BECOME A PART OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS.

Regular contributions allow us to better plan for the future and reach our long-term goals.

YOUR TIME IS ALSO PRECIOUS TO US. IF YOU HAVE SKILLS TO SHARE, THEN PLEASE CONTACT US AND GET INVOLVED AS A VOLUNTEER, A CORPORATE VOLUNTEER OR AS A FUNDRAISER.

We are always interested in discussing how you may like to get involved in supporting our Company. If you are thinking of contributing a gift above \$1000 we would love to discuss this with you further and talk about how this contribution benefits the work we do.

Please contact
Kate McBride, Creative Producer
kate@milkcratetheatre.com
or Tel: (02) 9331 0555.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Milk Crate Theatre acknowledges and respects the Indigenous peoples of Australia. We respectfully recognise that our activities take place on the land traditionally owned by the Gadagal people of the Eora nation and the Darug people.

ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Information can be provided in alternative formats upon request (i.e. Large print and electronic).

Contact us through the National Relay Service:

TTY users phone **133 677** then ask for **02 9331 0555**

Speak and listen (speech relay) users phone **1300 555 727** then ask for **02 9331 0555**

Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for **02 9331 0555**

INTERPRETING ASSISTANCE IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

The Translating and Interpreting Service, TIS
National: **131 450** and indicate which language you wish to use.

CONTACT US

P: (02) 9331 0555

M: 0427 199 193

E: mail@milkcratetheatre.com

W: www.milkcratetheatre.com

A: Suite 21/ 94 Oxford Street

Darlinghurst NSW 2010

PO Box 957, Darlinghurst NSW 1300

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