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Winter 2011

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# *iN hOUSE cHAT*

## **In\_house chat**

**'Now is the winter of our discontent' (Richard the Third)**

I have been seeing a lot of Shakespeare lately so this line immediately leapt into my head as I sat down to write my chat.

The thing is, that winter is truly upon us and I don't know about YOU but I like to do a lot of thinking about, 'stuff in general' in winter – it seems to go with the other thing that I love to do, which is to support my thought-fest with the continuous action of drinking lovely cups of coffee during the dark, cold days and nights that seem to suck me right down to the bottom of my doona!

On reflection perhaps my coffee obsession is something that is a constant in my life and maybe it is totally unrelated to what season I'm in –but I do love coffee!  
True I do!

**The lady doth protest too much (Hamlet)**

So, anyway about a month or so ago, over a coffee Tess (Waters) and I were having a rave about the 'new' work that she had

seen during the Melbourne Comedy Festival. Suddenly, she excitedly and completely out-of-the-blue identified this work as 'clown'.

'clown' I echoed do you think so?  
yes absolutely she replied as I inadvertently gulped down the last mouthful of my yummy latte.

**Out, damned spot! (Macbeth)**

Sans coffee I have to confess that I have always been somewhat confused, unclear and ambiguous about clown – it is not my strong suit, even though I have worked with some oddly brilliant and wildly creative clowns and with some 'clowns' who were really, just odd and not-so brilliant! Sadly, despite these mixed experiences clown has never become any clearer to me!

**"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude;" (As You Like It)**

So as the windy, cold, wet and dark days loomed into view, heralding that winter has indeed arrived– yes it is here! I found myself returning to my quintessential question - what is 'clown'?

**If you desire the spleen, and will laugh  
yourselves into stitches, follow me.  
(Twelfth Night)**

**I think that it is always best to let those in  
the know reveal all, so I asked a number of  
artists**

**the question: what is clown? You can read**

**what they reckon in the 'special feature'  
section - so snuggle in, get yourself a  
delicious, warm, frothy cup of liquid that  
is indeed a precious winter gift from the  
gods & goddesses and read on...**

**Hope you enjoy?**

**Parting is such sweet sorrow (Romeo and  
Juliet)**

**I have gotta get over this Shakespeare  
thing, it is starting to persecute me!  
gail x**

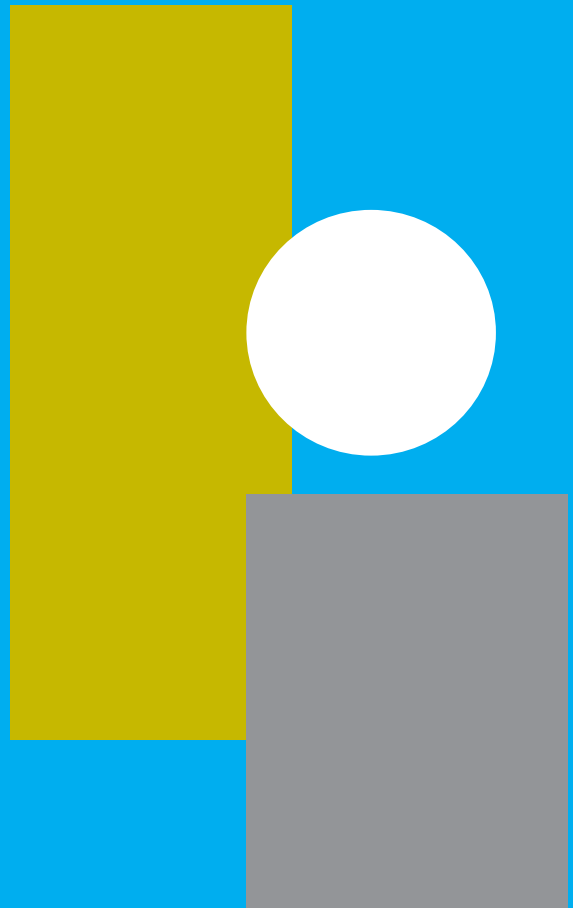


Image: Doogs @ Circus FloodAid Photographer: Jarrod Rose photography@jayrowtech.com



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'what is clown?'

## In Search of the Australian Clown or New Wave Clown by Tessa Waters



Image: Dr Brown (Philip Burgers UK) ©

### In Search of the Australian Clown or New Wave Clown?

It has been nearly a month since the Melbourne International Comedy Festival finished, marking the end of the Australian summer festival season. I feel like I am only just emerging from my cave, not fully recovered yet, but already looking towards the next show, the next grant, the next festival. Festival time creates such a surreal existence; living by night, constantly surrounded by like-minded artists all high on the adrenalin of daily performances and doing what we love for a living. Also a bit frayed at the edges from the always-present roller coaster of reviews, audience numbers, spruiking, applause, injuries and late night festival club adventures. This is nothing new to the carnie life and you get used to it, even hunger for it, and thrive on it. But something felt different this year; there was a sense of change and of

the new. Experiments were being conducted in a strange little basement at the end of a Melbourne laneway. The lab was Santoni Cabaretoni and the mad scientist at the helm was Dr Brown (UK), bringing together the weirdest, most awkward and hilarious artists in town. Audiences packed into the Tuxedo Cat, even the staff made sure they had a seat (but who was manning the bar??) to watch the anarchy on stage. The rules; no stand-up, try something new, and preferably make it physical, in other words; Clown.

Looking at the programs for the last few months of Australian festivals, Clown appears to be alive and well in Australian theatre, and audiences and critics alike seem to be lapping it up. And most of the work is being driven by a talented group of emerging artists, often with no circus background, or much in the way of formal clown training, but a passion for performing comedy with a strong physical language. The traditional rules and methods are giving way to experimentation and it has made me wonder; are we witnessing a 'New Wave' Clown movement in Australia? New Wave is a term used in regard to art movements in Film and Music in the 70's and 80's and especially to the Music, which emerged from Punk; a loose definition for the purposes of this article is; 'An avant-garde or experimental movement in the arts.'

So before I blatantly start sprouting about the fall of traditional clown, I should try and pin down what 'trad clown' is. This has however proved difficult, as there appears to be as many definitions as there are training schools. Is it mime? Is it buffoon? White face? Is it Lecoq? Is it Gaulier? Or is it trad/rodeo/Russian?

And does it really f\*cking matter if it makes you laugh anyway?

In search of an answer I asked a few of the locals who presented shows at the recent Adelaide

Fringe and Melbourne Comedy Festival to tell me why they were attracted to clowning?

Shane Adamczak (WA) with Ben Russell (Chicago), are Bingo-Bango, who only made short appearances at the experieMENTAL 'Santoni Cabaretoni' (SlowClap Productions), and in their 'real' lives perform more standard comedy i.e. a mix of stand-up, music and sketch. Bingo Bango stalked up onto the stage, seemingly coked up to their eyeballs, in ripped denim, dirty shirts, smeared make-up and big colourful hair and ran through what appeared at first to be some pretty traditional scenes, but then they would quickly take the captivated and slightly terrified audience to some dark, disturbing (but always hilarious) place. My personal highlight was the magical imagination adventure in a canoe that ended with us witnessing the slow and silent drowning of the duo. Their set up is simple, their joy is playing the obvious, and when you are watching them it sometimes feels like you are watching a bar room brawl, I wouldn't have it any other way.

**So Shane why Clown?**

"The make-up and costume mask allows us to hide behind or "inside" (as they would say) the character and explore the unreal, the abstract and the sometimes tasteless. If we were to do the exact same "material" without the make up/character, and play it straight as myself, it would just be terrible. You have to have that barrier..."

**And where did Bingo Bango pop up from?**

"I studied some clowning during my time at WAAPA and also spent a year in a Physical Theatre school, but truthfully most of Bingo Bango came from when Ben (my partner in clown crime) and I we lived together and we played these odd characters around the house, just trying to make each other laugh, which we did often. The risky part was seeing if it would make

an audience laugh, or just freak people out, or the ideal result, a little of both."

Joshua Ladgrove a.k.a Dr Professor Neal Portenza was nominated for the Golden Gibbo award for outstanding independent work at this year's Melbourne Comedy Festival, and was a regular at Santoni. He says he had no idea that he was 'doing clown' until someone said, " what's with all the make-up and the costume and the no talking stuff?" He didn't really have an answer, so he accepted the truth "I'm a Clown".

### So Josh, what is clown?

"(I think) clowning involves elements of the clown being a blank canvas. Playing with the audience, trying new directions, inventing in the moment, leaving oneself vulnerable, open, these seem to be elements of clowning, at least the elements to which I am drawn. It's not about making an audience laugh, or re-hashing rehearsed material ad nauseum. It's about finding things in the moment & playing with them and the audience tells you whether you should keep playing (by laughing)...there are always clowns around; kids, workmates, family, pets, people who take themselves too seriously, these people all contribute to my clown act."

Dr Brown (Philip Burgers) is a UK based clown who pushes his audiences right to edge of the awkward and the strange and sometimes he goes toppling off the cliff dragging them with him kicking and screaming with laughter. 2011 was his second year on the Australian festival circuit and he has definitely made his mark on audiences and fellow artists alike and this was most evident by the incredible attendance at his recent clown workshops. Word of mouth advertising and social media got the word out and over 90 clowns from all around Australia came to take part in his introductory classes in a Brunswick warehouse, during the Melbourne Comedy Festival. Talk about a clown hungry

community! Brown trained for a year at Gaulier School of Mime in London, but mostly appears to play and use the audience as a guide for his work, inviting chaos onto the stage and always embracing the absurd. I couldn't get a hold of Brown for this article as he's back in the UK, but Joshua Ladgrove recounted a recent experience that he thinks highlights his view of Clown;

"I was in Adelaide late one night with the master of modern clowning, Dr. Brown. We were walking from one venue to another and a drunk, toothless idiot was playing a single high note on a street busker's piano, out of time, and really, really enjoying himself. Phil (Dr. Brown) laughed, and with an odd mix of wisdom and flippancy, said "That's clown man, right there, he's a clown."

As a performer and self confessed Clown I can't write this article without putting my own two cents in, and besides that's what editorial is all about right? My own love of Clown started when I saw a simple series of scenes performed in Brisbane back in 2004 by Trent Baumann

(pre Birdmann) and Neridah Waters. I was so excited by the simplistic beauty that came out of the scenes, and how the joy of the performers was so present and not hidden from the audience, that I just got caught up in the fun and the story without a second thought. I did my first clown show six months later and haven't looked back since.

For me the basics of clown are being 100% present, playing around, talking with you body, allowing yourself to be vulnerable and always 'sending love' to your audience even when your slapping them in the face! I love the medium of clown as it allows you to take the language of your show to another more abstract level, inviting your audience to connect with you on a deeper level as they construct the meaning through images instead of just words, and on

Image: Tess Waters & Kai Smythe in Sexytime! ©



top of this clown makes them laugh (hopefully), allowing the message/theme/question I might be playing with to have more resonance.

‘Make em laugh and they will follow you anywhere.’

My clown is like this little kid who knows her lines and where the story must go but is just daring the audience to tip the cart over and invite chaos into the room to play.

So does this all boil down to a New Wave Clown movement in Australia? Is Clown really hot right now? And is there any use in trying to pin it all down? Why not instead, encourage it to push, pull, stretch, smash and tear at the meaning and definitions of comedy/theatre/circus/clown? Lets embrace this New Wave of Clown, with it’s unabashed, un-precious, prolific performers who want to have a conversation with their audiences and not just entertain them,

spray water in their faces, or humiliate themselves in the hope of a laugh or two!

I say let’s keep asking, keep laughing and keep falling over in our pursuit of the Australian clown. For in a world that is careening ever increasingly out of control, getting more and more where we are more emotionally isolated yet physically closer we need to send in the clowns to save the world!!

A quick shout out to the Australian Clowns that I didn’t get to speak with but are definitely worth keeping on your radar such as; *Alice Jane Cooper, Clare Bartholemew and Daniel Tobias, Vachael Spirason and Steph Brotchie of Slow-Clap Productions, Alex Gellman and Emily Minks of Porcelain Punch, Trent Baumann, Neridah Waters, Nicci Wilks, Annabel Lines and all the others that I know are out there, somewhere!*



## 'what is clown?'

Sue Broadway

Obviously barriers between art forms are increasingly breaking down - dancers are aerialists, actors are clowns, hybrid performances draw together and widely disparate elements can occur anywhere not just in tents or on stages. In this multifaceted world, do definitions matter?

Well yes, and for this reason. Circus sits near the bottom of the art form hierarchy. It is only in the past ten years or so that it has been mentioned in the same breath as Dance, Music, Theatre and Opera. This has come about only after a long struggle for recognition by practitioners and their supporters.

Clown, however, still has a way to go. The word 'Clown' still evokes for the vast majority images of Ronald McDonald, Andy Panda or Krusty. If we are to continue on the path of developing awareness for our work we have to be able to define what it is that we are doing.

So sticking my neck out even further, I offer the following starting points.

### TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF CLOWN

**CLOWN:** 1. (Noun) A comedy performance genre that draws on elements of mime,

pantomime, vaudeville, commedia, circus and theatre.

2. (Noun) A training methodology that uses techniques from all of the above plus children's games to develop performance presence, charisma and spontaneity.

3. (Noun) A person who performs in the genre.

4. (verb) to perform as a clown.

Clown can be either an entire performance or an element of a presentation in another genre such as theatre, dance, music or circus.

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

1. **Laughter.** The clown makes the audience laugh - more than 50% of the time. The laughter generated is a deep-stomached, open throated shout of joy. Not the secretive grin of superiority or the knowing chuckle of shared cultural knowledge or the suppressed sneer of derision.

2. **Audience interaction.** The clown plays in a world where there is no fourth wall, where the audience and the performer share the same space and where the actions of the



audience can impact on the performance.

**3. Cultural Universality.** Clowning, like facial expression, is a universal language that can be understood in all cultures. Clowns from Papua New Guinea, China, Bali, Russia, Australia

or anywhere else can all perform and be largely understood in all the nations of the world.

**4. Clowns speak to the best in us.** They ignite in the viewer a deeper understanding of our shared human condition. They call out to our vulnerability, to our confusion, to our willingness to laugh at ourselves and to our compassion.

**5. The clown is an inventor.** Clowns make their own material and perform in a state of continual alteration.

There may be other forms of performance that embrace these five qualities, but in the absence of even one of them there is no clown. There may be comic character, or satire, or parody. But not clown.

**Please discuss....**



## 'what is clown?'

Dr. Ira Seidenstein  
www.iraseid.com

Clown can be said, to be a direct pathway in person-to-person communication. Clown is playfulness in performance.

Clown is not limited to:

- a) being funny
- b) wearing a red nose or any particular costume or guise
- c) using a particular skill
- d) limited to any particular style of performance.

A clown can be anything, any definition using any skill, aesthetic, or sensibilities. I have performed nearly all types of clown in virtually all types of environments.

My first clown act saw me busking, every weekend in pubs, then I did, a year of 4 nights-a-week in a male strip show (burlesque/boylesque). I have toured with 3 major Shakespearian plays (Hamlet, Richard III, The Merchant of Venice) playing clown roles in all three plays. I have played at least 75 clown characters including the White Clown and the Dead Clown (lead role) with Cirque du Soleil.

As a teacher of clown with 35 years experience I do not define clown as that immediately reduces the aura of possibility and potential for both the novice or veteran clown. My workshops attract a range of people some of whom have over 20 years with clown, are clown teachers and directors themselves.



Image: Ira, Valentyna, Grigor Cirque du Soleil (2007) ©

Some are 18 and have 'no' experience with clown or formal or classical acting skills. Yet all of them, IF they are allowed to genuinely explore the work in a safe environment will begin to define 'clown' for themselves.

As a director, I have long known that it is what I choose NOT to say that is most potent. This is even truer when it comes to clown. In some cases, when one is clowning for a specific purpose say Clown Doctors (I was briefly the national trainer) or for circus clown (my initial apprenticeship was to the Boss Clown of Ringling Circus) or when acting a clown role

in a conservative rendition of a Shakespearian play, then you need to discuss what the various specifics would be for those clowns. But to define clown in the general teaching process is a manipulation of the learner for control by the 'teacher'.

In Sweden during one year I trained 26 young professionals in my theatre and acting method, which includes clown. I went on a mission to meet Scandinavia's uber clown Nils Poppe who was in his late 80s. It was an astonishing and inspiring 3 hours when I left and returned to my troupe of actors I said, 'I can tell you where a clown comes from if you can tell me where a wild flower comes from?'

Clown is a movement or a phenomenon that has always existed. I went to New Zealand (and Australia) to teach clowning and physical theatre. In New Zealand Michael 'River the Mime' Lynch wanted me to develop his teaching of clown. Shortly after arriving in New Zealand another clown teacher told me, 'we don't have a clown tradition in New Zealand!' I said nothing to this absurd fallacy. But I did go and meet several of the most remarkable clowns including Russell 'Byko' Middlebrook who was in his 80s and still performing, athletically, in Ridgeway's Circus. Byko and I became friends and he became a type of mentor to me.

I met an astonishing roustabout style clown who was about 21 years old who even clowned in the lions' cage! There was another highly skilled clown in his 50s who had been entertaining children and families for over 30 years. Not to mention the humor found in the Maori culture as well as the incredible GREAT clowning of NZ's master clowns The Topp Twins.

Of course now we see the virtuosity of clown portrayed by Flight of the Concorde.

Sometimes it is the clown teachers and their so-called definitions of clown that should be one of the first things to be removed from the quest to answer the valid question "What is clown?". It is similar to the questioning of the unemployed youth in Spain at this very

moment. Their question is 'are our leaders really capable of leading us'? The authority of clown teachers should be questioned.

My first visit to NICA was simply to see the building and to meet a few of the staff. One student walked across the full length of the huge studio and asked me, 'are you a clown?' Yes. 'Are you going to teach us?' Maybe, someday! That student was Skye Gellman one of the most unique and profound clowns. He saw a clown in me. He defined me by observation. Perhaps definition preceded? I don't know.

One of my early clown characters was 'Dunno'. He knew nothing about everything. Another clown 'The Battler' tried obsessively to know everything about his three fields of reality, he failed at every junction, except he caused laughter and tears in the audience. My boylesque character 'The Comic Strip' could never succeed in getting his clothes off. For a year in that environment I changed the ambience in the room from lust to love via pathos.

We live in a time of some of the most incredible clowns including the Absolutely Fabulous, Jim Carey, Russell Brand, Sex In The City, Little Britain and of course, CHRIS LILLEY. Chris is way beyond funny. He is a clown in the truest and purest sense. Besides being funny and brilliant and a highly skilled actor, he has something to say. Actually he has a lot to say and it is said with every minute body movement including his varied eye and neck movements, which are different in each of his characters. But he is preceded by his elders which include, The Auntie Jack Show (on before he was born), Max Gillies from the original Pram Factory (before Chris was born), and the duet Reg Livermore and Nancye Hayes (musical theatre stars) currently on tour with their obscure black comedy 'Turns'. You might not like it, but it is two great clowns defining clown in their own black way and why not!

Clown is a great open field where even the most unqualified teachers can teach and define clown in a way that only they and not the learner is empowered.

Ironically clown teaches us about our inherent creativity, as human beings and it cannot be limited by self-perpetuating definitions.

The idea behind the question posed by Gail is to open up new processes and discussions, not to nail it down. So my contribution, at this moment in time is to fire a few canon ball shots across the bow and to warn against definitive answers to 'what is clown?'

I simply offer and repeat that one of the many definitions is my anti-definition and my reply (though not an answer) is 'I can tell you where a clown comes from if you can tell me where a wild flower comes from.'

**What is clown? What is not clown?!**



Image: Jane 'Zophitie' and Kristen 'Femela' in Chaplin's Eye ©

## the mentoring project

*introducing 5 young women who are here to stay...*

the race is on – September 2010

The Theatre Board initiates a Cultural Leadership Program, which aims to: support Oz organisations to deliver a range of activities and programs that targets the development of leadership skills and the distribution of leadership, within the theatre sector.

The Board states that: *Cultural Leadership is inspiring, building, sustaining.*

And that, 'a cultural leader is the driving force behind the creation and pursuit of a set of artistic, organisational or sector goals. Developing cultural leadership skills is about building individuals and organisations capacity to:

- Effectively lead colleagues and/or sector areas through extended periods of experimentation and growth
- To think and work strategically toward long-term goals
- To manage, motivate and inspire colleagues
- To develop fortitude and problem-solving skills in the face of adversity
- To be financially resourceful and responsible
- To understand, analyse and respond to the complexities of the Australian theatre scene and its relationship with broader communities.

I read the OZCO's brief and immediately I think of the following words of wisdom by Margaret Wheatley (2002) from Supporting Pioneering

Leaders as Communities of Practice.

**Where have all the leaders gone?**

There is a well-noted and alarming trend reported throughout the world--a desperate shortage of good leaders and talented professionals. These shortages appear at a time when the world is reeling from years of failed leadership. Leaders either have struggled valiantly with ineffective means, such as bureaucracy and command and control, or they have held onto power through brutal and corrupt means.

We are not yet free of this legacy of bad leadership, of abuses of power and profound disrespect for the human spirit. As this era grows more turbulent, some leaders are becoming desperate in their grasp for power. Daily, we learn of greater corruption, more extremes of abuse, more belligerent behaviours on the part of leaders.

Many individuals and organizations, in increasing numbers, are attempting to intervene to resolve the most pressing problems of this time: health, human rights, poverty, hunger, illiteracy, environmental issues, democracy. Far too many of these well-intentioned efforts are subverted by the lack of talented leadership.

Money for projects disappears because of mismanagement, inexperience, or corruption. Change efforts fail because of inappropriate implementation processes. In developing countries we say there's a leadership vacuum.

In developed countries, we ask, "Where have all the leaders gone?"

So the need for new leaders is urgent. We need new leadership in communities everywhere. We need leaders who know how to nourish and rely on the innate creativity, freedom, generosity, and caring of people. We need leaders who are life-affirming rather than life-destroying. Unless we quickly figure out how to nurture and support this new leadership, we can't hope for peaceful change. Thus, new leadership becomes a central and pressing challenge of our time.'

### Flash-Back November 2008

Bec Coen and I meet for the first time and she suggests that it would be fantastic if ACAPTA implemented a mentoring project. I am in total agreement with her but I am not quite sure if and how we can do it. But I keep thinking about IF we could actually manage a mentoring project and then as if by magic an opportunity comes along - 2 years after Bec's initial idea and all I have to do is write a really awesome funding application!!!!!!!

I am totally under the pump but hey nothing ventured nothing gained – as they say! Who said that!

### And then they arrive June 2011

'In the winter of my discontent', we start the project. Allow me to present to you 5 young women who are firmly entrenched in ACAPTA's inaugural 'cultural leadership', mentoring project. Loud cheers and a drum roll please for:



Image: Ella Holmes ©

**Ella Holmes** is a founding member of Trick Circus where she participated in performance making, tour management, writing funding applications and organizing marketing & promotional campaigns. At 17, Ella attended the Lady Somers Camp Youth Leadership program and since then she has returned to the camp as a voluntary facilitator and team member. This experience has given Ella critical insights in to the importance of leadership, teamwork & community. Ella has a Diploma of Arts in Small Companies and Community Theatre (Swinburne University TAFE). She has worked as a circus coach for Little Devils Circus for 3years and this has helped her to share her passion for circus with other young people.

In 2008 she was employed by ArtPlay and SIGNAL (City of Melbourne) to organize workshops by professional artists for young people,

coordinate the quarterly 'ArtPlay Cabarets', and facilitate the FReeZA committee. Most recently Ella joined 'La Mama for Kids' as the program coordinator where she works with emerging and established performance companies to present and promote monthly shows for children at La Mama Theatre & La Mama's Courthouse.

**Luth Wolf** is a circus artist, administrator and events manager from Upwey, Victoria. 'I have been involved in youth circus from the age of 6 with Coonara Community Circus, who later became RUCCIS. In 2009, I became the first Administrative Manager of RUCCIS and I have been running the company ever since. I have had the opportunity to teach circus skills to people of all ages and abilities, and I have seen how effectively circus works as a social, mental, emotinal and physical support tool.

I have been heavily involved with the Melbourne Juggling Convention since its inception in 2007 as the front of house and volunteer coordinator, and in 2010 I was asked to co-run the convention in preparation for Christian Parr's (founding coordinator) move to Tasmania. 'I have a Bachelor of Arts in Classical Mythology and Event Management from Monash and Victoria Universities.

Currently I am coordinating a tour for the newly formed, Solid State Circus' and I am involved in initiating a national safety and accreditation project for street performers (PASS).

**Alex Talamo** began her training in performance when she helped establish, the award-winning Trick Circus. 'What inspired me about circus was the collaborative nature of it; the



Image: Luth Wolf ©



Image: Alex Talamo ©



ensemble worked as a family; training, creating performances / shows, and running the business component of the company. Learning was structured by adult mentors, but guided by our interests and talents. Trick was an intense and inspiring experience and I was given the opportunity to learn how a 'cooperative' company worked – creatively, legally and financially - everything I ever needed to know to establish and run my own arts company. I created, Heist Productions to reinvent narrative theatre, to go beyond the backlash of 'anti-story' by creating work that uses highly stylized physical choreography to move audiences through the action. My cultural identity drives my passionate and inquisitive political reflection of the world. My father migrated to Australia just after Argentina's "Dirty War", and my interest in political science, including pursuing a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University (Political Science and Philosophy), has been informed by his personal accounts and my own experiences of Argentina. My politics always informs my art making.

**Bec Cooen** began her career at 12 with the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. Whilst she was in the 'fruities' she toured internationally and nationally and had access to teaching and directing experiences. After graduating from the FFFC, Bec completed a Degree in Contemporary Arts at Deakin University. Bec is a freelance artist who teaches and provides arts access to young people who are in difficult situations or who live in remote areas. She has extensive teaching experience with: Circus Oz, Kindred Circus, The Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Trick Youth Circus, Westside Circus and Tangentyere Youth Circus (Alice Springs). In 2008, Bec and 3 friends joined forces to create R.E.A.C.H, (Restoring Empowerment Across Culture and



Image: Bec Cooen ©

Humanity), a small project based company that promotes positive life skills through circus with some of the world's most underprivileged young people. 'In 2009 we embarked on our first trip to Cambodia where we worked at Epic Arts with young adults with disabilities and at M'loptapang, a centre for street children, which provides free work skills and a positive & safe environment'. In 2008-09, Bec was the Artistic Director for Outback Theatre for Young People. She relocated to Balranald (a remote town, which had been devastated by drought) to set up and run a circus program. The project produced a spectacular (and huge) physical performance, which explored the community's water stories; 75 children and young adults from culturally mixed backgrounds performed the show.

Bec wants to create opportunities and work that empowers, excites and unites participants, celebrates diversity and generates positive outcomes.

**Terri Cat Silvertree** is most interested in how art creates ideas and how ideas shape the world. 'I grew up in Cirkidz, which was a very socially aware company. I appreciate how valuable this experience was as it taught me that it is really important to have something to say in your circus work. Also, I am now able to fully appreciate the artists that we worked with –as they were leading circus, dance and theatre artists. Two artists who had a huge impact on my development were Ursula Beaumont (a director and an ex-Cirkid herself) and Roz Hervey (a dancer, choreographer and physical theatre artist). I was a very motivated 17 year old so I created a circus company, applied for funding, received it and my show won awards and got good reviews. In 2006, whilst producing and performing in a season of circus shows, which I also directed, I worked with the Candy Butchers during their Adelaide Fringe Season of 'A Circus Sweetmeat'. This was one of my most valuable experiences as I gained networking skills and insights in to how small companies devise work and survive. In 2007, I directed and performed in a circus show called 'Menagerie', which won the Adelaide Fringe Festival Award for Best Circus Show by an Emerging Ensemble. In 2008 I co-created a contemporary performance entitled Scattered Tacks (with Skye & Alex Gellmann) which de-constructed circus whilst revealing things about humanity. The end product debuted in the 2008 Melbourne Fringe Festival and won the Village Award for Most Outstanding Production. Over the next two years we performed in Australia and Europe. I have always tried to learn from as many people and places as possible so I think that the ACAPTA cultural leadership project is an amazing opportunity for me, as a young, indie artist!'

Engage with our awesome mentorees - find out where they are, what they are doing and how they are wrestling with the big questions. Check out the mentoring project blog @ [www.acapta.org.au](http://www.acapta.org.au) (coming soon).



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Images: Ivan Smith ©



support Ivan - make the world a better place

Dear Gail,

Some thoughts and ideas that I would like to share...

Circus performers know all too well that the physical, mental and emotional strain that one puts oneself through to follow this career is massive. We do it because we love it, but when the element of choice is taken away, it becomes blatant abuse. Add to this poor living conditions and human beings who are bought and sold like products, and a hideous picture emerges.

The following is an excerpt from an email that I received recently:

'Working along side UK professionals the Esther Benjamin Trust have put together a rehabilitation and vocational training program that comprises of hugely talented young people who have been rescued from Indian circuses. This project was born when some of the former circus girls expressed a desire to develop the skills that they were once forced to learn into something for their own pleasure. Beyond being a cathartic experience for the performers, it also became clear that with support and training they had the potential to forge careers as professional performers: Now Nepal's first ever contemporary circus company has been born- Sapana: Company of Dreams.

The young people who have chosen to participate in Sapana are now receiving regular, high standard training, and they have already debuted in their first show. The coming year will see Sapana performing this show internationally!

At first it was hard to believe that I was reading about circus trafficking! The buying and selling of children who were to be enslaved as circus performers is a real industry, and not merely the plot of some dark absurdist film. I read and reread the email.

### And then I asked if I could help?

To be a part of something truly inspiring, to experience a facet of society that normally is hidden from us, to live amongst the soaring Himalayas, and to use my skills for a genuinely good cause, these opportunities don't come along so often.

My heart leapt when I was offered the chance to work with Sapana as a volunteer trainer. And then a few days later they told me that some key funding had fallen through and my hopes came crashing down.

But I steadied myself: everything would be ok, I still had the gig, I just had to somehow get the money together for the flight, visa and vaccinations.

Then you suggested I host a fundraiser! And I thought that we could raise funds not just for me, but also for all trainers who maybe want to come over and help out.

Ok, I thought, I have 3 weeks to organize this fundraiser and make a new show with Skye, before I fly to Nepal. Why not?

What we lack in time we will make up for in passion and zeal. And besides, in my new home in Brisbane there is an amazing community of talented, innovative and supportive circus

performers. So at the very least it will be awesome to try and get everyone together for a great cause and a good party.

### So the fundraiser is happening on:

Sunday the 19th June

At Turnstyle 10 Laura St, Highgate Hill

It will begin at 5p.m. and go well into the evening.

Turnstyle is a multi-purpose community hub: The crew there are really something, they run a bike workshop, keep honey bees, have a pizza oven, make home brew, have a band stage and a cinema and the list goes on. They're always happy to host a fundraiser for a good cause. There will be performances, films, food, drinking and music. It will be half-organized and half-renegade. There is a little stage and an expansive backyard, so if anyone wants to do something, or say some words, or play some music, get in touch with me ([ivan.boom@gmail.com](mailto:ivan.boom@gmail.com)) and I'll try and make room for you.

Sorry aerialists, next time I have a fundraiser I'll put it somewhere where we can rig.

For people who can't make it to the fundraiser but who would still like to help out, you can make a donation into this bank account:

Account name: Mr Ivan N Smith

BSB: 063 122

Account number: 10653619

And to my wonderful Melbourne friends who have already offered support, moral and otherwise, thank you so much.

For more information about the Esther Benjamin Trust, go to [www.ebtrust.org.uk](http://www.ebtrust.org.uk)

For other questions or comments, contact me on [ivan.boom@gmail.com](mailto:ivan.boom@gmail.com)

Thanks heaps  
Ivan

**Editors' Note:** Ivan Smith is a circus performer, puppeteer and general manipulator of objects. He has sprung forth from the overactive imagination of The Red Button, a company dedicated to presenting new work through collaboration and experimentation.



Image: Bingo Bango (Ben & Shane) ©

# What's Happening in... | the ACT

## Warehouse Circus on the Road by Aleshia Flanagan

**For the first time since its founding in 1990, Canberra's Warehouse Circus is going on tour!**

**In October this year, a bus filled with enthusiastic Warehouse Circus troupe members will sweep regional NSW. First stop is getting pumped with professional training from the Flying Fruit Fly Circus in Albury.**

**The tour will then continue on to perform two major theatre shows packed full of fun and thrills in Cootamundra and Young.**

**But that's not all! Passionate troupe members will be bursting into multiple schools to deliver shows and workshops, allowing regional students to experience the joy of circus first-hand.**

**After a week of buzzing through regional NSW, the tour will return home for a HUGE Grand Finale of 5 Major shows over 3 nights in Belconnen Community Theatre.**

## circus floodAid



Image: Curtain Call Circus FloodAid Photographer: Jarrod Rose (photography@jayrowtech.com) ©

Dear Gail, ACAPTA, Deb and all the stunning and thoughtful members of our circus and physical theatre community who were involved in the post flood fundraisers,

I am writing to thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for thinking of us at this challenging time, and for organising a fundraiser to help us out post-flood.

We are deeply touched and greatly humbled, to know that there are people out there in our community who are thinking of us and care.

The cheque you gave us was for so much more than we could have imagined. The things we have been able to buy with this money have already made an enormous difference to our new home.

As a direct result of the money raised and presented to the Wilde Family (currently comprised of Mali-Rose Rhiana Jay, Abbey Church & I) we are now be able to purchase 2 bed bases , 1 book case, 1 mattress and a miscellany of soft warm and comfortable things. Oh - and a dish rack and baking pans!

Not only has the money made it possible for us to replace lost items in our household but it has greatly lifted our spirits - we are deeply touched and energised, by this gesture.

Please can you pass on our thanks to the members of the circus community who gave their time, skills, thought and energy to running the two fund raisers - and also for thinking of Rudi, Tess and I in particular.

Words fail to truly express...but...

Thank you for thinking of us  
Thank you for caring  
Thank you for being there  
and  
Thank you for giving us beds & bases!!

With Gratitude,

Allie, Rhiana, Mali and Abbey Xxxx

Thank you ACAPTA and our stunning circus community - from the Wilde Family

Image: Sosi Wogayehu Circus FloodAid Photographer: Jarrod Rose (photography@jayrowtech.com) ©



Image: Dan Rabin & Rudi Circus FloodAid Photographer: Jarrod Rose (photography@jayrowtech.com) ©



Most sincere thanks from Rudi, Tess and mini me's to ACAPTA and the Melb/Adelaide peeps for flood donation. Received gratefully last night from the impeccably well-heeled Gail Kelly. Big thanks to Flipside also for hosting with yummy food and beverages. We are surrounded by a wonderful community. Love. Tess x

Image: Chris and Sam Circus FloodAid Photographer: Jarrod Rose (photography@jayrowtech.com) ©



Image: Miss Ellaneous Circus FloodAid Photographer: Jarrod Rose (photography@jayrowtech.com) ©



**STOP PRESS | STOP PRESS | STOP PRESS | STOP PRESS**

*'I remain just one thing, and one thing only, and that is a clown.'*

*It places me on a far higher plane than any politician.' Charlie Chaplin*

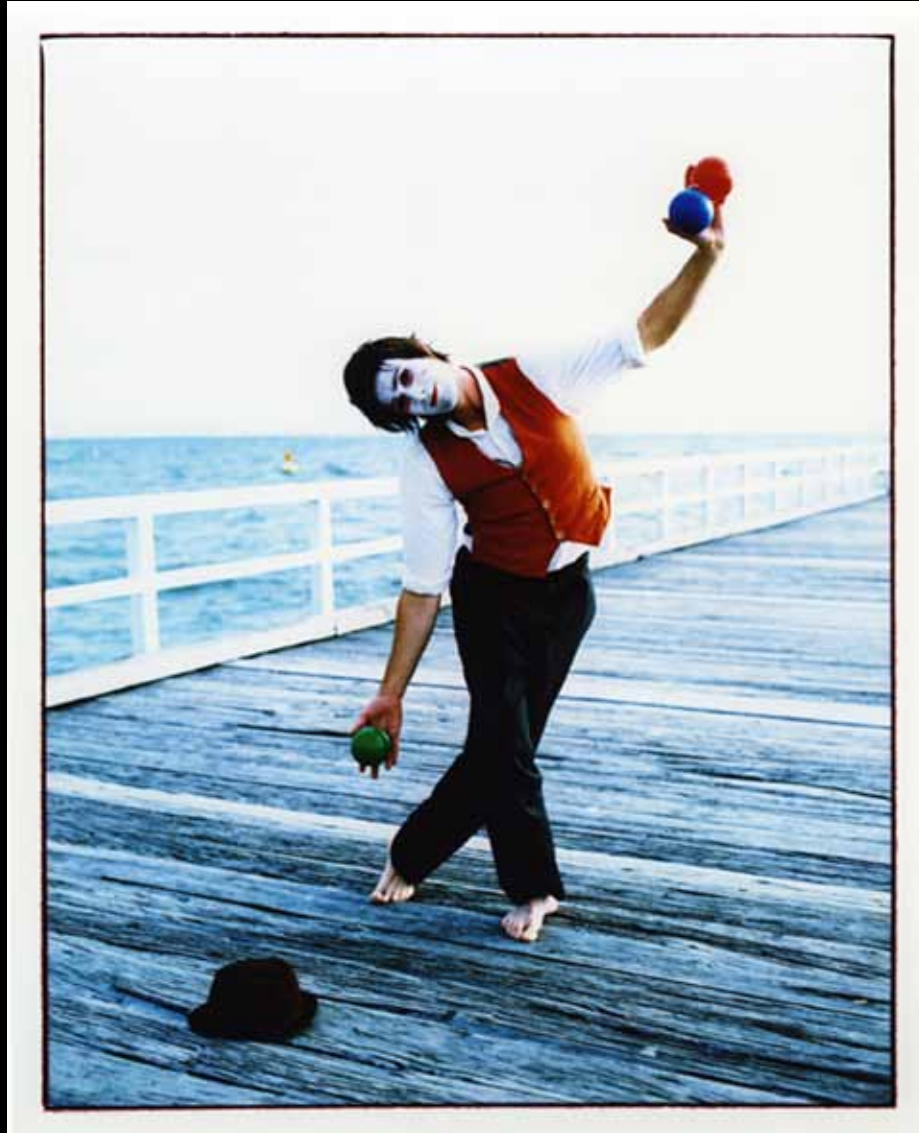


Image: Ivan Smith ©

**LATE | BREAKING | NEWS | LATE | BREAKING | NEWS**

*'circus makes the world a better place'*

*Give some \$ so that Ivan can get to Nepal.*

**FUNDRAISER: 19 JUNE**

*At TURNSTYLE: 10 Laura St, Highgate Hill Brisbane*

*Cranks up at 5 p.m. and will end well into the wee hours of the AM!*



**ARTS HOUSE**



**ARTS VICTORIA**



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