



THEATRE KIMBERLEY



Annual Report | 2024



Theatre Kimberley acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future, and thank them for sharing their culture, knowledge and stories.

We recognise First Nations peoples' continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful region, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain the images and names of people who have passed away.



Lower primary students at Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay, recite an Acknowledgement to Country in Nyul Nyul with the support of traditional owner, Doris Victor (right). Photo by Robak Photography.

Our Work

Theatre Kimberley creates high-quality arts opportunities with and for Kimberley communities.

We work in a highly collaborative and responsive way, with community connections and engagement key to the design and delivery of our programs and performances.

Our Vision

Thriving, creative, connected Kimberley communities.

Our Purpose

To create high-quality arts opportunities that contribute to local stories and culture, increase skills and employment, improve wellbeing, and strengthen communities.

Our Priorities

Our Strategic Plan 2024 - 2026 identifies four priorities:

Vibrant arts experiences and skills development

Reach and accessibility

Strong relationships and partnerships

Sustainable, socially and culturally responsible organisation

We are guided by our commitment to:

Artistic and organisational excellence
Community, creativity and connection
Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility



Co-director Nel Simpson (left) leads stilts rehearsals for *Small But Spectacular*. Photo by Meredith Bell.

Our Team

Theatre Kimberley Board of Directors

Board Executive

Chair, Justine Johnston
Vice Chair, Lily Chin
Co-Secretaries,
Georgia Deguara & Bex Youdale
Treasurer, Wendy Burton

Board Members

Chris Hill
Lesley Marsh
Robyn Stacey
Naomi Brown



Theatre Kimberley Staff

TK Leadership

Artistic Director, Meredith Bell

Executive Officer Business, Jael Johnson

Artistic Program

Franque Batty
Will Tredinnick
Eleanora Angeli
Kath White

Operations

Julie Borsboom
Tara Gower
Esse Deves
Raphaella Raaber
Cathi Rigby

Teen Trainers

Molly Bell
Frances Anstey
Aella Westlake
Poppy Youdale
Elliot Beurteaux
Anna Gatt

Key Contractors

Chris Hill
Nel Simpson
Lesley Marsh
Georgia Deguara

Tracy Lowe
Claudia Alessi
Bonnie Blewitt
Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman

Jake Silvestro
Eduardo Maher
Jacob Gregory
Ben Kotovski-Steele

A massive THANK YOU to all our amazing volunteers.
Theatre Kimberley's success is only possible because of your generosity,
skills and commitment.

Justine Johnston, Chair

Theatre Kimberley's Year - A Celebration of the 'Grassroots Extraordinary!'



Dear Theatre Kimberley Members,

I am filled with both pride and gratitude as I reflect on another year of progress, collaboration, and transformation. This year I would like to focus our celebration around the theme "Grassroots Extraordinary" — a fitting reminder of the powerful role that each of you plays in the ongoing work of our organisation.

At our core, Theatre Kimberley has always been about empowering individuals and communities, and this year, it has been abundantly clear that the heart of our success lies in our grassroots efforts. From the smallest acts of kindness to the biggest initiatives, each step forward has been driven by the energy, dedication, and passion of our members, volunteers, staff, and supporters.

Some of the extraordinary news we share this year comes directly from the ground up — stories of local impact that have sparked a ripple effect, changing lives and inspiring others to join our mission.

Whether it's Sandfly Circus, Bust Out Cabaret, our Outreach programs, the professional development of our teams and staff, or the countless hours put in by unsung heroes, our work has never been more relevant or necessary.

As you read through our annual report and the highlights of the year, you will see how far we've come. But more importantly, you will see how the collective power of our grassroots network has created real, tangible change in the lives of those we serve. From the young leaders emerging from our programs to the volunteers dedicating their time and resources, the foundation of our organisation is stronger than ever.

We are excited about what lies ahead and the continued opportunities for growth and impact. But we also recognise that this would not be possible without each of you — our community of members, supporters, and champions. Your involvement is the heartbeat of our mission, and we are deeply thankful for your unwavering commitment.

As we look back on 2024, let us reflect on the incredible work we've accomplished together and look forward to the extraordinary opportunities that lie ahead. Together, we will continue to make a lasting difference, one grassroots effort at a time.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We are honoured to have you with us as we continue to build, grow, and serve.

Jael Johnson, Executive Officer Business



2024 was another huge year for Theatre Kimberley. Alongside our much-loved Broome shows, we delivered a record number of outreach projects in schools and communities across the Kimberley.

Behind everything we do - whether it's a performance, residency, or workshop - is a team working

tirelessly to secure funding, manage budgets, and handle administration, insurance, governance, evaluation, logistics, and partnerships. You won't see these people called up on stage for applause or flowers. You may not even know who they are - but their work is vital to TK's success.

This includes our hardworking staff, dedicated board members (many who also volunteer for TK in multiple ways) and invaluable volunteers, including those who have been with TK since the beginning! From child wranglers, box office, stage crew, bar staff, costume makers, and more, these volunteers play essential roles in making our shows and programs a success.

Financially, we made solid progress, building reserves and staff capacity, while keeping our programs accessible and high-quality.

2024 marked our first year receiving Arts Organisation Investment Program (AOIP) funding from the WA Department of Culture and the Arts. Despite previous unsuccessful attempts, we persevered, and are now funded by this highly sought after grant until 2027.

A sincere thank you to all our funders. Your generous support makes it possible to inspire creativity and build connections across the Kimberley, where access to the arts is limited, but the impact is profound.

To everyone who came to a show, became a member, or donated - thank you. Every contribution, big or small, makes a difference.

Staffing remains a key challenge for small, regional arts organisations. We deeply appreciate our dedicated team and keenly feel their absence when they move on. This year we farewellled remote Admin Support Raphaela Raaber, and Arts Program Assistant Ele Angeli, who both went travelling overseas. In 2023-24, TK was very lucky to have journalist and teacher, Esse Deves as our Media and Communications Officer. With increasing hours at ABC Kimberley and a young child, Esse stepped away to focus on journalism and her family.

A heartfelt thank you to all - we deeply appreciate your time, skills and dedication, and look forward to seeing what's next for you!

Finally, we'd love to involve all of you in celebrating **Theatre Kimberley's 30th year anniversary in 2025!** Expect to hear more soon!

To everyone who has supported us this year - thank you for helping to strengthen and sustain vibrant and accessible arts in the Kimberley. Time and again over many years, we've seen arts and creativity build confidence, connection, and resilience.

Theatre Kimberley is, at its heart, a community, and it's the dedication of our people—staff, volunteers, board members, funders, and supporters—that keeps us moving forward.

We're so grateful for your support - we couldn't have done it without you. Here's to another incredible year ahead!

Artistic Program 2024



Meredith Bell, Artistic Director



Hello Friends,

We are excited to share the successes of our busy year in the pages that follow. After an unprecedented season of major performances in 2023, our focus this year shifted to deepening community engagement through smaller projects, and responding

to the growing demand for meaningful arts experiences in remote communities. This included building on previous performing arts engagement in the Pilbara and the Fitzroy Valley, maintaining existing partnerships and developing new ones. It involved planning a new series of Big Country Puppets engagements with Aboriginal Ranger groups right across the Kimberley from Bidyadanga to Wyndham, to celebrate cultural and environmental values and encourage First Nations storytelling. It involved returning to communities who have requested annual residencies and exploring what can make them even better.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who help our projects come to life. Every name you see listed in this report is one of those people, but there are so many more! Freelance artists, technicians and other project staff go above and beyond the call of duty, throwing enormous physical and creative energy at the projects we deliver. Our community partners also hold essential space for these projects, preparing their community for our visits and communicating with us regularly from the planning stages through to project delivery. These are often staff members of remote schools or organisations who already have enormous workloads and responsibilities. Lastly, I'd like to thank our Board of Directors and our community volunteers. We are blessed with a kind, generous and talented network of people who give up evenings and weekends to attend meetings or raise funds and who support the successes of our local emerging artists in countless ways. We hope the energy and joy created by our projects fuel the efforts you have contributed. Many thanks.

January | Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus at the WA Circus Festival and International Training Project



Sandfly cast and crew pose with family after their last *Framed!* rehearsal on the grounds of the WA Circus Festival in Karridale. Photo by Pip Kelly.

An enthusiastic community of Broome circus lovers converged in Karridale for WA's renowned circus festival and masterclass training program. Held in a paddock in the state's southwest, the festival is a great incubator for emerging circus artists and other performance enthusiasts. Keen children, youth and adults of all skill levels have the opportunity to do full-time circus training alongside extraordinary professional artists. The weekend festival is packed full of the industry's top acts, and serves to inspire circus converts and community members alike. Sandfly students have attended regularly since the festival's inception, and the professional training environment and networks formed here have helped launch numerous Sandflies towards successful circus arts careers. Every second year, Sandfly Circus leadership organises a group to attend and prepare a show for the festival.

The Sandflies had their biggest presence this year with more trainers, participants and family members than we have ever previously had - 38 in total! Of these, 19 participants



Festival rigger Beau Dudding (left) rehearses a counterweight scene with Sandfly cast and crew in the WA Circus Festival's Lunar Sensation tent. Photo by Meredith Bell.

rehearsed with Sandfly trainers and show director, Nel Simpson to deliver an adaptation of the 2023 mainstage production, *Framed!* Crystal Stacey, Will Tredinnick and Meredith Bell supported the project with rehearsal direction and project coordination. Performers' families offered incredible support as stage hands, costume dressers and first aid support. We couldn't have done it without them!



The Sandfly Performance Troupe performs at Broome Turf Club's Family Day, supported by troupe directors, Georgia Deguara (left) and Will Tredinnick (back centre). Photo by Robak Photography.

February - December | Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus program

2024 was another busy year for the Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus in Broome! As usual, our general classes ran throughout all school terms for students aged kindy to high school. Additional speciality classes were offered whenever trainer availability allowed. This year diabolo and contortion skills were boosted enormously, with the contributions of Japanese visiting artists, Naoyuki Kubo and Naruha Ohta, who worked with us during the dry season. Continuing the momentum of recent seasons, unicycle skills developed strongly, with the support of Franque Batty's Saturday sessions. In 2024, we delivered 224 weekly sessions to students in general and speciality classes. Additionally, adult and youth students also enjoyed stand alone masterclass sessions with visiting acrobats, Benton Adams-Walker (Cirque du Soleil/NICA), Ben Kotovski-Steele (YipYip Circus/CircusWA), Bonnie Blewitt (NICA) and Freyja Hochapfel-Wilkes (CircusWA).

We launched our 2023 Teen Trainer program in Term 1 with two days of professional learning across numerous areas of circus arts instruction, delivered by Georgia Deguara and Ben Kotovski-Steele. We welcomed three emerging Sandfly teen leaders to the trainer program this year.

In Term 2, our performance troupe formed again under the leadership of Will Tredinnick and Georgia Deguara. Circus students self-nominate for this additional opportunity to advance their performance skills and learn how to work as an ensemble. 'P-troupe,' as it is known, performed at the Broome Turf Club, the Broome Courthouse Markets and the Opening Ceremony of Shinju Matsuri Festival.

This year, we found new and exciting ways to use circus to connect with our community. In April, Theatre Kimberley delivered a circus intensive for Kimberley School of the Air's Broome camp. Connecting over 50 remote kids with their long-distance classmates at the Broome Camp School, the project gave the students the opportunity to learn, practice and perform circus skills over three days. Also during Term 2, trainer Will Tredinnick explored SEW-related (social and emotional well-being) activities with our Year 5-6 Sandfly class group as part of Healthway and Telethon Kids Institute's SEW-Arts program. The program supports teaching artists to help students explore well-being factors like 'working in groups' and 'coping with criticism,' encouraging awareness and self-management of their own social and emotional well-being.

In Term 3, visiting arts facilitator Louise Moriarty, delivered community workshops for diverse age groups, during days off from the Beagle Bay outreach project. She delivered two circus sessions with the "Goldies" seniors group at Broome Lotteries House and one session for preschool tots and carers at Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Services' new Kids' Club.



Kimberley School of the Air youngsters bound on stage with their circus trainers during their project finale at the Broome Camp School. Photo by Meredith Bell.

April - October | Act Belong Commit Dragonfly Outreach Program

Oh the places we've been! We are pleased to be expanding partnerships across the Kimberley and Pilbara, allowing us to connect with more communities more often than ever before. The Act Belong Commit Dragonfly Outreach Program offers performing arts residencies for young people from remote communities, often partnering with schools and usually ending in a finale performance for the whole community.

April | City of Karratha

Our circus team returned to the Pilbara to build on previous engagements in four City of Karratha locations. Will Tredinnick and Perth-based Bonnie Blewitt supported Karratha local government's Youth Week efforts with workshops in Karratha, Wickham, Roebourne and Dampier. The workshop tour was made possible with the support of Horizon Power's Community Partnership Program.



Sandfly graduate Leah Pigram (right) teaches balance skills during the Fitzroy Crossing school holidays project. Photo courtesy of Shire of Derby/West Kimberley.



A unicycle rider takes a rest during the Fitzroy Crossing school holidays project. Photo courtesy of Shire of Derby/West Kimberley.

July & Sept-Oct | Fitzroy Crossing

At the request of the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley, Theatre Kimberley developed a circus program for the shire's school holidays program in Fitzroy Crossing. The first part took place during the July holidays, with the circus team returning during the September/October holidays for two more weeks of instruction, culminating in a finale community event of dinner and performance. Through the whole program, local kids lapped up the amazing skills of Isaac Salter (Bunbury), Krissy Lane (Perth) and our own Will Tredinnick. First Nations junior artists and Sandfly graduates, Leah Pigram and Ali Conopo each joined the project for one week, and production specialist Kath White joined the finale week to help the show come together smoothly. The show was a high-energy marathon of the kids' favourite skill areas - including mini tramp, tightwire, tumbling and hula hoops - to a soundtrack of favourite Kimberley tunes.

July-August | Beagle Bay

In July and August, we returned to Beagle Bay Aboriginal Community for our annual three-week residency at Sacred Heart School. For several years we've delivered this project in partnership with the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Australia's premier youth circus school, based in Albury, NSW. This year, 'the Fruities' sent one of their remote partner artists, Louise Moriarty, to join our team. The idea was to offer an exchange opportunity for Louise, who also runs remote circus programs, in her home of Wilcannia, NSW. Louise offered her wealth of experience to our project, supporting Will Tredinnick as project lead.

Once again, we were pleased to share this project with the next generation of circus artists. Noted as a standout for her support on the 2023 project, Fruities Year 12 student Chelsea Quail returned for all three weeks this year. Sandfly teens, Elliot Beurteaux and Tullula O'Shannessy joined the last week of the project. They assisted with teaching and helped manage performance groups for the finale show.

[Read about Chelsea's project reflections in 'My TK Experience.'](#)

August | Fitzroy Crossing

Building on her work from the 2023 Winthali project, Perth-based teaching artist Claudia Alessi, returned to Fitzroy Crossing in 2024, to lead a multi-art form project. Working in residence at Fitzroy Valley District High School, a dynamic group of local and visiting artists allowed students to explore several creative disciplines as an entry point to storytelling.

The artist team was made up of Claudia (dance/physical theatre), Cecile Williams (visual artist/puppets), Jacob Gregory (hip hop), Emmanuel James Brown (movement/storytelling), and Jael Johnson (storytelling/project support). The school community was delighted by project outcomes, and has confirmed another visit in 2025.



A cheeky creature emerges from his aerial cocoon during Sacred Heart School's circus safari show. Photo by Robak Photography.



Fitzroy Valley District High School students proudly display their creations. Photo by Cecile Williams.

October | Bidyadanga

At the start of Term 4, our Dragonfly Outreach crew returned to Bidyadanga. Building on foundations laid in 2022 and 2023, this two-week residency finished with an exciting evening show at the Women's Centre for the whole community. Dinner was provided for all by Palya Mayi, and taking the event outside of the school building and beyond school hours added to the air of festivity. We were delighted to work in partnership with Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services and the BACLG office (Bidyadanga Aboriginal Community La Grange Inc.) Will Tredinnick led the returning team, supported by visiting acrobats Benton Adams-Walker and Freyja Hochapfel-Wilkes and Sandfly graduate, Aliysah Conopo.

October | Yiramalay

In Term 4, we returned to Yiramalay Studio School on Bunuba Country, for a circus residency in partnership with the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA). Part of the growing network of Studio Schools Australia, Yiramalay is an open-entry boarding high school for First Nations students years 10-12, located on the beautiful country of the Wunaamin Miliwundi Ranges.

NICA's project lead, Andrea Ousley, who has been coming to Yiramalay with Theatre Kimberley since 2015, returned with two NICA graduates, Melbourne-based Benton Adams-Walker and Perth-based Bonnie Blewitt. As the school environment is residential, our visiting artists have come to have a broader leadership role here than they can on other projects. Andrea and the artists join the students rostered for dinner clean up; they spend time supporting teachers in the classroom; and they spend time getting to know the students outside of the circus workshop environment.

Being immersed allows for true cultural exchange. Of course, being invited to visit water holes and ranges on Bunuba Country is wonderful. But also, you see the fights and tough times, you eat together, and relationships happen. Even when we aren't engaging with students in arts learning, it's really valuable time. These kids are learning how to talk about themselves and express their opinions to adults from other places who have very different life experiences from their own.

There's really important growth in this. And for our team, we have the opportunity to get to know some beautiful First Nations youth, to learn more about their interests and talents and to understand their challenges. That's something that Melbourne residents don't get every day.

Andrea Ousley, Coordinator, NICA



Bidyadanga children start their balancing act during the finale show of their Act Belong Commit Dragonfly Outreach project. Photo by Meredith Bell.

August | Bust Out Cabaret

Nothing celebrates the fun and madness of peak season in Broome quite like *Bust Out Cabaret*. With a Beam scooter making its stage debut, this year was no exception. And so on the cusp of Shinju Matsuri, and three weeks before our major Sandfly show, an amazing array of local and visiting artists took to the stage with acts dazzling and quirky, and all things in between. *Bust Out* is our 'bring your own act' fundraiser with a cheeky twist, where we get to celebrate the amazing adult talents of our community alongside our visiting artists.

This year's show was fuelled by the enormous energy of Perth-based circus artist, Ben Kotovski-Steele, who emceed with Will Tredinnick. Ben also performed new acts with Will and acrobat Amy Fimmel, as well as excerpts from his solo show, *Thicc Jesus*. Local puppetry artists, Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman and Eduardo Maher, treated audiences to a debut appearance of David Attenborough and a larger-than-life sea cucumber. Japanese circus artist, Naoyuki Kubo, left audiences in awe with his sharply executed performances of diabolo and meteor juggling. Cyr wheel performer, Jake Silvestro, returned to Broome just in time for his second season of *Bust Out*, having performed with us previously in 2022. Local favourites including Franque Batty, Jaime Jackett, Bex Youdale, and Justine De Bruyn's Studio 34 dancers, entertained and delighted audiences as always.



Naoyuki Kubo dazzles audience members with his diabolo performance in *Bust Out Cabaret*. Photo by Boy From Beyond.



Acrobats Amy Fimmel and Ben Kotovski-Steele. Photo by Boy from Beyond.



Studio 34 Dancers at their satirical best with "It's a Hard Knock Life" in *Bust Out Cabaret*. Photo by Boy From Beyond.



Wulumara (long-necked turtle in Ngarinyin language) goes for a walk with Wungurr Rangers and Big Country Puppets project lead, Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman (centre back). Photo by Adam Douglass.

September | Big Country Puppets returns to Kupungarri Community

Big Country Puppets residencies incorporate many creative elements including puppetry, theatre, music and storytelling in local First Nations languages, to teach local communities about important cultural and environmental issues. Theatre specialists create each project collaboratively in remote locations with local Aboriginal Ranger groups, elders, linguists, school groups and other community members. The program is led by multi-disciplinary artist and theatre maker, Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman.

In July, we received the fantastic news that the Big Country Puppets program had received funding for another suite of projects through the federal government's Indigenous Languages and Arts program. The funding supports three new projects in Wyndham, Broome and Bidyadanga, as well as two shorter revisit projects. The revisit projects use the creative materials made on a previous project, such as giant puppets, songs and/or show scripts, to allow the community to re-engage with a recently developed local story.

Shortly after hearing of our funding success, Bernadette began planning for the first repeat project, revisiting the story of *Wulumara* (long-necked freshwater turtle) in Kupungarri Community. *Wulumara* was originally developed and performed in February - March 2023. In early September, Bernadette and Broome artist Adam Douglass travelled to Kupungarri, where they worked again with Wananami School and the Wungurr Rangers. The project provided some great opportunities for community connection - including the involvement of nearby community Dodnon and getting Wungurr Rangers back into the school classroom. The Rangers talked with students about their work protecting wetlands by controlling feral pig populations. Existing puppets, including the giant *Wulumara* puppet were repaired, and new small puppets, props and masks, including baby turtles, feral pigs and even a helicopter! were made by school students and rangers. The finale show was performed to Kupungarri and Dodnon community members and featured the *Wulumara Rap*, created in 2023 by Jacob Gregory and school students.



Wungurr Rangers work with older students from Wananami School to prepare puppets for the Big Country Puppets performance, *Wulumara*. Photo by Adam Douglass.



Students at Wananami School display small turtle puppets during the Big Country Puppet project. Photo by Overland Exposure.

September | *Small But Spectacular* by the Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus

The Sandflies' 18th major annual production celebrated the smallest creatures of the world, and highlighted that their importance far exceeds their size. Co-directors Nel Simpson (Perth) and Stephen Burton (Melbourne) returned to Broome to develop and deliver their second Sandfly show, *Small But Spectacular*. The show features a cast of all types of small creatures of the wilderness - spiders, frogs, beetles, butterflies, caterpillars and more. Only at the end, does the entrance of a larger-than-life lawn mower make us realise that the whole show has taken place in someone's backyard. This show included 94 young performers - all Sandfly students aged six and up, and the Beagle Bugs, a group of special guest performers from Beagle Bay's Sacred Heart School.

Small But Spectacular was supported by some amazing creatives. Returning Flying Fruit Fly Circus instructor, Jake Silvestro, assisted Nel and Stephen as rehearsal director and supported the Beagle Bugs' involvement. Ben Kotovski-Steele supported aerial act development and was head rigger for the project. Additional trainers included Irish aerialist, Sarah Fossett, of Fossett's Circus; Sandfly graduate, Reuben Pedlar; Japanese juggler, Naoyuki Kubo; and Perth-based acrobat and former Sandfly show trainee, Amy Fimmel. Local Sandfly trainers, teen trainers and parent helpers were indispensable in supporting our young performers and assisting with the show's development. The magical natural world of *Small But Spectacular* couldn't have come to life without Chris Hill (sets and props), Tracy Lowe (concept development and costumes), Lesley Marsh (costumes) and Unbound Sound (lighting and sound). For the first time, the show included a student musical ensemble directed by local musician and music teacher, Bex Youdale. Giant puppetry performances and projection artwork also enhanced the show.



Aerialist Frances Anstey on tissu in *Small But Spectacular*. Photo by Robak Photography.



Unicycling flies swarm in *Small But Spectacular*. Photo by Robak Photography.

My TK Experience

Chelsea Quail

Emerging Circus Artist - Dragonfly Outreach Trainee 2023 and 2024



My favourite part of this year was getting to see all the students again. Remembering their names, and them remembering mine.

Chelsea (right) and lead trainer Will Tredinnick (centre) support young performers on stage at Sacred Heart School. Photo by Robak Photography.

Chelsea with keen Beagle Bay performers before their 2024 school show. Photo by Robak Photography.

My name is Chelsea Quail, and this is my TK Experience!

At 10 years old I fell in love with circus. In 2024, at age 17, I graduated from The Flying Fruit Fly Circus after 6 years of being a part of their full-time school program. The most unique opportunity I was offered was to be a part of the team that was going over to Western Australia to teach the Dragonfly Outreach Program in Beagle Bay. I was super excited!

In August 2023, I travelled to Broome with another Fruities student for a week. Flying into Broome, we were met by the deep red landscape, the clear, turquoise water, and whales swimming along the coast. It was magical. Broome is surrounded by beautiful landscapes and coastal areas quite different to where I am from, but the population size and having all the essential shops made it feel quite normal. One of my favourite memories from this trip was being taken out to a waterhole near Beagle Bay by some of the students. On our walk there, they would point out donkey tracks and leaves that smelt a particular way.

When this week in 2023 came to an end, I left feeling grateful, inspired and eager to do more work like this. So, I kept in contact with Meredith, crossing my fingers that another opportunity would come my way, and a few

months later I received an email. I was offered a contract to teach the full three weeks of the program in Beagle Bay in 2024. I was so excited.

This time for me was slightly different to my first year. I had to learn lots of the logistics of contract work, how to travel by myself, how to make effective class plans, and how to communicate my needs and boundaries in terms of work hours, pay, what I felt comfortable coaching, etc. Throughout this process, Meredith was a massive help. She was always able to answer my questions, emails and calls with clear and understandable answers.

Another difference this year was being a part of the senior coaching team, meaning I was involved in lots of the decision making, particularly in the show making process. It was interesting to learn all the different parts of this process, and it gave me a greater appreciation for all performance makers.

My favourite part of this year was getting to see all the students again. Remembering their names, and them remembering mine. I felt that having this ongoing relationship allowed them to trust and feel comfortable with me, which made teaching and creating with them so much more fun!

Theatre Kimberley Outreach



Outreach Program Residencies 2012-2024



Repeat visits during 2012-2024

- 1 - Djarindjin/Lombadina (197 km)
- 2 - Bayulu (410 km)
- 3 - Beagle Bay (129 km)
- 4 - Fitzroy Crossing (396 km)
- 5 - Bidadanga (184 km)
- 6 - Derby (221 km)
- 7 - Yiramalay (394 km)
- 8 - Kupungarri (Mt. Barnett) (517 km)

Single visit during 2012-2024

- 9 - Halls Creek (685 km)
- 10 - Looma (253 km)
- 11 - Yiyili (571 km)
- 12 - Pandanus Park (168 km)
- 13 - Mulan (758 km)
- 14 - Yakanarra (440 km)

(Distance from Broome)



Broome and Beagle Bay teens perform together during Sacred Heart School's circus safari show. Photo by Robak Photography.

Artist in Profile

Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman



Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you're up to now?

I'm a multidisciplinary/undisciplined artist, currently producing a few giant puppetry projects, writing a new show and a documentary that spans climate disasters in Brazil and Fitzroy Crossing.

In private I'm playing music, writing and painting, having

good conversations and daydreaming - which is the engine room.

When did you first become involved in the Arts?

Officially my first performance was playing a giant galah when I was 6, but mum got the show time mixed up and I missed it. I was devastated. However that trauma has driven my desire to work with giant puppetry ever since. Thanks Mum. After studying theatre, fine art, design and architecture, I cut my teeth as a theatremaker at LaMama in Naarm, Melbourne, then on various Melbourne Fringe shows. During that time I exhibited my visual art, sculpture and installation at galleries around town.

Why do you love the arts and what inspires you?

I love that in the arts, you can meet amazing people and communities, you can travel into your own imagination, transform places and situations, make people laugh or cry or both, be playful or serious, ignite curiosity and wonder, invent/unearth whole new realities, ideas and perspectives.

I'm also inspired by adaptation and resilience, whether that's in plants, animals or entire ecosystems. I especially love art in public places and art forms that have developed within movements of cultural resistance and protest.

Tell us about your involvement with TK?

I started with TK back in 2013 when I led the first Big Country Puppets project, after Gwen Knox saw me running around in a bilby costume in the bush. Since then I've worked as a performer, singer, maker, producer, director, writer etc on numerous shows such as *The Shorebird Quest*. I've also been possessed by Justin Beiber, played a singing jellyfish and been killed by a giant sea cucumber as part of *Bust Out Cabaret*. I still lead the Big Country Puppets project, which has evolved over 12 years and has happened in many places in the Kimberley.

What has been your most memorable project with TK?

That's tricky. *The Shorebird Quest*, both of them, but the first Big Country Puppets project was really special. We built a series of giant puppets, a Gouldian Finch, a frill-necked lizard, a pelican and a pandanus tree through a series of open workshops. We got to use a gorgeous 100 year old Singer pedal powered sewing machine donated by Arnhem Hunter. The first public interactive roaming performance was with the Dreamtime Dancers at Minyirr Park Ampitheatre at night, the second was at the Shinju Matsuri Parade with an accompanying Jila Junk Band, and the third was at Ardyloon for a community festival. There were so many beautiful moments of celebration, people coming together, testing out new ideas and just playing after quite a few years of intense stress and tension for Broome community members.



Rangers and project artists bring their freshwater puppets to the water during the Big Country Puppets project at Kupungarri Community. Photo by Overland Exposure.



Phantasmagoria, 2022 Theatreworks premiere, written and created by Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman, directed by Cathy Hunt. Pictured (left to right) are Meg Dunn, Yuchen Wang and Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman. Photo by Rick Evertz.

What has been the biggest challenge you've faced in your career?

That's a title shared by the Covid 19 pandemic, successive federal cuts to arts funding over decades and ongoing housing insecurity. And difficulty making decisions.

How did you overcome it, and what lessons did you learn?

Adapt, slow down and/or pivot but avoid neck strain. Surround yourself with people who believe in social justice, make sure you demonstrate those principles yourself. Don't acquire too much furniture.

What has been your favourite arts project and why?

Impossible question. However building the interior of a giant mechanical clock I'd designed for a sculpture commission from the Ice Hotel in Jukkasjarvi, Sweden above the Arctic Circle was an amazing opportunity. It was minus 40 degrees celsius, but I chainsawed and carved ice until my arms almost fell off for 10 hours a day and then lay on the snow exhausted, watching the Aurora Borealis. Ice is the most beautiful material to work with, there's no grain. I was surrounded by artists from all over the world, I didn't see the sun for a few weeks and lived in an arctic caravan. The Ice Hotel director sent us photos of our work melting gradually as the winter ended. Back then in 2006, the ice was already melting earlier than usual.

Where is the most exciting place that work has taken you?

A toss up between Wyndham, touring with the Snuff Puppets in South Korea, or performing at the Charleville Meziers International Puppetry Festival in France. Writing and developing a theatre show in Iceland was pretty amazing, as was making theatre and animation work in Brazil for 6 months.

Illuminated giant curlews, musicians and several hundred performers took to the mudflats of Roebuck Bay during *the Shorebird Quest*, 2019. Photo by Ben Houston.



Mulan community members play with the giant 'Jarlka' puppet (Great Egret in Eastern Walmajarri) during a Big Country Puppets project in 2021. Photo by Paul Hoelen.

What are your hopes and dreams for the arts going forward?

Better funding for independent artists and the arts in general. An artist living wage and/or a Universal Basic Income. Real action on climate change (no arts jobs on a dead planet). No more racist/homophobic/sexist politicians in power. More equitable housing policies and funding would be lovely too.

If you could give your younger self some advice or words of encouragement, what would they be?

Be brave. Dream big and don't give up. Get more sleep.



Financial Summary 2024



Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	438,734	380,349
Trade & Other Receivables	18,971	47,090
	457,705	427,439
Non-current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	33,132	41,271
Total Assets	490,837	468,710
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	72,560	62,905
Provision for employee entitlements	27,142	26,222
Unexpended funds	118,188	122,796
	217,890	211,923
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provision for employee benefits	23,910	20,375
Total Liabilities	241,800	232,298
Net Assets	249,037	236,412
Equity		
Accumulated Surplus	149,037	148,912
Operations Reserve	100,000	87,500
Total Equity	249,037	236,412

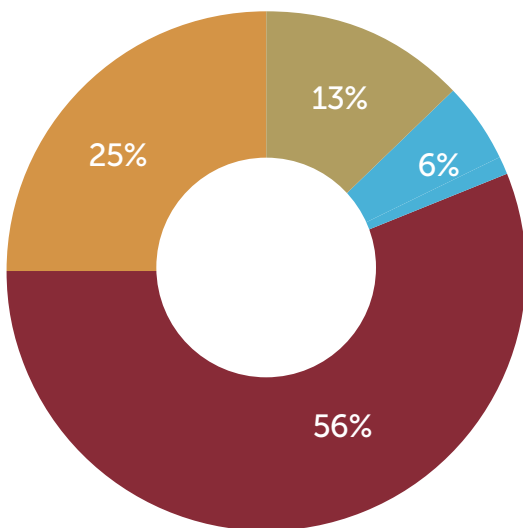
Theatre Kimberley's audited financial statements are available on request.

Statement of Operations

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

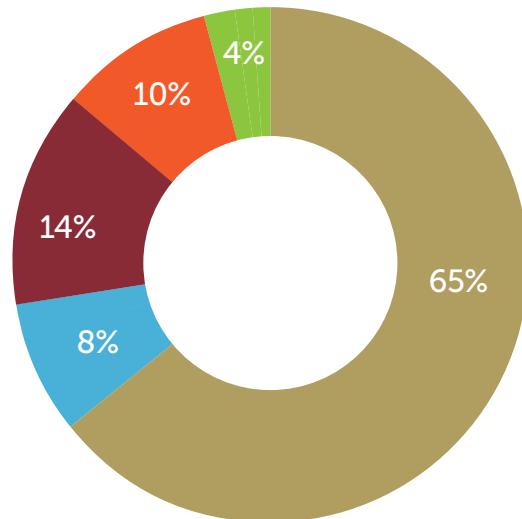
	2024	2023
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Operating Revenue (box office, class and client fees, fundraising)	142,450	220,342
Funding		
Government income - grants	434,658	726,853
Philanthropy	64,873	25,000
Other Income		
Interest	4,590	4,718
Sponsorship and donations	10,405	11,376
Membership fees	2,754	2,364
Other	7,641	8,625
Total Income	667,371	999,278
EXPENSES		
Production costs	83,241	153,525
Operating costs	31,847	67,835
Depreciation	8,828	10,552
Employment costs	369,520	345,227
Professional Fees	161,310	395,099
Total Expenses	654,746	972,238
Surplus from operations	12,625	27,040

TK Expenses 2024



- Production Costs
- Operating Costs
- Employment Costs
- Professional Fees

TK Income 2024



- Grants
- Box Office & Fundraising
- Class & Client Fees
- Philanthropy
- Other

NB 'Employment costs' include fees paid to TK teaching artists and casual project contractors.

2024 Outcomes



Sandfly Circus participants:

128



Number of workshops in remote communities:

237



Total paid artists &/or artworkers:

95



Total paid Aboriginal artists &/or artworkers:

12



Total volunteer hours:

656



Total number of Aboriginal people engaged (participants & audience):

1658



Total participants in TK projects and shows:

1526



Total audience numbers:

3493

Following each arts activity, we tally numbers of participants, artists, artworkers, volunteers etc. We also estimate audience numbers and demographics to the best of our ability, but these can only ever be approximate.

A Thriving Creative Future for WA

In December 2024, the WA Government launched *Creative WA: A 10-year vision to grow and sustain our creative ecosystem*. It maps out how the State Government will support WA artists and organisations over the decade.

What's especially exciting for Theatre Kimberley is its focus on three key communities: young people, First Nations people, and those in regional areas. While recent increases to regional arts funding are very welcome, *Creative WA* recognises more needs to be done. A new Creative Fellowship will support people from these key communities to become future leaders. *Creative WA* also commits to growing arts jobs, and making arts training more accessible and affordable - addressing barriers to sustainable creative careers raised by young people during the consultation process.

\$54M has been committed towards realising *Creative WA* targets for 2029 and in 2034. These include: a three-year extension of the Creative Learning program (which has supported several TK school-based projects); \$30M for

arts and culture infrastructure, \$15M specifically for Aboriginal Arts Centre upgrades, and \$15M to continue the Creativity and Wellbeing program. An additional \$350,000 will tackle the urgent shortage of skilled arts technicians and support workforce development.

As *Creative WA* unfolds, we're excited about the opportunities it offers Theatre Kimberley, our artists, our audiences, and the communities we work with. We look forward to working with the WA Government to create more opportunities to bring people together, share stories, strengthen communities, and celebrate what makes the Kimberley so special.



Our Supporters

Theatre Kimberley is generously supported by



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries



Australian Government
Indigenous Languages and Arts



Tate Family
Foundation
Supporting Your Vision



Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

**REGIONAL
ARTS WA**



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

The Regional Arts Sector Investment is supported by the State Government of WA through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and Lotterywest.



NIDAOPEN
National Institute
of Dramatic Art





Theatre Kimberley 2025

We hope to see you at one of our exciting shows or projects soon - from Bidyadanga to Wyndham - we're sharing stories across the Kimberley.

Briefs Collaboration

In February, we're linking up with Broome Pride and international touring sensation, Briefs Factory for some great Mardi Gras fun. Senior Sandfly performers will join Briefs cast on stage for the high thrills family show, *Brats Carnival*. Briefs will also deliver our 2025 Circus Train the Trainer weekend and teach lots of circus and dance workshops for the Broome community.

Dragonfly Outreach Residencies

Theatre Kimberley's Act Belong Commit Dragonfly Outreach program travels to community schools to work intensively to teach performance skills that are showcased in an end-of-project performance for the whole community.

Big Country Puppets

Big Country Puppets arts residencies in remote Kimberley communities celebrate First Nations' language and culture and the local environment. TK artists work with Aboriginal Rangers and local schools to co-create theatre shows, incorporating local knowledge and languages, and giant and small puppets.

Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus Show

We look forward to welcoming Broome locals and visitors of all ages to our next circus show. We're excited to welcome the team from YUCK Circus back to Broome to direct this massive youth and community effort. Get ready for more high-flying feats and thrilling circus antics by 90 of our most talented young people!

Sandfly Remote Kimberley Tour

Select Sandfly students will take the show on the road, with our inaugural Sandfly Remote Kimberley Tour this October. The Sandfly team will share the magic of the wildly popular annual Broome show when they perform an adaptation to several West Kimberley communities.

Bust Out Cabaret

One of Broome's best nights out – for performers and audiences alike – *Bust Out Cabaret* sees local community performers join visiting artists for two nights of adults-only music, circus, dance, comedy and more!

Donations and memberships are always appreciated.

TK has tax-deductible status.

Sandfly Remote Kimberley Tour

Various Locations
Funding Permitting

Dragonfly Outreach Residencies

Fitzroy Crossing: 16 - 20 June
Bidyadanga: 23 June - 4 July
Beagle Bay: 28 July - 15 August
Yiramalay: May, Aug, Oct
Bayulu: 15 - 26 September

Big Country Puppets

Wyndham:
17 Feb-20 March

Entrance Point, Broome:
7 April-1 May

Kadjina:
October TBC

Briefs
Collaboration
23 Feb - 1 March

Sandfly
Circus Show
12 & 13 Sept

Bust Out
Cabaret
25 & 26 July

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