

AMaGA

Performing Arts Heritage

National Conference 2019

Abstracts and biographies

Keynote:

Costume memories; resurrecting the fragile histories of dance.

The burgeoning field of costume studies provide a distinctive way to engage with what remains of performance, and what survives of the fragile conditions of historical repertoires from theatre, dance, and opera. This paper will consider the trail of evidence about modern dance that was evoked by a coat in the collections of the Museum of Australia that belonged to Madam Gertrud Bodenwieser, a leading European modern dance choreographer. Through analysing the diverse costumes, the archives and collections in which her choreographic legacy has been preserved, this keynote will consider the careful ways in which we need to interpret and communicate the affective and experiential dimensions of performing arts archives. As well as animating the costumes, and bringing performance back to life, the paper will extend discussion to the role of digital archives, and databases such as AusStage, in shaping the preservation and memory of the multiple dimensions of bodies, time and place in theatre.

Rachel Fensham is a theatre and dance scholar who currently leads the Digital Studio, a research centre for the digital humanities in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne. Her own research in performance studies includes projects on dance history and theory, audience research and digital archives, and she is currently finalising a book on *Movement: Theory for Theatre* (Bloomsbury).

From humble beginnings – a brief retrospective of some of the people, locations and performances staged, in 19th century Geelong.

The first theatrical performance took place in Geelong in 1843, just five years after Geelong was surveyed and still six years before the town was officially recognised. Drawing upon records, objects and reference material from the Geelong Heritage Centre Archive, this brief retrospective will look back on some of the people involved, locations of and performances staged, in the early years of Geelong post European arrival.

Mark Beasley has been Manager of the Geelong Heritage Centre Collection & Services for the past 12 years and counts more than 20 years managing and working

with archive collections, genealogy resources and special collections both locally and nationally. Mark's role has seen him directly involved with the concept, detailed design and delivery of the nationally and internationally acclaimed \$45M Geelong Library & Heritage Centre (2017), as well as countless research projects, presented papers at national conferences and symposiums and appeared as an expert on television programs nationally and internationally, including *Who Do You Think You Are?* – Australian Series 8 (2016) and *Can We Help?* – ABC Television (2008).

The pinch point: Victoria's first show route

For more than a century, from the early 1850s until the launch of television in the late 1950s, an industry of countless itinerant shows travelled Australia. Moving along fairly well-defined show routes, they delivered entertainment to Australia's small and widely-distributed population. The first circus troupes - the earliest example of travelling show - were followed by other travelling shows of wide-ranging descriptions and reputations. Travelling shows and the routes they followed provided livelihoods for thousands of entertainers and their supernumeraries and contributed to regional economic, social and cultural progress.

The first troupes of entertainers began to methodically move beyond the few coastal settlements early in 1851, on the dawn of the great Australian gold rushes, to explore the hinterland beyond. The discovery of gold in New South Wales and then Victoria later that year sparked the movement of settlers and new arrivals onto the gold fields. Following in their tracks came the showmen to entertain them. But different showmen adopted different strategies to reach their audience and seek their fortune.

How did show routes come into existence? Were the routes merely a means for a showman to reach a paying audience? Or were other factors involved? How did travelling showmen negotiate the various, often contradictory, forces that confronted their profession?

In this paper, building on my research into the history of circus in Australia, I intend to outline how Victoria's first show route came into existence and the crucial role that Geelong played in the development and operation of that route over the critical gold rush years of 1852-4.

Dr Mark St Leon lectures at the Melbourne Institute of Technology [Sydney Campus] in the field of international business education. He is descended from one of Australia's earliest family of entertainers. He received his PhD from the University of Sydney in 2007 for his dissertation, *Circus & Nation*. He served the Australia Council, 1983-94, where he oversaw the financial health and development of numerous arts organisations throughout the nation and from where he instigated the Circus Summit, Australia's first national conference of circus people, convened at the Arts Centre, Melbourne, in 1991. Out of the Summit was established the National Institute of Circus Arts [Pahran], now one of Australia's nationally-recognised centres of performing arts excellence. Mark is the author of *Circus: The Australian Story* (Melbourne Books, 2011) and numerous articles and monographs on the history of circus in Australia.

The Index Card and the Returned Soldiers & Sailors Woollen Mill: Two Material Archives

In *Theatre Archeology*, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks propose “That the traces left behind by a performance are perhaps more susceptible to the approaches of contemporary archaeology than methods taken from textual analysis” (2001.9) Pearson is drawn to archaeology’s “retrieval, recoding and reassembling” of the material traces of performance as a method for documenting performance that is “inevitably in the past and ultimately enigmatic”.

That was the cue for one of the chapters in my book on The Mill Community Theatre Company (*The Mill: Experiments in Theatre and Community*, ASP, Melbourne, 2016). In that context the artefacts were mined for the traces they carried of the performance of “Mill Nights” and their capacity to allow the reader to experience, through my interpretation, a version of the events they stood in for. That interpretation was in turn, informed by my own body’s stored recollection of the events described.

Here I want to reconsider those artefacts for their own intrinsic material values as much as for the information about past events that they may contain.

The first of these is a set of index cards, fragile with age, sticky tape attached, and redolent of abandoned technologies. The second is a building, still standing on Pakington Street, Geelong, and carrying the marks of its many past uses and transformations even as it expresses its robust present.

Dr Meredith Rogers, MCA (Melb), Ph D (Melb), works mainly in theatre and performance but also in various cross and inter disciplinary projects such as *Performing Mobilities* 2015 <http://www.performingmobilities.net/>

She worked with Kiffy Rubbo at the Ewing and George Paton Galleries from 1974 – 1979) and was a member of the Editorial Collective of *Lip, A Feminist Arts Journal* 1976 – 84. In 1979 she joined the innovative Mill Community Theatre Company as actor and general manager and two years later she was a founding member of the Home Cooking Theatre Co., one of only two professional feminist theatre companies in Australia <https://www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/organisation/268>. At different times she acted, designed, directed and produced for the company; its *Running Up a Dress*, by Suzanne Spinner, was presented in the first Melbourne Festival season in 1986 and toured for several years. Rogers received the Ewa Czajor Memorial Award for a female theatre director in 2002. She taught theatre and performance making at La Trobe University for more than twenty years and co-edited the *Australasian Drama Studies* journal (2013 – 2017). Her essay “Arts Melbourne and the End of the Seventies” appeared in Helen Vivian’s (ed), *When You Think About Art: The Ewing & George Paton Galleries 1971-2006* (2008) and her book, *The Mill: Experiments in Theatre and Community* <http://www.scholarly.info/book/527/>. was published in 2016.

Recent performances have included Gold Satino’s *This Is Grayson* for the Melbourne Fringe Festival 2018 (Two Green Room Awards) and *Seduction* – Gold Satino for Melbourne Fringe Festival 2019. <http://www.goldsatino.com/> . Earlier this year she directed and designed *Not Now Not Ever*, a solo performance text written and performed by Lara Stevens.

Back to Back Theatre: A legacy of The Mill

In this presentation Artistic Director Bruce Gladwin will talk about the history of Geelong's Back to Back Theatre, the ecology in which the company was first established and its relationship to The Mill Theatre Company.

Bruce Gladwin is an Australian artist and performance maker. He has been the Artistic Director of Back to Back Theatre since 1999, creating MENTAL (1999), DOG FARM (2000), SOFT (2002), SMALL METAL OBJECTS (2005), FOOD COURT (2008), THE DEMOCRATIC SET (2009), GANESH VERSUS THE THIRD RECIH (2011), SUPER DISCOUNT (2013), LADY EATS APPLE (2016), ODDLANDS (2017) and THE SHADOW WHOSE PREY THE HUNTER BECOMES, which premiered in September 2019.

Bruce's works with Back to Back Theatre have toured extensively, including presentations at the world's preeminent contemporary arts festivals and cultural venues. In 2015, Bruce was awarded the Australia Council for the Arts' Inaugural Award for Outstanding Achievement in Theatre.

“How to emulate the phoenix”, Allan Wilkie and the disastrous Geelong fire

In 1926 the Geelong Mechanics' Institute suffered not one, but three, arson attacks. Dubbed “the work of a maniac” the third of these attacks damaged the building to such an extent that it had to be rebuilt. It also destroyed the uninsured stage effects of the popular Shakespearean actor-manager Allan Wilkie who was appearing there at the time. Such was the loss felt by Wilkie's Australian public that within days an appeal was established. Led by some of Australia's most powerful and educated men, the appeal, and the generosity of the Australian public, enabled him to replace his staging and continue his tour.

Jenny Fewster began working on performing arts databases in the early 90's in her role as Research Assistant at the Performing Arts Collection of South Australia. She joined AusStage, the Australian national online resource for live performance research, when the project began in 2000 and was appointed Project Manager in 2003. During her time with AusStage the project has been successful in gaining over \$4 million (AUD) in funding from the Australian Research Council, Australian National Data Service, National eResearch Architecture Taskforce, eResearch South Australia and the Australian Access Federation. Jenny is active in nurturing relationships between university researchers and cultural collections. She is currently the Interim Chair and Secretary of the Performing Arts Heritage Network of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMAGA) and has served on that Committee for the last eleven years. In 2019 Jenny was honoured to be granted life membership of the The Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies (ADSA).

From circus to Spire to Spiegeltent: the past, present and future of the Melbourne Arts Precinct, 1890 to 2025

The part of Melbourne where St Kilda Road meets the Yarra River has seen continual performance and entertainment since the arrival of travelling circuses in the 1890s.

Material from the Australian Performing Arts Collection, combined with contemporary newspaper accounts and maps, gives us a view of a multifaceted district of leisure, entertainment and performance that emerged informally through the choices of circus companies and entrepreneurs. After the Second World War government policy directed the creation of the Victorian Arts Centre, a more formal and perhaps 'respectable' ensemble of performing arts and visual arts venues, while the surrounding area shifted to industrial and then high-density residential and office uses. Now with the Victorian government's planned Melbourne Arts Precinct transformation, the area may return to its more diverse roots, with plans for 'a distinctly Melbourne cultural experience – whether you have a ticket to a show or not.' As such the history of the site provides a microcosm for changing attitudes to the performing arts, land use and leisure over a 135 year period.

Claudia Funder has worked with collections at the Grainger Museum, The Old Treasury Building and Museums Victoria in collection management and curatorial roles. She project managed the selection and implementation of the Emu database at the Australian Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne. A musician and dance teacher, she founded the dance company Swing Patrol, now in Australia, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. She returned to the Australian Performing Arts Collection in 2017 as Research Coordinator and is studying for a Master of Arts Degree in History.

Ian Jackson has been Assistant Curator, Theatre and Popular Entertainment at the Australian Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne since November 2018. Prior to this he worked as a curator on exhibition projects and collections at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, and the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. He completed a doctorate in history at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom, in 2003.

Double Stories – Archives and Oral History

As Sydney Theatre Company undergoes a major renovation of its home at The Wharf, Walsh Bay, after 35 years of residency, we have found that the company's archives and oral history program, with interviews having been recorded since 2004, are providing two 'storeys/levels' of stories with an insight into the perceptions and understandings of key players (architects, artistic directors, administrators) as to the importance of the venue, and the environment it has created for the company's operations. This paper is a work in progress, hopefully leading to an on-line podcast, in which we aim to tell the story of the STC at The Wharf through the voices, written words and images contained the company's archives.

Dr Margaret Leask, a former arts administrator in Sydney and London, has been recording oral histories in the performing arts since 2004. She currently researches and records interviews for the STC, NFSA, National Library of Australia, State Library NSW and the Sydney Opera House. She is also completing an on-line history of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust's role in the musical life of the country, based on an extensive oral history interview.

Judith Seeff is a qualified archivist who, after gaining experience in a variety of government, education and commercial organisations, was employed to establish Sydney Theatre Company Archives in 1996, initiating the STC Archives' oral history

program in 2003. From 2003, Judith has also concurrently been the archivist at Australian Theatre for Young People.

Title: *Dancing Sydney: Mapping Movements: Performing Histories – activating the archive*

As Cheryl LaFrance stated in 2013 it is “almost unnatural for [dancers] to think ‘backward’ about their records [...] when they are constantly thinking ‘forward’ about creating new works” (p. 12). *Dancing Sydney: Mapping Movements: Performing Histories* is a project that seeks to ameliorate this situation by bringing Sydney dancers, choreographers, historians, curators, archivists and researchers together, to (re)learn ways of dealing with our dancing past in order to keep our dancing present from disappearing in the future. *Dancing Sydney* undertakes to answer Mark Wagenbach's (2014) challenges, which were inspired by the sudden death of the German choreographer Pina Bausch and her company's attempt to deal with (and keep alive) her legacy. Wagenbach asked: How do we inherit dance? How do you approach our legacy? How can we activate the archive for dance?” (p.15). This paper will explore these questions in relation to the projects instigated under the banner of *Dancing Sydney* by the project's collaborators: Amanda Card (USyd), Erin Brannigan (UNSW) and Julie-Anne Long (MQ).

References

LaFrance, C. 2013 "Choreographers Archives: Three Case Studies in Legacy Preservation." In L.M. Brooks & J. A. Meglin (Eds) *Preserving Dance Across Space and Time*. New York: Routledge

Wagenbach, M. 2014. *Inheriting Dance: An Invitation From Pina*. Bielefeld: Transcript

Dancing Sydney : Mapping Movements : Performing Histories website
<https://www.dancingsydney.org/>

Dr Amanda Card is a senior lecturer with Theatre & Performance Studies at the University of Sydney. Her areas of research and teaching are predominantly in movement, dance and performance studies. Her current projects include: modernism and transnationalism in Australian dance (1920-1960); cultural appropriation and dance in American and Australia; embodiment theory and dance; dance and the archive with Drs Erin Brannigan (UNSW) and Julie-Anne Long (Macquarie University) for *Dancing Sydney: Mapping Movements: Performing Histories*.

Touring variety in the Asia Pacific region, 1946–1975: entrepreneurial diplomacy and regional formation—notes on ‘walking the archive’

This presentation reflects on my experience of researching the touring circuit that developed in the Asia-Pacific region between 1946 and 1975. As I traveled between Adelaide, Brisbane, Hong Kong, Manila, Melbourne, Singapore, Sydney, Taipei and Tokyo to conduct research, I visited archives that are remarkably diverse in provenance, content, and material condition. As I navigated the forces that have

shaped the collections in each city, I realised that archival research is no substitute for the experience of place. A practice of 'walking the archive'—tracing spatial reference from evidence collated in archival collections into an embodied experience of urban geography—became crucial in re-connecting the itineraries of touring artists, anchoring traveling repertoire to physical sites, and bringing fragments of evidence to life. Walking the streets of each city, I found some theatres still standing and the buildings that housed nightclubs or what now stands on their sites: shopping malls, office towers, international hotels. Yet I also experienced what meLê Yamomo observes: that regional research on archival collections must contend with the histories and ideologies of nation-states. My research was enabled by the advent of digital archives that provide online access to documents—in particular, newspapers—that, in material form, are widely dispersed. But digital collections are acutely shaped by national dimensions of cultural policy, the evolving affordances of digital technologies, the constraints of curatorial decisions and legacy systems, and an international distribution of digital capital which is radically uneven. In recounting this experience of regional research, I argue that the national provenance of archival collections obscures the entrepreneurial diplomacy of regional relations, that the international repertoire embodied by versatile artists breached national regimes of aesthetic discrimination, and that the touring networks that extended across Asia and the Pacific are yet to be embraced by popular memory in Australia.

Dr Jonathan Bollen lectures in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of New South Wales. His research includes the repertoire of Australian plays in theatre production, and the history of artists touring between Australia and Asia in the 1950s and 1960s. He is a co-author of two books: *Men at Play: Masculinities in Australian Theatre since the 1950s* (Rodopi, 2008) and *A Global Doll's House: Ibsen and Distant Visions* (Palgrave, 2016). He also has experience in the digital humanities.

Her Majesty's memories, memoirs and major makeover.

Her Majesty's Theatre (Grote Street Adelaide) has withstood two world wars, the Great Depression, redesigns, bankruptcy, numerous ownership changes, different names and has the distinction of reaching a centenary. The theatre continues to play a significant role in Australia's theatre history and is currently undergoing a major redevelopment. This talk will reveal Her Majesty's Theatre's extraordinary past and celebrate its exciting future with a time lapse that will sweep you up into the nooks and crannies of the original "Gods" and get you scrambling in the rubble, plus the big reveal. The theatre's visual history will be told through a montage of photographs, programs, portraits, personalities and anecdotes.

Helen Trepa is the Collection Co-ordinator at the Performing Arts Collection of South Australia. The Performing Arts Collection celebrates its 40th birthday in 2019. Over the last forty years the Collection has evolved to become one of the most significant and comprehensive archival and object rich performing arts collections in Australia. As curator for the collection, Helen Trepa continues to preserve, record and display objects from past performances, with an eye on what's happening in the theatres tomorrow.

The appeal of digitising performing art scrapbooks

Thanks to the generosity of donors during the National Library of Australia's 2018 appeal, the collection of PROMPT performing arts scrapbooks has now been digitised after receiving appropriate preservation treatment. While the physical items themselves are still too fragile to be handled in person, most can now be viewed online, allowing this extraordinary material to be accessed by researchers and enthusiasts everywhere. As the Project Manager for this work I will discuss some of the challenges that we encountered and also provide a demonstration of how the scrapbooks can be accessed online.

Eleanor Goodwin has worked for the National Library since February 2000. For most of that time she has worked directly with the Pictorial collection but for the past two years Eleanor has been working on a variety of projects to improve physical and digital access to other collection material such as the PROMPT Ephemera scrapbooks.

Eleanor holds a Bachelor of Art (Art History & Curatorship) from the Australian National University and also a Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Management from the University of Canberra.

La Mama: Archiving Grassroots Theatre.

How has a small experimental theatre been able to develop a substantial archive over 50 years? This talk looks at the importance of being in one location over these years, in preserving the condition of the collection. I will also discuss the role of the University of Melbourne Archives and the commitment of staff to documenting Australian Theatre. Exploring the past collection of production and administration files and images, before the May 2109 fire, and the transition towards the creation of digital archives.

Fiona Wiseman began her association with La Mama in 1990 while on secondment from Preston TAFE. Fiona was House Manager from 1990 through to 1997. She returned around 2005 and created the role of Preservation Coordinator to first focus on the more than 3000 photographs stored at La Mama. She has been involved in theatre for over 35 years in many roles in performance, production and administration.

Theatre Heritage Australia - progress report on recent & new projects

As you know THA is committed to documenting and sharing Australia's unique theatre heritage. For the last three years we have been working on a number of exciting digitising projects which have recently been completed. These include The JCW Scene Books (1898-c1930), The Riley/Hailes Scrapbook and the Viola Tait Memoirs. This short presentation will discuss the content and importance of these resources and how to find them. This will be followed by an outline of our current projects including the digitising of the important Falk Album containing many images of early 20th century performers.

Web site <https://theatreheritage.org.au/#special-projects>

Simon Piening is the current President of THA and a Director of Australian Stage Online an online media outlet for the performing arts in Australia, which he founded in 2005. He completed a BA in Performing Arts in 1991 and has worked extensively as an actor and director. He completed post graduate studies in Arts Management at the VCA/University of Melbourne, and spent a number of years working as assistant manager at an outer metropolitan performing arts venue. He holds a Master of Communications and is currently completing a PhD in audience development.

Peter Johnson was President of THA from 2008 to 2015. He was also chairman of The ALSO Foundation's Special Events Committee which produced the legendary Red Raw and Winterdaze warehouse dance parties from 1992 until 2000. In 1995, acting as honorary architect, he was responsible for the conversion of Shed 14 at Melbourne Docklands into a permanent performance venue. He has undertaken extensive research into the work of his great great grandfather and Australian's most prolific colonial theatre architect George R. Johnson (1840-1898). Peter is a heritage consultant and valuer of architectural documents for the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program.

Re-Performing the Archive: The Resurrection of *Rumstick Road*.

The Wooster Group's much-lauded seminal work, *Rumstick Road* (1977) inaugurated a new form of autobiographical performance. Produced as a response to the death of Spalding Gray's mother, the performance, devised by Gray and Elizabeth LaCompte provides rich material for considering how The Wooster Group used a variety of objects— Gray's personal recorded conversations, family letters, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, 35mm slides, music— to summon the spirit of Gray's mother. Dissatisfied with the official archival record of the production held in the New York Public Library, The Wooster group used contemporary digital technology to resurrect and repurpose the performance as a video, which constitutes a new work of art. The video reconstruction 'keeps faith with the theatre piece by registering, in a new composite, the vivid texture of time and memory that shaped the original production. LeCompte and filmmaker Ken Kobland have worked with Wooster Group archivist Clay Hapaz to layer, juxtapose, and blend together numerous archival fragments – including U-Matic video, Super 8 film, reel-to-reel audio tapes, photographs, and slides – in order to reconstruct that lost performance'. Drawing on Marvin Carlson's (2003) argument concerning theatre as a memory machine, this paper situates this work within discourses concerned with the Anarchive: that which harnesses the energy of archival objects, but exceeds the archive (Massumi, 2016).

Glenn D'Cruz is Associate Professor of Art and Performance and teaches drama and cultural studies at Deakin University, Australia. He is the author of *Sarah Kane's 4:48 Psychosis* (Routledge, 2018) and *Teaching Postdramatic Theatre: Anxieties, Aproias and Dispositions* (Palgrave, 2018). He is the co-editor of *Contemporary Publics: Shifting Boundaries in New Media, Technology and Culture* —with Katja Lee, David Marshall, and Sharyn Macdonald (Palgrave, 2016). He is also the author of *Midnight's Orphans: Anglo-Indians in Post/Colonial Literature* (Peter Lang, 2006), and the editor of *Class Act: Melbourne Workers Theatre 1987-2007* (Vulgar Press, 2007) which was short listed for the Victorian premier's prize for best community history. His work has appeared in

journals such as *New Theatre Quarterly*, *Australasian Drama Studies*, *Thesis 11*, *Southern Review*, *Meanjin*, *Celebrity Studies*, *Media International Australia*.

He has been a visiting scholar at the Australian National University (2005) and City University New York (2018). His creative work has been performed and/or exhibited at Federation Square, Melbourne, the RMIT Gallery, Walker Street Gallery, Federation Hall, VCA and the Gertrude Street Gallery in Melbourne.

He is a senior member of the AusStage project.