

YEAR IN REVIEW 2019



UNION HOUSE THEATRE

CREATIVITY · RESPECT · RESPONSIVITY & ENGAGEMENT · INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY

32 shows, 38 workshops, over 1000 student artists, 12,000 audience members across 24 teaching weeks, in two venues with 474 seats, 18 casual staff, six core staff including co-artistic directors!

2019 has been a very busy and creatively rich year at Union House Theatre.

At Union House Theatre (UHT) we work to build communities of people who, through a shared passion for exploring creativity, come together in real time to find a tribe and build relationships.

UHT is the creative-hub for extracurricular student theatre and performance at the University of Melbourne. We provide an environment in which autonomous and diverse student theatre can flourish, supporting an ecology of high-impact, student led creativity. UHT facilitates and supports theatre in all its forms by providing artistic leadership, advice, mentoring, education and events that are responsive to the students' needs and their artistic and creative exploration.



// This is just an email to say how thankful I am for the opportunity to work with Union House Theatre this year. It's been an exciting journey and a memorable experience"

Cover Image:
UHT's *The Lonely Crowd*
Photo by Nam Nyugen

UHT's *The Lonely Crowd*
Photo by Nam Nyugen

UNION HOUSE THEATRE 2019 AT A GLANCE



12,625
audience patrons



1,187
UoM students performing
(not including creatives
or production crews!)



32
productions



12
original works



12
premiere seasons



16
Australian works



18
accessible works
(inc. captioning, Auslan, 'Pay what you feel'
and relaxed performances)



102
production meetings



90 HOURS
of one-on-one mentoring by
the Artistic Directors alone



2.4KM
metres of gaffa tape

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It is such a privilege to watch students develop into performers and theatre-makers.

When they take their first tentative steps into the UHT office and ask in a small voice how they can be involved in theatre on campus, you cannot help a rush of affection. For you know they have taken the first steps into a unique community on campus, to finding their voice — to a whole world of theatre making they never knew existed.

In 2019 Union House Theatre has continued to reach out to these students, in particular to strengthen pathways and remove barriers, making sure that what we do is accessible to anyone who wants to participate in extra-curricular performance on campus. Our 24 hour-play-generator project, held during SummerFest, is one of these long standing initiatives bringing many fresh faces to the Union House stages.

The UHT production, *The Lonely Crowd*, a devised movement-based theatre work with almost all new students, investigated connection in the digital age. This was led by Co-Artistic Director Xanthe Beesley, supported by our Artist-In-Residence, Emma Hall and created with the students.

This year has seen a dedicated focus on the development of new work, led by Co-Artistic Director Petra Kalive, with a season of new plays as part of La Mama's Exploration Season at The Burrow and a season of work presented by students in the Guild Theatre presented within the Melbourne Fringe Festival.



UHT Artistic Directors – Xanthe Beesley & Petra Kalive
Photo by Jo Chen

These dedicated programs provided pathways (and the all-important deadline) for students to create work and connect with Industry.

Responsive workshops both in the artistic and technical areas continue to be a staple offering and are well attended. Student Theatre Groups continue to produce varied and exciting work — and big thanks must be given to our production team who shepherded and supported the artistic ambition of almost 40 student-driven events.

2019 is also Petra's final year in the role of Artistic Director/Theatre Coordinator for Union House Theatre — she leaves UHT in the capable hands of Xanthe Beesley. It is with great pride that she leaves a thriving community of theatremakers, comedians, dancers, movers, directors, designers and critics who will without a doubt use their formative experiences at UHT to go onto successful careers in many fields.

UHT OUT AND ABOUT

As well as all the activity that happens on campus — student engagement in the Industry is always so exciting to watch. 2019 was no exception.

- Anchuli Felecia King opened her show *Golden Shield* at Melbourne Theatre Company presented in the Sumner Theatre
- Jean Tong and team behind *Satan Stole My Pineal Gland!* were awarded — Best Emerging Performance Ensemble, Melbourne Fringe
- Kim Ho shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Drama Awards for his play *Buried Kingdom*
- Vanessa Di Natale won the Stella Young Award, recognised for her impact on disability activism
- Chris Summers is one of the writers in Melbourne Theatre Company's Next Stage Program. Chris was UMSU Arts Officer in 2009 and in 2011 wrote the UHT commissioned play *No Place Like*
- Meri Leeworthy won a Green Room Award for their work on *Moral Panic's* sound design
- Angus Cerini won a Green Room Award for his play *The Bleeding Tree*

STUDENTS & ALUMNI @ MELBOURNE FRINGE



- Harriet Wallace Mead took on the role of Club Coordinator Melbourne Fringe Festival
- Lucy Seale performed in *Blitz*, an original play by Ebony Rattle, named after the club in London during the 1980s at the Alex Theatre, St Kilda
- Misha Lee Stage managed for *Batmania* by The Very Good Looking Initiative, Sept 11 - 21 @ Theatre Works. *Batmania* was an immersive experience exploring Australian identity through twisted horror-comedy
- Kinloch Anstiss crewed *Happy-Go-Wrong* — a quirky number about living with chronic illness told in an artful way with clowning, physical theatre, and rawness.



WORKSHOPS

- Budgeting & Scheduling
- Producing Skills
- Let's Dance
- Marketing for Theatre
- Weekly Improv
- Performance Making
- Acting
- Lighting
- Deaf Access & Inclusion
- Power Tools
- Sound Workshop
- Stage Management
- AV for Theatre
- Presenting with Confidence
- Risky Business
- Composition for Musical Theatre
- Exploring Shakespeare
- Physical Theatre
- Ready, Steady, Festival!
- Backstage Skills Series
- Theatre-making
- Directing Skills
- Theatre Devising Tool Kit
- Midday Move it!
- Access for Low Vision Audience
- Study Pathways at VCA
- Play Hard: Physical Comedy

STUDENT THEATRE GROUPS

- MU Modern Theatre
- Melb Uni Comedy Revue Board
- MUDCRABS
- Uni Melb Music Theatre Assoc. (UMMTA)
- Melbourne University Sri Lankan Students Assoc. (MUSLSA)
- Four Letter Word Theatre
- Melb Uni Shakespeare Company (MUSC)
- Uni Melb Music Theatre Assoc. (UMMTA)
- Trinity College Music Theatre Society
- Intercollegiate Activities Committee (ICAC)
- Melb Uni Chinese Theatre Group (CTG)
- Newman Theatre Association
- Floor Work
- Ormond Drama
- International House
- Melb Uni Law Revue
- University College Theatre Company
- St Hilda's College
- St Mary's College Drama Society
- Trinity College Drama Society
- Queen's College Music and Drama Society
- Medleys: The Med Revue
- Our Father – Feral Cat Theatre
- It's Time – Flare Dance Ensemble

GUEST ARTISTS

- Emma Hall – Artist in Residence
- Paul Lim
- Kimberly Twiner
- Emma Riches
- Suzie Hardgrave
- Sidney Millar
- Natalie Gillis
- Freya McGrath
- Mari Lourey
- Kali Hulme
- Ashlee Clapp
- Jessica Moody
- Ilana Gelbart
- Donna Gross
- Holly Durant
- Harriet Wallace Mead

EVENTS LED AND SUPPORTED BY UHT

- 24 Hour Play-generator
- Artist-in-Res program
- *The Lonely Crowd*
- La Mama Explorations Season for presentation of new work
- Guild Fringe – five works presented as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival

THE LONELY CROWD

Presented by Union House Theatre

Directed by Xanthe Beesley | Collaborator Emma Hall

Is it lonely in here? Or is that just me....

Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June
George Paton Gallery, Level 2
Union House, University of Melbourne

Ideas for *The Lonely Crowd* came from many conversations where we wondered how 'we' connect and what it is that keeps 'us' apart?"

What are the real, technological and perceived barriers preventing people from forming community and does our digital world make this harder or easier than before? We became curious as to the impact of these ideas on young people and turned to a group of eleven committed and courageous performers to explore.

The process encouraged experimenting with different methods of theatre devising — both through movement and text — and drew on the ideas of the ensemble each step of the way. What we made was a piece that asked questions and (like a painting in a gallery) it's meaning could be interpreted in many ways.

The Lonely Crowd was a collage of ideas, movements and sound bites which all came from the performers' own experiences of feeling alone and looking for connection.

UHT/GPG COLLABORATION

2019 started a tradition of collaboration with UMSU's George Paton Gallery (GPG).

The GPG became the site for our performance of *The Lonely Crowd* and helped to shape and influence the style of the work. In return the GPG staff took up residence in our Guild Theatre for a fortnight to explore and present *Equidistant Objects*, in May 2019 with Melanie Irwin, Freya McGrath, Reis Lowe and Sandra Bridie.

Thank you for the wonderful support we've received this year, along with the incredible venue and team."



[Click here to watch Inside The Lonely Crowd](#)

UHT's *The Lonely Crowd*
Photo by Nam Nyugen

GUILD FRINGE

MELBOURNE FRINGE ARRIVED AT UNION HOUSE THEATRE!

This year we transformed the Guild Theatre into an artistic-hive of Fringe fun and activity.

With five student theatre shows plus pop-up foyer performances, and a transformed Guild Foyer — this was a great opportunity for students to try a new experimental work with lower risk (as the venue costs were shared) over a week during the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

The student shows presented were:

Bab Crabulous and the Dinosaur Dilemma

Mudcrabs presented a roving, fully immersive, sketch comedy show.

The Playground

Four Letter Word Theatre invited us to a play-date in an experimental adventure land.

Our Father

Presented by Feral Cat Theatre, dived into the psychology of a family turned upside down by child abuse.

The Metamorphosis

MU Modern Theatre presented a new adaptation of Franz Kafka's inimitable and sinister novella for the stage.

Kung-Fu Man

Chinese Theatre Group presented a comedy based on the story of the Wing Chun Master, Ip Man.



The Metamorphosis by MU Modern
Photo by Erin Adams



Kung-Fu Man by Chinese Theatre Group
Photo by Erin Adams



The Playground by Four Letter Word Theatre
Photo by Erin Adams



Bab Crabulous and the Dinosaur Dilemma by The Mudcrabs
Photo by Erin Adams

LA MAMA EXPLORATIONS

Union House Theatre supported nine students to develop new works for presentation as part of the La Mama Explorations season at The Burrow in June.

These works were first drafts, or unfinished scripts presented to an audience for the first time. Supported by student directors, actors, stage managers these writers developed these plays with professional mentorship. The buzz and excitement generated from these new plays has led to the formation of new theatre companies, staging of new work and further opportunities to present work at La Mama.

This initiative follows Union House Theatre's long-standing tradition of nurturing student playwrights, directors, performers and technicians since 1969. So many of our alumni go onto successful careers in the arts. UHT is proud of the diversity of voices that it empowers and our La Mama Explorations Season was no exception.

Vanessa Di Natale — *Breeders*

Martin Hoggart — *Keadaan Darurat/States of Emergency*

Donna Spilane — *Blowing the Whistle*

Scout Lubowitz — *The Angel with Blue Eyes*

Lucy Seale — *Ugly Something*

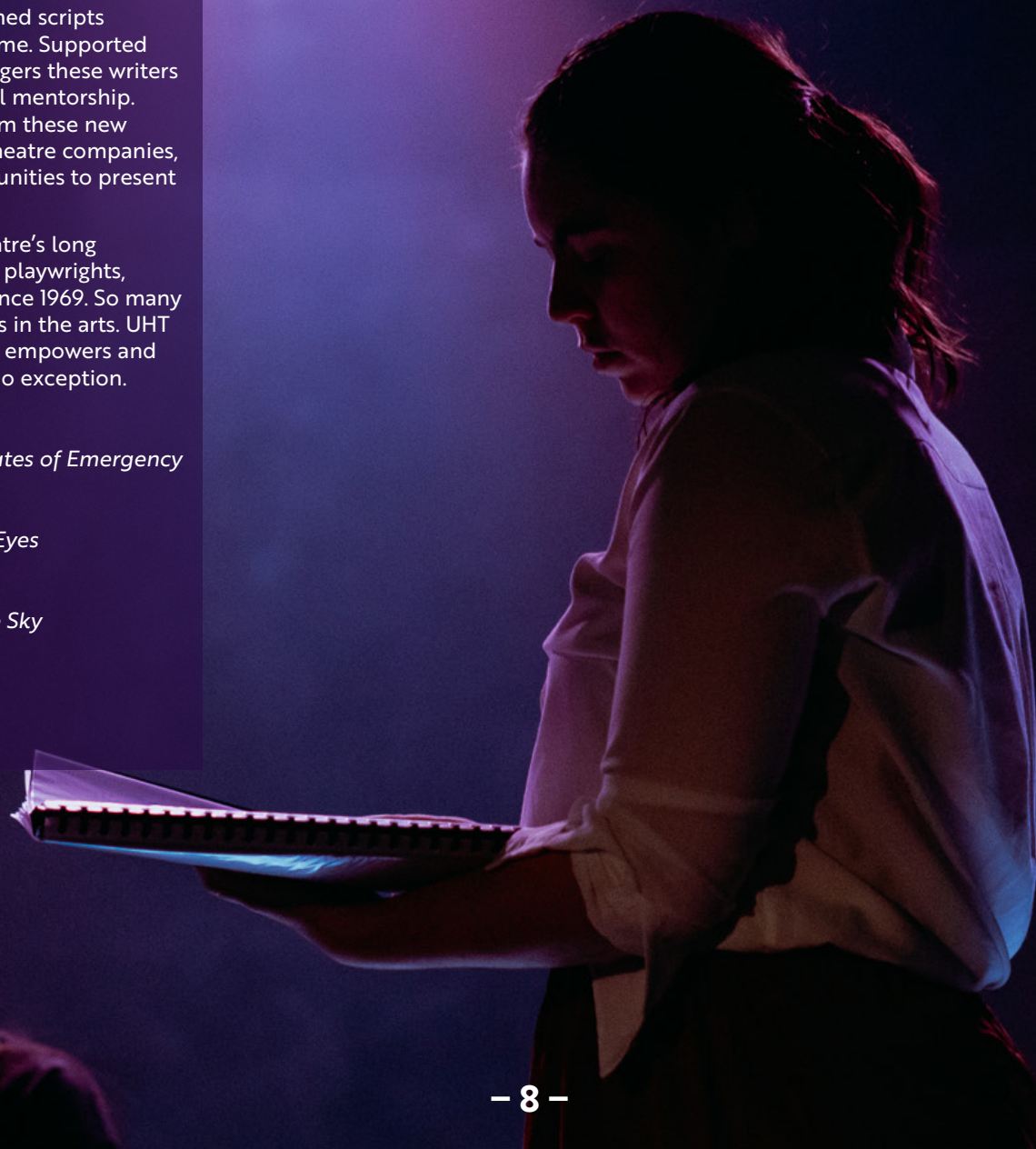
Lauren Bennet — *They Cannot Take the Sky*

Lotte Beckett — *Code-Switching*

Jo Chen — *Anonymous*

Pascale Kahn — *The Intervertible Man*

“It really does mean the world to me, and I'm sure other [students], to have the opportunity to gain so much knowledge and experience through doing these shows with you guys”



PRODUCTION REPORT

The backbone of all venue and performance activities at Union House Theatre is our Production Team.

Our Production and Venue Manager; Khat Kerr, Head Technician; Clynton Jones and Stage Carpenter; Allen Lavery, lead a team of eighteen casual theatre workers.

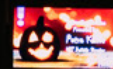
While you may not always spot them, they are at the forefront of every foyer, back stage and bio box of each student theatre production providing technical, production and management workshops and mentorships, production budget and scheduling guidance, hosting production meetings, providing technical and design advice, running bump ins and outs, providing management, venue hire, maintenance and the occasional shoulder to cry on with a box of tissues and always a rousing, loud cheer on opening nights.

The Production Team has hosted 102 production meetings, received 31 lighting plans and 19 sound designs, set up 11 orchestras, 3 visits from Nigel the Union Theatre's resident possum and used 2.4 kilometres of gaffa tape to hold it all together!

In 2019, the Production Team have covered the myriad of performance genres from dance and movement, musical theatre, cultural events, talent quests, drama and comedy...and some works that will not be defined by category! The Production Team also supported the biennale student run festival Mudfest 2019 and the first annual Guild Fringe Festival that were both incredible experiences.

Highlights for the Production Team include the ensemble site specific work of UHT's presented *The Lonely Crowd* in the George Paton Gallery, the originality of new work *Inkling* by Floor Work, as well as the problem-solving creativity of *Kung-Fu Man* and *Maniac Me* by Chinese Theatre Group.

// I feel that you were an invaluable source of information and support... I always appreciated your honesty and am honoured to have received feedback"



ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Emma Hall

UHT Artist in Residence statement 2019

During my residency at Union House Theatre in February 2019, I co-devised an ensemble performance, mentored productions, led two workshops on contemporary theatre making practice and performance, and had many discussions with students about their heroes, histories and art-making.

In semester one, I worked with Xanthe Beesley to create *The Lonely Crowd*, a devised theatre performance looking at the loneliness faced by students in a big city university. Xanthe and I spent weeks building trust and community with the ensemble of mainly new performers. Together, we researched what loneliness feels like: singularly and collectively, in our bodies and our minds, and online and IRL. We discovered that loneliness exists irrespective of the number of people in your life; what matters is the quality of social connection. I was variously moved, bewildered and inspired by the sheer talent and intelligence of the cast, and their willingness not only to learn theatre-making practice, but to interrogate how these skills and practices can inform and reflect upon their academic studies and personal lives.

During Mudfest and Melbourne Fringe, I advised creatives on three productions: *ifreak out!* by Charlie Zhang and Wilson Liew and *Override* by Alice Wheaton (both Mudfest productions), and *The Playground* (Four Letter Word Theatre). I also provided tips and support for various students regarding their career goals, creative challenges and research interests.

Working in a university environment, where ideas and social critique hold such currency, has had a brilliant impact on my artistic practice as a political artist. I've enjoyed the opportunity to interrogate, through debate and active experimentation, contemporary theatre practice and Australian industry trends with these students. I very much hope to continue the relationships I've formed with this younger generation of theatre makers, and look forward to seeing their work continue to evolve into 2020 and beyond.



Emma Hall
Photo by Bryony Jackson

ALUMNI IMPACT

"Union House Theatre didn't just enrich my time at Melbourne University, it has enriched my whole life."

Suzannah Chambers, Publisher Allen & Unwin (student 2000–2002)

"I am a Molecular Biologist and Taxonomist. I've been working in this field for over ten years (including while I was doing my PhD), and I admit that student theatre skills have been of use when it comes to conference presentations, seminars and so on - even a scientific presentation can become a bold narrative performance in its own way, while still being professional. I've used these skills when it comes to public outreach and science communication as well."

Kate Naughton, Molecular Biologist (student 2007–2013)

"I evaluate public policies and programs to assess their effectiveness. I use a lot of the management and stakeholder engagement stuff that I picked up during theatre. In my previous job as a management consultant I actually used a bunch of theatre warm up games in a project where I had to train a large number of people and needed to get them up and moving about. That was really fun."

Georgia Marett, Public Policy Consultant (student 2001–2014)

"My time at Melbourne Uni, particularly working in the Union House theatre community, has absolutely shaped who I am as an artist and a human being."

Anchuli Felicia King, 3010 Melbourne University Magazine, 2019 (student 2011–2014)



"Being involved in UHT opened a door to a world of people, creativity, making, teamwork... So many life skills. UHT gave me, a teenager from Hobart, a way into Melbourne. And a second career, completely unrelated to my degrees."

Dr Grace Walpole, GP & Palliative Medical Specialist (student, 2000–2005)

"I learned from student theatre that no matter how seemingly small the role or task you've been given, you should always be professional, work hard and produce the best possible output that you can, because the people you're working with will notice and that alone can guarantee that future opportunities that are offered to you. I think that's an important lesson that can carry forward into any professional setting, but is particularly pertinent in the legal profession, where it's incredibly important to establish a reputation as a capable and reliable colleague."

Natasha King, Junior Dispute Settlement Lawyer, World Trade Organisation (student 2018–2019)

"Student theatre was such a brilliant opportunity to be mentored by so many experienced and passionate staff and peers, and to try out new skills in a really welcoming and supportive environment. UHT was always so positive in encouraging thinking creatively and expanding your abilities as an artist, whilst also providing a lot of useful knowledge both for the theatre industry but also in working creatively with others. Thanks to student theatre not only did I make lots of friends and connections, I also got to experience lots of new and diverse works and received support in engaging in theatre beyond just the student community."

Karolina Judd, currently studying Masters of Performing Arts Administration NYU, (student 2016–2018)

“ I would like to personally thank you and express my gratitude for all the UHT staff and their mentorship, as I am extremely appreciative of all the knowledge that I have gained from working at UHT and participating in the amazing student theatre opportunities you have to offer. Working and joining the UHT community was such a turning point for me in deciding to further pursue arts administration and management, and I have loved getting to work with such hardworking and dedicated staff in creating student theatre and learning more about the theatre community.”

