



2008 Annual Report

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Our Vision

The Flying Fruit Fly Circus is internationally recognised as the national centre for excellence in contemporary circus arts for young people.

Our Mission

To provide and enhance the education and the artistic development of young people through circus training and performance thereby advancing contemporary circus arts in Australia.

Signed

Grant Glinski
Chair

Chris Pidd
General Manager and CEO

2008 HIGHLIGHTS

- Coordinating a skills exchange with Montreal Circus School
- Attendance at the Australia Council for the Arts 8th Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) and discussions with The 2012 London Olympic creative team
- Committee member of the Australian Circus & Physical Theatre Association and attendance at the biennial ACAPTA conference
- Membership of an advisory panel to Arts Victoria on the formulation of a Circus strategy
- Design and implementation of a comprehensive audit of rigging equipment and safety procedures.
- Assessment and archiving of (on-site) FFFC show posters by Helen Pithie enabled through a National Library of Australia Community Heritage Grant.
- Transfer of historical VHS footage onto DVD, a partnership project with Albury Employment Service.
- Launch of the national tour for the *Step Right Up* exhibition with Albury Art Gallery
- Beach Party's transformation into a full-length theatre show.
- Creative development and pre production for The Promise
- Two students from interstate joining the circus following participation at the National Youth Training Project
- Linking with ACAPTA to perform at NICA for the first time, celebrating National Youth Circus Day
- Visits to the FFFC school by educators from China, India and Canada
- Commission from the Victorian Arts Centre to create *Sleep Over* for the Chookahs Festival.
- A local address by benefactor and Australia Day Ambassador Noel Tovey
- Pragmatically supporting 58 adult circus artists by donating more than 12,300 hours of time, space and equipment for skill and act development
- 12,966 people seeing our young artists perform at corporate / special events
- 17,824 people seeing our general public performances
- 2.574 million media coverage for our programs and events

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2008 will stand out in the company's history as one that was marked with a number of significant milestones, events and achievements, both high and low, that sets the course for its next ten years.

Amongst them the recruitment of artistic director, Markus Michalowski, head of training, Adam Kronenberg, marketing manager Jodie Kensington, the loss of Australia Council funding coinciding with our elevation to the (non competitive) Negotiated Funding pool at Arts NSW. Our investment in the implementation of a safety audit lead to the development of an equipment check list system second to none in the Australian circus world.

Losing Australia Council funding, whilst not catastrophic in itself, has certainly provided us an opportunity to recast the organisation and not simply cut and paste from the past. Therefore as we prepare for our 2009 application to the newly created Australia Council 'Emerging Key Organisation' fund we do so with new vigour. In the early part of 2009 the company will develop separate strategic and business plans for the Training and Artistic arms to better reflect outwardly the complex nature of our operation.

The company entered into new triennial funding agreements (2009 – 2011) with Arts NSW, the NSW Department of Education, NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, Arts Victoria. Annual agreements were secured from DCITA and AlburyCity with discrete project funding from the National Library.

In sometimes difficult and trying circumstances the company, under Markus's stewardship, was able to implement an ambitious artistic program with participation in a number of regional and metropolitan festivals. Particular highlights being performances of a reconstructed Beach Party and the development of shows for Chookas and Riverside Theatre's 25th Anniversary. However, the significant changes in staff and the focus on a large scale work for early 2009 meant that audiences and turnover for that year were naturally down on 2007 figures.

The company's investment in community development continues to pay dividends. With our indigenous outreach program now centred around our home base in Albury/Wodonga we are delighted that the number of young participants who will benefit from the program will grow exponentially over the next three years.

Participation in programs offered by the circus continued to grow with 388 workshops attended by 1404 participants. The company's core training program delivered an additional 722 sessions servicing 35,656 participants.

The Noel Tovey Scholarship also grew in 2008 with donations from individuals and the company results in four scholarships being awarded in 2008 with one specifically funded through the Indigenous Officer at AlburyCity. Our thanks go to Noel for his vision and drive.

Baker Motors and the Wodonga Sports and Leisure Centre, maintained their partnerships with The Flying Fruit Fly Circus while further corporate support was secured from The Great Australian Sign Company, South Albury Truck Repairs and Border City Trucks.

Plans for the major capital upgrade of the company's training and administration centre were significantly advanced with a successful application being forwarded to the Federal Government in December. We are indebted to both AlburyCity and the City of Wodonga for supporting this application.

I attended the Australian Performing Arts Market in Adelaide during March meeting with presenters and producers from Europe and North America. The company has begun

discussions with representatives from the 2012 London Olympic games Arts Festival team with a view to presenting a work in partnership with a London based school or youth organisation.

The Australian Circus and Physical Theatre Association Conference immediately following APAM was an opportunity for the company to participate on the conference panels. The Flying Fruit Fly Circus supports this peak body with Naomi Inwood, Finance Manager, functioning as ACAPTA's Treasurer.

Our operating result for the year, a deficit of \$157,000, is a reflection of the company's investment in new work, primarily *The Promise*, and the implementation of recommendations from the safety audit conducted in 2008. Further to this our Auditor has completed a thorough review of our depreciation schedule resulting in an unexpected 40% increase in depreciation for the 2008 year. It is pleasing to note that the company has exceeded its expected 2009 return from *The Promise* which will be reflected in the 2009 result.

2008 was an extraordinary watershed for the company and I am indebted to each and every member of the Fruit Fly team and the wider Fruities community. The Board of Directors, led by Grant Glinski, continue to provide clear and consistent leadership with our parent body FOFF providing the much needed moral, financial and logistical support when and where required. Every member of the sometimes severely depleted staff devoted themselves wholeheartedly to achieving the ambitious strategic targets set. The Flying Fruit Fly Circus School staff, under the watchful gaze of coordinator Kaye Harris, make the work that we do here at the Circus possible and their support is invaluable.

Of course the public face of the company is the young artists who never fail to inspire us with their dedication, drive, courage and their ability to charm and enthrall us all. It may sound clichéd, but it is true to say that they make it all worthwhile.

Chris Pidd
General Manager

CHAIR

As foreshadowed, staff recruitment for key positions was very successful. Markus Michalowski joined us as artistic director and Jodie Kensington was recruited as marketing manager. Adam Kronenberg was recruited as head of training however he did not actually join us until early 2009.

An important focus during the year was the revision of our strategic plan. The involvement and contribution of all staff added considerable depth to the result. The plan is important to us not only because it is our guide but also because our funding bodies use it as a benchmark to measure our performance. Significantly we lost some funding this year but at about ten percent of our income it was not a 'show stopper'. Nonetheless we did run at a loss. However in 2007 we had a large surplus and we have good reserves. Despite everything we have ended the year in a good financial position.

Lobbying for building funds continued strenuously. Chris, Markus and I met with Peter Garrett, the minister responsible for the arts, in Canberra. Despite the time pressure because parliament was sitting we received a good hearing and valuable lines of communication with his staff were maintained. Towards the end of the year we made a submission for funding through the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program. Our proposal was based on being a regional project that required the support of both Albury and Wodonga councils that we were grateful to receive. With such a short time to prepare our submission it was a credit that Chris and his staff worked tenaciously to meet the deadlines.

Our submission has proven to be successful with Peter Garret having since visited us to announce that we will receive the money to construct our new building. In our thirtieth year this is the best birthday present we could have received.

Artistically we had another successful year with our performances. Markus's deft influence is already being felt and the standards of our training cadre remain high. Relationships with the school are also close and we thank Kaye Harris and her staff for their support.

We have had some changes at board level. Maureen Lescun stood down to be replaced by Rob Connell. So the active involvement of FOFF (Friends of Fruit Fly) members continues. After seven years as a board member Karral Miller has decided also to retire from the board. We have very much appreciated her support and commitment. We are fortunate to have an involved and busy board and I am thankful for their support to the Fruit Flies.

All in all we can look forward to 2009 with hope and excitement.

Grant Glinski

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

2008 was a year of great change and renewal. Changes involving company personnel as well as artistic exploration opened pathways to new directions for the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. I am delighted to be associated with this buoyant and buzzing company and am looking forward to the exciting years ahead.

Artistically we shifted gears towards a more theatrical approach. The performances and the involvement of the young artist in the creative development all showed the benefits of this.

Training has seen continuous progress under the guidance of master trainer Sergei Okhai. Skill level amongst our kids is among 'the best ever', according to some of the founding members (who attended the performance of *The Promise* and training sessions at the "Y"). With the arrival of our new head of training, Adam Kronenberg, the foundations are laid for increased focus on performance skills in co-operation with the school.

Collaboration with the FFFC School has intensified over the last year to provide one of the broadest artistic and educational experiences for students possible in Australia. Closer ties have been weaved - especially in the areas of drama, arts and fitness classes - as well as curricular co-operation and a new approach towards a unified pastoral care between circus and school. The level of work attitude, dedication, and willingness to work as team players - as well as taking on leadership responsibilities among our students - serves as constant inspiration to our trainers and staff.

Beach Party saw its transformation to a full-blown theatre show and a successful season in Griffith. A new show *Sleepover* was devised for the Victorian Arts Centre in Melbourne. *The Promise* took centre stage with two holiday blocks of creative development and a four-week production period leading up to the sell-out season and rave reviews at Sydney Festival in January 09.

The global financial crisis made itself felt in the reduction of high-end corporate engagements contrasted by the flood of inquiries hoping for free performances. Corporate engagements still generated income in 2008, but not to the extent of previous years.

Due to changeover and shortfalls in staffing, the *Stageflight* initiative (enriching the educational experience for younger artists with performance opportunities) took a hiatus but will come back in strength in 2009.

The *National Youth Training Project* had people from all over Australia flock to the Border region and continued to be a useful scouting tool for new Fruit Flies through the national intake program. Two of our new 2009 students from interstate were recruited directly through the National Training Project.

Our co-operation with NICA took big steps forward. For the first time Fruit Flies performed at NICA during the National Youth Circus Day. Plans to place all Senior School Fruit Fly students for two weeks at NICA, as well as have NICA trainers visit Albury, are being driven by both organisations. Four students went to Montreal Circus School in January for four weeks and four Canadian students and trainer joined us for a month in July.

Our team of established and new staff has gelled well. The positive effects of this are felt and communicated back by the community of parents and friends. While the changeover of three senior staff members within 18 months has meant a loss of corporate knowledge, it has also allowed for new approaches, flexible structures and fresh energies. We are already reaping the benefits of this change and I am confident that the next years will show the artistic growth needed to shine within a more challenging and competitive environment.

Markus Michalowski

SCHOOL COORDINATOR

As I reflect on my first year at the school and being involved with the circus, I have gained a greater insight and commitment to the collective vision of two organisations: “The Flying Fruit Fly Circus and school will provide and enhance the artistic and educational development of young people through circus training, performance and cultural exchange.”

The school community has a strong commitment to ensure that the students achieve their personal best in academic and circus studies. The program is centred on supporting each student to develop their academic and performing art skills, whilst making connections to their local, national and global communities. To this end the school focuses on providing a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum in line with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

The 2008 school year has been a landscape of learning experiences, starting with the whole school orientation camp to the Wymah Resort. This was a time to develop relationships and forge a positive learning culture for all students. The camp set the tone for a year of challenging and engaging programs. The central focus on ‘hands on learning through movement and activity’ extends to all curriculum areas.

The hands on approach came to the fore when students from Year 4 to 10 formed cross-age groups with a teacher as the facilitator to explore an integrated curriculum project, titled *Greenscape*. Students created personalised totem poles, mosaic tiles, vegetable patches, chicken breeding program, wearable recycled art and garden curios to enhance their school environment. Students demonstrated a range of personal and interpersonal skills to complete their projects, also gaining support from many school families and local businesses.

As in 2007, the Year 8 students travelled afar to participate in the River Health Conference, to Tamworth NSW. Students explored the plight of the bee population and creatively presented their response to peers from across the state.

The unique learning approaches at the FFFCS were recognised when Sarah Pitcher and Ella Horner featured at the annual Alfred Deakin Lecture Series ran by Monash University. The two Year 9 students outlined their learning experiences at the school and circus.

In a joint project with the Wodonga Middle Years College, and part of the ‘Festival for Healthy Living’ auspiced by the Royal Children’s Hospital, teachers and students were part of term project providing a circus experience for a group of mainstream students. A number of circus trainers led the project that culminated in a festival at the Felltimber campus.

The Fruit Fly students continued to achieve high academic results in 2008. Many of our students entered academic competitions in Mathematics, English and Science. A number of students achieved pleasing results, including distinctions and high distinctions. Most notable was a Year nine student achieving results that placed him in the top 2% of the state. The cohort of Year 10 students also undertook Theatre Studies at Year 11, Victorian Certificate of Education level.

The school year finished with the annual awards presentation ceremony. Students received awards for academic excellence and also citizenship and leadership. Many local businesses and educational providers sponsored the awards in 2008.

In addition to academic endeavours, the students also attended and participated in artistic performances, including the Soweto Choir and an initiative with Highwater Theatre / Somebody’s Daughter’s Theatre Company. Senior students visited the National Institute for Circus Arts, with one Year 10 student returning to undertake work experience at the institute.

The whole school travelled to Melbourne to celebrate the 30th birthday of Circus Oz and Year 9 - 10 students received good reviews at the Biting Dog Theatre Festival produced by HotHouse Theatre. The Year 6 - 7 class led workshops for other local students at Baranduda Primary School.

The Student Representative Council continued to be the voice for the student body. The Council led school meetings, fundraising activities and spent time consulting with the Mayor of Wodonga.

Partnerships with families were important in 2008, including formal and informal interactions. Three parent-teacher interview nights were held during the year, enabling the sharing of information about assessments and student outcomes. The Friends of the Fruit Fly (FoFF) played an important part in supporting families and the school. The school staff and students participated in the annual picnic and trivia night organised by FoFF. FoFF also made a significant financial contribution enabling the school to buy and install a large shade sale over the playground area.

The school enjoyed positive links with the Wodonga Middle Years College and Melrose Primary School. This included the use of the schools' libraries and teachers' resources, plus participation in special events (including Sorry Day), visiting authors, swimming and athletic sports, and other sporting events. As a result, a number of students went on to represent the school at district and zone competitions

International interest in the school was a feature of 2008 with visits from Canada, China and India. In particular four students undertook an exchange program with the circus and travelled to Montreal in January 2008. In June the visit was reciprocated when four senior students came to the circus and part of their exchange included studies at the school. This was a unique experience for our students with many new friendships formed. Principals from China and India came to the school to discuss student learning, curriculum and the uniqueness of the school and circus relationship.

In 2008, the school community was made up of many people and none more special than the teaching and non-teaching staff. It was a great team to be part of and each day I continued to be impressed by their talents and the way that they effortlessly (seemingly effortlessly) worked through the challenges that come their way. I wish to publicly thank them for their efforts through this publication.

The school would not exist without the circus, and we value and respect the strong and supportive relationship that exists between the school staff and Chris and Markus, The Board and their respective teams. The company faced many challenges last year and it is their consummate professionalism that makes the Flying Fruit Fly Circus a world-class company. We are all so much stronger from the long-standing and new relationships that have been forged through the exciting and visionary work of the circus.

Kaye Harris
Coordinator

ARTISTIC PROGRAM

Artistic Hub

At the close of 2008 the Flying Fruit Fly Circus reflected on 30 years of history: 30 years of locally developed artists immersing themselves in the global world of physical theatre and circus; of joining and founding companies throughout Australia. Past, current and future FFFC graduates are and will continue to be vital and crucial instigators, members, administrators and performers in the Australian physical theatre and circus landscape. Below are just some markers of the connections that tie the FFFC into this vibrant scene.

- Five out of 9 current **Circus Oz** performers are former Fruit Flies. The majority of cast members of **CIRCA** (Brisbane) are Albury Wodonga graduates.
- The 2009 Australian **CIRCA** tour of *61 acts in 60 minutes* will not only showcase two 2007 graduates, but the show's tour director Scott Grayland, is a former Training Director with us, as well as an original Fruit Fly, having started his performance path in 1979.
- The **Tom Tom Club** was the smash hit of the 2006 Edinburgh Festival, saw one European tour in 2008 and will see two more in 2009. All the acrobats are Fruit Flies, with one 2007 graduate joining the cast in Holland for their 2009 tour.
- **Acrobat**, founded by former Fruit Fly Simon Yates, use our training space on a daily basis to train and develop new work, except for when touring the world.
- 58 individual artists, many of them freelancers, made over 210 visits to our training space, equating to more than 530 hours of training and act development. Finetuning in Albury Wodonga have been used to secure employment with **Cirque du Soleil**, **Somebody's Daughter**, **Stardust Circus**, **Warehouse Circus**, **NICA**, **Silver Circus**, **Circus Monoxide**, **Circus Oz** and for the cabaret circuit across **Europe**.
- **CIRCA** came down from Brisbane in May 2008 to train for two weeks with Fruit Fly trainer Clete Ball, to share in his 55 years of acrobatic and performing experience. They developed an act based on his technique, that they performed to honour him at the Tasmanian Circus Festival in 2009.
- **Circus Oz** and the FFFC are developing a regular graduate placement with Circus Oz, to find a first footing in the industry as of 2010.
- A planning process undertaken in 2008 comes to fruition in 2009, with David Clarkson, Co-artistic director of **Stalker** giving a workshop to students with a long term view to source performers for upcoming productions.
- **A4** is a newly founded company of graduates, who in 2008, with the support of Hothouse Theatre, ourselves, Australia Council and other funders, began the process to conduct a creative development of their first production "*White Nights*" in 2009.
- **NICA** and FFFC are developing a professional development model that will see a regular exchange for year 12 students and a trainer placement program from 2010.
- The FFFC undertook a co-producer role with Performing Lines to present a **Branch Nebula** production locally. The Fruit Flies invited Branch Nebula to perform Paradise City at Wodonga Civic Centre to provide a professional development experience for our students, and to offer access to an urban art-form not usually seen in the region. The cross over fusion of break dance, bicycle acrobatics, skateboarding and modern dance inspired our kids and widened their horizon as to what physical theatre/ circus cross-over can be. An audience of 234 saw two performances.
- For the first time in our 30-year history, two of our students performed at NICA during **National Youth Circus Day**.

BEACH PARTY OUTDOOR SPECTACLE
Shepparton Arts Twilight Festival
Bounce Festival, Geelong

Director	Phil Witt, Sergei Okhai
Costume Designer	Wiggy Brennan
Light Designer	Sian James-Holland
Trainers	Ruth Bauer, Michelle Stevens, Phil Witt, Sergei Okhai
Rigger	Brook Ratcliff, Wayne Appleton
Production Manager	Scott Stoddart
Teacher	Kaye Harris, Tanya Beavan
Chaperones	Shane Smead, Steven Takle, Wayne Appleton, Owen Smith, Melissa Muntz, John McNally

Venue	Shepparton Show Ground
Dates	6 – 8 March
Performances	2
Audience	750

Venue	Geelong Performing Arts Centre
Dates	29 March
Performances	1
Audience	578

BEACH PARTY THEATRE SHOW
Griffith Theatre Subscription Season

Director	Markus Michalowski
Costume Designer	Wiggy Brennan
Light Designer	Sian James-Holland
Trainers	Ruth Bauer, Phil Witt, Shane Witt
Rigger	Luke Haynes
Production Manager	Scott Stoddart
Teacher	Karral Miller
Chaperones	Matt Smith, Julie Shepherd

Venue	Griffith Theatre
Dates	25 – 28 June
Performances	4
Audience	2104

Beach Party was originally created as a 40 minute outdoor show for the HOOPLA Festival, Sydney in 2007. This 55 minute rework for the Griffith season saw the young artists developing old and new stage figures into more ripened characters, allowing for a strong sense of ownership. On the back of the character work a strong narrative backbone was established which gave the dramatic arch needed for a full-length theatre show. Involvement in this process gave the Fruit Flies an understanding of theatrical dynamics as well as an increased appreciation for the fusion points between circus and theatre.

SLEEP OVER Chookahs Festival

Director Markus Michalowski
 Trainer Ruth Bauer
 Teacher Therese King
 Chaperones Janelle Scheuner, Wendy Day

Venue Spiegeltent, Arts Centre Melbourne
 Dates 29 October - 2 November
 Performances 20
 Audience 6210

Commissioned by the Arts Centre in Melbourne this new show saw the Fruit Flies taking over the Spiegeltent for a week. For 20 performances the venue was filled to capacity with young audiences. The simple story of a sleepover, the dreams of flight and pillow-fight drew in the young kids and delighted their adult companions. *Sleep Over* also afforded valuable public speaking experiences for the performers. Every performance was followed by a question and answer session with the audience.

Artistic Program Summary

Production	Presenter	Venue	Date	Number of performance	Audience Figures	Media Figures
Beach Party	Shepparton Festival	Shepparton	6-8 Mar	2	750	55,000
Beach Party	Geelong Council	Geelong foreshore	29-Mar	1	578	67,000
Beach Party	Griffith Council	Griffith Regional Theatre	25-28 June	4	2104	135,000
Sleep Over	Arts Centre Melb	Arts Centre Melb	Oct Nov	20	6210	675,000
Totals				27	9,642	932,000

THE PROMISE Creative Development

Writer & Director Sally Richardson
 Associate Director / Choreographer Jodie Farrugia
 Production Designer Richard Jeziorny
 Lighting Designer Philip Lethlean
 Composer/Sound Design/Musician Steph O'Hara
 Puppeteers Jacob Williams & Sarah Kreigler
 Initial concept Kim Walker

The Creative Development took centre stage in 2008 with just over 7 weeks of rehearsal spread out over the year. In many ways it signified a transition to a more theatrical approach for the Fruit Flies. All cast was introduced to hands on puppeteering as well as object theatre and shadow-play through professionals with international experience. While there was initial hesitance towards these "non circus skills" from most cast members, not only did they develop a high aptitude, but during the course of rehearsals they embraced it further and *understood how the circus moments were heightened through the different methods of storytelling*. The subsequent success of *The Promise* with audiences and reviewers alike opened the doors to further theatrical exploration in 2009.

TRAINING

2008 was a year of consolidation and solidifying aspirations for this wing of the circus. Master trainer Sergei Okhai stepped up to the plate again, and took on the lion's share of the training director's role for 12 months while managing to train the young artists before the arrival of Adam Kronenberg.

What we sought to achieve in 2008:

- To continue the progression of the skill level within the organisation with a view to inspiring the new incoming artistic director to create high level work for the company
- To encourage all the young artists within the Company to adjust to the shift from Performance group to Opportunity group and to embrace all of the demands and possibilities that the change brings
- To recruit our Head of Training
- To support the existing team of trainers to reach their pinnacle of training capability.

When the Company acquired a new artistic director in April 2008 there was also a commitment to stage established work from the predecessor, and a series of contracts to fulfil. The training team worked well to bring the young performers up to speed with all of the necessary skills to meet these responsibilities.

Student Intake & Training Groups

The Circus continues to attract high quality students to fill its vacancies both from its Circus Arts program and through open audition. Fifteen young people were identified as potential students via the Circus Arts program for 2008. These children were streamed into a selection group in which they participate in their normal Saturday class and one afterschool training session. Thirteen of these children made it through to final selection and of these, eleven accepted positions at the circus. Fourteen young people responded to our call for open selection to the circus via the general audition process in September 2007 for the 2008 intake. Of these seven were offered and accepted a position.

First year	Transition	Fledgling	Opportunity
10	12	8	47
Luke Bokic Jamie Bownds Tayla Lee Halpin Willem Karutz Genaveive Neal Jasmine Pearce Georgia Polson AJ Saltalamacchia Nicole Seawright Jordyn Smith	Tom Baxter Alexei Boyd Noah Gorrick Claudia Grenfell-Uijland Zachariah Johnson Harry McKoy Isabel Nisbet Kealy Oswald Amy Robinson Nicholas Smith Imogen Stuart Samantha Webster	Louise Ashman Kahlia Clarkson Doug Fox Hannah Kerr Stella Mitterer-Streicher Trent Stevens Indigo Walton-Guerin William White	Portia Atkins Brigitte Bailey Annabel Burns Till Cappelli Abbey Chettleburgh Jessica Connell Alexandra Coombe Susie Day Alana Foster Kyle Fowler Nicholas Gibbs Rebekah Gibbs Marni Harris Tahlia Hartwig Patrick Heilmann Ella Horner Nick Hutchinson Casuarina James Kai Johnson-Peady Nathan Jones Maya Kaspi-Horncastle Felicia Lannan

			Bree LeCornu Carlee Lowe Simon McClure Laura McNally Nathan Mills Alice Muntz Kate Muntz Amie Patching Noel Pitcher Sarah Pitcher Jemma Power Madeline Robbins Odette Robbins Marcela Scheuner Seth Scheuner Kelsey Shepherd Oliver Smith-Wellnitz Callum Stafford Jarrod Takle Blake Thomson Georgia Tighe Samantha Treffers Sophie Wilkinson Jordane Williams Alexandra Young
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Retention

First Year Entry. 100% retention from 2007 into the 2008 transition group

Transition Group. Of the fifteen in the transition group, seven moved into the performance troupe with five remaining in the group and three leaving the program.

Fledgling Group. Created in 2008.

Performance Troupe. Now Opportunity Group. Of the 38 in the troupe, seven graduated with two others leaving to pursue another academic program.

Withdrawals

Eleven students failed to complete any program in 2008. The reasons are summarized as follows: parents choose to move students to a different school/boarding school (3); homesickness (1); injury (1); parents relocating (3); behavioral issues (1); student deciding not to pursue performance linked education (2).

Circus Arts

Circus Arts remains the key feeder initiative into the FFFC School. Last year 220 children enrolled, with 13 from the Saturday program selected for the 2009 intake. Senior trainer Ruth Bauer was again the mainstay of the program, with Natalie Dyball taking charge for term 4, plus coordinating the annual concert for participants and families.

The initiative has two main objectives:

- 1 – it provides a weekly program for children who are otherwise not interested in sports; provides an alternative recreational program; and provides an introduction to circus arts
- 2 – it gives an opportunity for older Fruit Fly performers to expand their knowledge and deepen their understanding of the integral ‘other component’ of performance (training) and its subsequent responsibilities.

In 2008 we adjusted the program in response to parental feedback. This involved creating four classes that run throughout the day starting at 9.15am, concluding 5.15pm. The four classes catered for 4 – 5 years, 5 – 7 years, and two classes of 7 - 16 years. The youngest class has a trainer/student ratio of 4:1, whilst the other 3 classes have a 5:1 ratio. The class

structure included: a game, stretching and tumbling, prior to learning skills such as a-ring, trampoline, trapeze, handstands, mini-trampoline, tight-wire, juggling, rolla-bolla, hula hoops. During the year potential students are identified for the following year's circus school intake. This more targeted program is conducted during the last 2 terms of the school year.

Circus Arts is taught by four senior adult trainers (Ruth Bauer, Matt Swan, Per Westman and Nick Gibbs). They supervise and mentor 10 junior training staff, all of who were current students. Potential 'trainee trainers' shadow senior trainers prior to being employed. One benefit of being a trainee trainer is that they become adept at teaching children who possess a variety of learning styles, social backgrounds and medical conditions. Circus Arts affords the trainees the chance to consolidate what they've learnt during their years with the circus. Interestingly, the bulk of these have themselves come through the Circus Arts program, now finding themselves as role models for a 2nd generation!

Trainee Trainers: Brigitte Bailey, Annabel Burns, Till Cappelli, Jessica Connell, Patrick Heilmann, Nick Hutchinson, Maya Kaspi, Bree Le Cornu, Kieran Love, Tessa Love, Simon McClure, Laura McNally, Alice Muntz, Noel Pitcher, Seth Scheuner, Callum Stafford, Sophie Wilkinson.

Graduates of 2008

There was one graduate last year. Bridget Bailey went through the circus and school as part of a small Year 9 cohort, where the original intake totaled three students. Bridget was trained in Web and Tight-wire. She will spend 2009 as a gap year, and work with the FFFC as a Circus Arts trainer.

Future Student Intake

In 2008 we promoted to the broader regional community and removed the charge for auditioning. This resulted in 56 young people trying out for a position. Of these, 32 were offered position with 31 finally taking their places in January 2009. Eighteen were identified as potential students through Circus Arts. Seventeen were offered places, with 13 accepting.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING OUTCOMES

National Youth Training Project

The NYTP was held over two weeks during the Victorian school holidays in June/July. The FFFC revised its aims and targets for this project as it became a non-subsidised addition to the annual program. The company over achieved on its target of 20 participants, attracting 23 to the two-week course despite a significant fee increase due to the lack of external financial support.

Ten trainers were involved, including two graduates now established in freelance careers, Felicity O'Brien and Alonna Scott.

A bonus for the circus was having two of the participants return to the region to take part in the general audition process in September, when they were accepted into the permanent school program, boarding with local families.

Montreal exchange

This circus skills training exchange was conducted in January and July 2008 between FFFC and École Nationale de Cirqe de Montréal (National Circus School). The exchange involved Ruth Bauer and four students from the Opportunity Group (Till Cappelli, Seth Scheuner, Kelsey Shepherd and Alice Muntz). The aim for the Fruit Flies was to see how other training institutions operated, and to gain experience from a well-resourced training organisation that catered to the upper secondary and tertiary level performer.

Ruth gained professional development from the visit, learning about individual schedules and staff rostering. The students were slotted into preparation physique training for acrobatics,

drama and dance, aerial tissu, swinging trapeze, cloud-swing and 'fast track' training (a 20m length of ground level trampoline floor).

The FFFC team learned more than circus skills during the four weeks: they gained a deeper understanding of the Canadian way of life through a home billeting program that enabled them to appreciate winter as represented by -16 degrees Celsius!

Members of the host families were involved in Part 2. Four students and one trainer visited the FFFC for two weeks and NICA for four days. The Montreal students tried skills they had not previously attempted, such as teeterboard. Canadian trainer Veronique Thibeault worked with the FFFC students and trainers on strength work and duo-trapeze.

As a direct result of this alliance, 2007 graduate Bridie Hooper enrolled in the Diploma of National Circus School Studies, following in the footsteps of Zeb Hunter, who gained the tertiary qualification several years earlier.

Our aim is to continue with the alliance, and we hope to send trainers to participate in a four month intensive 'teach the trainer' course in Montreal.

Equipment Audit

2008 saw the initial implementation of an audit focussed on rigging equipment and associated procedures. A series of safety standards were created & introduced throughout the year. This included retirement schedules for all purchased & manufactured circus equipment, purchasing standards, inspection standards coupled with an extremely thorough working at height OH & S policy.

2008 also saw the first Advanced Rigging Course undertaken by FFFC staff. All six participants were successful in achieving this qualification. This has enabled and facilitated a greater ease of implementing the above-mentioned standards & inspections.

This has also given the company a far stronger group of properly trained individuals. Add to this the flexibility of having trainers who can also rig, and it has proved to be an invaluable asset.

YoHo Product Development

The training department was involved in the production of an instructional CD that accompanied purchases of an electro hula-hoop sold by toy manufacturer, YoHo.

Senior Trainer Yos Worth was employed as a design consultant for the hoops and four FFFC hula specialists featured in the instructional interactive CD Rom. Another 14 students featured in a second promotional CD featured on the manufacturer's website. The project was several months in development, resulting in one day of filming in Albury.

There were two main areas of benefit from this partnership:

- International exposure: -the FFFC features prominently in the CDs, and is credited accordingly.
- Complimentary hoops have been used in performances and in training.

Adam Kronenberg, Sergei Okhai, Ruth Bauer, Yos Worth, Scott Stoddart

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In 2008 we implemented a multi-faceted workshop program that focussed on four key areas. Namely:

- corporate (team building, professional development)
- indigenous (camp based outreach, Train the Trainer, Local Inclusion Albury/Wodonga)
- school (regional and town)
- Griffith 'Smart Circus' Project

Corporate

Based on team building, professional development and the ethos "a happy team is a productive team". This program is in its early stages and we completed a pilot program in 2008 as research to develop tailor made packages to suit businesses. In 2009 we look to promote an inclusive program that caters to local and interstate companies.

Indigenous

Local Inclusion – Albury/Wodonga

In term 3 we began a weekly indigenous class for a local group of 12 teenagers who are working towards an end of year performance at Albury's Nangirra Indigenous Festival in 2009. The main aim for this program is that the students get a good understanding of circus training so that in the future they have an opportunity to audition for the main FFFC program.

Connect ED – Circus Camp and 'Train the Trainer'

The Camp is a circus and cultural activity program for indigenous youth from NSW regional towns including Balranald, Barham, Deniliquin and Wagga Wagga. The week long camp culminated in a circus performance shown to the local community at the FFFC training space in Albury. In 2008 50 people – many of them female Elders - attended the show and feedback was very positive. The audience was amazed at how quickly the indigenous kids learnt circus skills and how confident they were at performing them. The circus camp program offered skills in juggling, tumbling, hula hoops, acro-balance, trapeze, diabolo, mini trampoline, dance and aerial ring.

Project Trainers: Joshua Bond, Zanette Clements, Rebecca Coen, Tiffany Winters

In 2009 a trainer course will be attached to the Connect Ed camp and ran for 2 days. It will be specifically designed to educate indigenous educational officers from around the region to deliver their own basic circus workshops in their own communities. The trainees will also be involved in the camp and learn first hand from FFFC trainers delivering the Circus Camp program.

School groups

The FFFC offered in-house and outreach circus workshops for schools such as Finley High School and various community groups. This annual commitment has utilised Circus Arts trainee trainers alongside senior staff.

Griffith Smart Circus (2008 – 2011)

This is a three year cultural development project involving a majority of the Western Riverina town's youth. To date it involves 500 students through outreach school programs. The project began in 2008 and will culminate in a FFFC and Griffith community performance with a core group of 60 students in 2011.

The company is investing in a team of trainers that are culturally aware, have a broad range of skill and can work across all areas of the wider community. The team are all ex-Fruit Fly students that have an interest in passing on their skills to various community groups.

Workshop Summary

Organisation	Number			Demographic				Date
	W'shops	Participants	Total participants	In house	Out reach	Corp	Indigenous	
Tirkandi 'Boys to Men' program	4	12	48		13 -16		12-14yrs	Feb
Connect ED. Indigenous Train the Trainer & Circus Camp	21	37	777	10-16yrs				Mar - Apr
Shepparton Festival	6	33	198		7-16yrs			Apr
Camp Quality	2	20	40	10-20yrs				May
Finley High School.	30	400	12000		11 -15yrs			Jul
Performance	1	400	400					
Wodonga's Festival of Healthy Living & Felltimber School	28	20	560					July-Oct
Performance	1	20	20					
Local Inclusion (2 terms)	20	12	240				10-16yrs	Aug
Balranald – OTYP	14	60	840		5-16yrs			Aug
Wodonga Children's Fair	4	80	320		6 -16 yrs			Oct
Moyhu – Wangaratta	3	14	42	6-12yrs				Oct
Wakool + Barham	8	114	912		9-15 yrs			Nov
Performance	1	114	114					
Griffith Smart Circus Project 'taster'	30	55	1650		10-16 yrs			Nov
Albury Council team building pilot	1	12	12			adults		Dec
Griffith Circus	4	35	140		10-16 yrs			Dec
SUB TOTAL	178	1438	18313					

Michelle Stevens
Senior trainer/ community development officer

OTHER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Fruit Bats

This Circus program for over 40s continued with vigour in 2008. Fruit Bats members were trained by Per Westman, Yos Worth and Julie Wilson twice weekly in the training centre. The core group numbered 15.

The Fruit Bats appeared at 12 community events throughout the region during the year. They conducted demonstrations, workshops, and choreographed performances.

Event	Venue	Date	Number of Performers	Audience Figures
National Seniors Veterans Tennis Tournament	Catholic College, Wodonga	20-Jan	14	700
Workshop	Wodonga	6-Mar	12	0
Demonstration	Hovell Tree Park, Albury	6-Apr	10	200
Seniors' Week NSW	Lutheran Home, Albury	9-Apr	8	55
Rutherglen Outside School Hours Programme	Wodonga Primary School	9-Jul	10	300
Demonstration	Park Hall Retirement Village, Wodonga	10-Sep	9	30
Dementia Respite Options	Mirambeena, North Albury	17-Sep	7	75
Seniors' Week Victoria	Rutherglen Memorial Hall	8-Oct	7	160
Over 50s Festival	Wodonga Civic Centre	11-Oct	n/a	n/a
Applause Festival	QE2 Square, Albury	18-Oct	9	500
Agricultural Show	Rutherglen	9-Oct	9	40
Celebrate Ability Day	Gateway Amphitheatre, Wodonga	5-Dec	7	
Total			102	2210

CORPORATE / SPECIAL EVENTS

In addition to works created under the banner of our artistic program, we also responded to requests for bespoke shows or one-off performances of existing work. This corporate sector relationship is a vital link for the company and strengthens connections between business and the arts. In 2008 we were able to respond to a series of regional events as part of our aim to maintain a strong local identity.

Event	Venue	Date	Number of performances	Audience Figures	Media Figures
Australia Day	Noreuil Park, Albury	26-Jan	1	4,000	165,000
Noel Tovey address - Australia Day Ambassador	Noreuil Park, Albury	26-Jan	2	4,250	165,000
25 th Anniversary	Riverside Theatre, Sydney	16-Mar	1	549	355,000
Wodonga Man Launch	Wodonga Civic Centre	15-Apr	1	200	165,000
Today Show Weather - Channel 9	Gateway Village, Wodonga	17-Apr	1		143,387
Hueys Cooking Adventures – Network 10	Albury	17-Sep	1		312,370
National Youth Circus Day Cabaret	NICA, Melbourne	30-Sep	1	220	887,000.00
Albury Art Gallery Step Right Up Exhibition opening	Albury	10-Oct	1	500	165,000
Mars Petcare Australia	Wodonga	28-Nov	1	100	0
RSM Bird Cameron Accounting	Wodonga, Gypsy Gardens	1-Dec	1	170	0
AUDIENCE			11	9,989	2,357,757

Community Feedback

"We're just thrilled across the board in every way, and the audience responded really well".
Donna Aston, Geelong Bounce Festival Program Manager, 2/4/08

"We would like to thank you for your generous and talented contribution to making Riverside's 20th Anniversary Concert a huge success. It was enjoyed by each and every member of the audience and will be remembered as a special occasion for a long time to come." Robert Love and Camilla Rountree, Director/Producer, Riverside Theatres, 18/3/08

"The FFFC is renowned for it's high standard of performance and theatricality and the quality of the performance delivered for Chookahs certainly reflected this." Linda Catalano, Chookahs Festival Producer Programming, 10/2/09

"I wouldn't have traded my childhood for anything. Working with people who wanted to do more and who wanted to be better, going to training every night, doing it all together."
Spenser Inwood, former Fruit Fly performer, ACAPTA newsletter, 10/08 edition

"Thank you so much for giving our son Sebastian the opportunity to participate in a workshop recently at the Shepparton Arts Festival... the opportunity to perform before the Fruit Flies was invaluable. Sebastian was very impressed with all the instructors who he found to be wonderful and passing on/teaching their skills. We also we [sic] 'blown away' by the stand of the performance of the Fruit Flies." Walker-Staalyaer Family, 4/08.

"He is having the time of his life as a Fruitie and I'd like to pass on our thanks for his opportunity. He's on the phone to us every evening telling us about every aspect of his training. He just loves it." Jenny Hutchinson, Nick's mum, 29/5/08

"The most magic of weeks. Thanks FFFC." Di Alexandra, Creative Arts Consultant Riverina, Connect Ed Circus Camp, 3/4/08

"As a unique training and performing institute with high quality trainers and support staff the FFFC can certainly be seen as a hub for the circus industry." Linda Catalano, Chookahs Festival Producer Programming, 10/2/09

"You are a highly skilled, professional and unique troupe who delivers exceptional service every time. It delivered everything it promised and more. Would happily recommend to others." Meredith Williams, ICON International Communications, 8/3/08

"A highlight of our experience at the Arts Centre was visiting the Spiegel tent and watching the young Fruities perform."

"The Kids loved being in the Spiegel tent and the Fruit Fly Circus was pitched perfectly for this age."

"Children [were] SO inspired by the Fruit Fly's physicality after this experience; especially on trapeze swing, hoops."

"Children loved seeing their peers perform in the beautiful Speigeltent. The Fruit Flies show was perfect for this space."

"The skill level of the Fruit Flies was amazing."

"The Children can't stop talking about the Fruit Flies show in particular - they were very inspired." School teachers and patrons, via VAC Festival, 2008

"It's fun, its exciting, risk taking and the more I do and the more I learn, the more I love it ... Before I joined the FFFC I wasn't having the best time in my life, but the circus made me feel happy and helped me escape from other things, and now I want to do it as a career."
Callum Stafford, Fruit Fly performer, 10/08

MANAGEMENT

The management systems within the company were further developed in 2008 with the refinement of proformas for corporate budgets and quotes, for interdepartmental requests, for purchasing protocols and for wage and per diem payments.

The company now has standard contracts for sell off seasons and for all positions that may be contracted for a project. This has made the contracting process more rigorous and more streamlined – essential given the number of guest artists and presenters with whom the company works each year and the level of safety that we need to ensure for our young artists.

Planning and review

In 2008 the company began a thorough review of its 2008 – 2011 strategic plan. The board has taken that view that whilst the company should be ambitious we should not be unrealistic. It is felt that the current plan should be recast and placed over 5 years, which with our regular reviews, will ensure its relevance to 2014.

The following year's annual program, budget and targets against the strategic plan are presented to the meeting of the board of directors for approval in October.

The development of the annual program is one that evolves over a three year period. Detailed planning for the coming year starts in February of the year prior. Seasons are mapped out and planned around confirmed tours.

At Board level there are annual reviews of:

- The strategic plan
- The performance of the artistic director and general manager
- The performance of each member of the board of directors (prior to the AGM)
- The performance of the Board as a whole (prior to the AGM)

At senior staff level there are reviews of

- The strategic plan each quarter
- The company's assets each year
- The performance of all members of staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair	Grant Glinski
Treasurer	Peter Challis
Board	Catherine Brown, Rob Connell, Robert Inwood, Ross Kearney, Karral Miller, Jane Mullett, Kate O'Brien, Yos Worth (aka Helen Sonerson)

COMPANY

General Manager	Chris Pidd
Artistic Director	Markus Michalowski
Head of Training	Adam Kronenberg
Finance Manager	Naomi Inwood
Production and Operations Manager	Scott Stoddart
Marketing Manager	Jodie Kensington
Community Development Officer	Michelle Stevens
Master Trainer	Sergei Okhai
Trainers	Ruth Bauer, Phillip Witt, Yos Worth
Circus Arts Coordinators	Ruth Bauer, Natalie Dyball
Administrative Staff	Robyn Cole, Natalie Keaveney, Terri Robinson,
Casual Trainers	Clete Ball, Keirnan Bourke, Nathan Boadle, Andrew Bright, Amy Britten, Daniel Catlow, Caitlin Clarke, Dai Shu Ling, Casey Douglas, Freyja Edney, Nicholas Gibbs, Scott Grayland, Zebastian Hunter, Spenser Inwood, Meg Jacobs, Phillipa Kammerer, Brook Lester, Lachlan McAulay, Xavier Pinard, Matthew Swan, Brodee Stewart, Nathan Taskis, Per Westman, Julie Wilson, Shane Witt, Tanya Witt.
Physiotherapist	Louise Humphries
Rigger	Brook Ratcliff
Wardrobe	Catriona Brennan, Heather Heather
Video - DVD Archivist	Benjamin Byrnes

SCHOOL

Coordinator	Kaye Harris
Teachers	Tanya Beavan, Therese King, Neil McDermott, Karral Miller, Valerie Ratcliff
Literacy Support	Kath Dobson
Business Manager	Liz Wilkinson

LIFE MEMBERS

Audray Banfield, Kath Dobson, Mara Giourouki, Heather Heather, David Lester, Guang Rong Lu, Trevor Matthews, Neil McDermott, Dr Jane Mullett, Jacqui Nelson, Charles Parkinson, John Paxinos, Robert Bomber Perrier, Jim Saleeba, Rob Scott, Faye Stevens, Kim Walker, Elizabeth Walsh.

as at 31 December 2008)