

CHAMBER  
MADE  
OPERA

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# Annual Report 2015

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“This is what opera in the 21st century should be...  
The ways in which all of the artists work together  
in Captives of the City is astonishing.”

– *The Sound Barrier, PBS FM*



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# Message from the Chair

*Michael Bink*

Chamber Made Opera continues its restless, relentless pursuit of the now. This is and always has been one of its defining characteristics. Yesterday's ideas are inadequate for a truly contemporary company. Once we were at the edge of opera, now we are at the centre of something new. Our artistic team – Tim Stitz, Sarah Kriegler, Erkki Veltheim, Christie Stott, and Tamara Saulwick – is creating work that is dramatically new and utterly relevant to today. Old definitions are being obliterated, releasing gravity waves that push and pull at the fabric of our artistic universe.

This important work is happening in dark, subterranean places. An artistic prison in the bowels of the Arts Centre. A stark hospital basement amongst flickering film and the tyranny of digital clocks racing to an absolute end. It is revolutionary work. Alchemical. The results are dangerous. And danger is exciting. Here at the centre of the new.

Like any voyagers, we need to thank our Navigators and all our donors: their support gives us courage to undertake work we otherwise could not afford, to take risks, to explore. We need to thank our Governments, who understand our work and invest in us: Creative Victoria (Victorian Government), City of Melbourne, Australia Council and Creative Partnerships Australia (Australian Government). And we need to thank the philanthropic organisations that

allow us to pursue ideas here and overseas and to take our vision into the lives of the young people at The Venny, who give even more back to us in return through their enthusiasm and growth. In regard to this last point I want to single out the wonderful Hugh Williamson Foundation, which has supported us for a number of years and has agreed to continue that support in 2016.

The Chamber Made Opera Board also provides guidance to our artistic voyagers. I'd like to thank my peers: Greer, Fiona, Michael, Dave, Erin and Kylie for giving their time and wisdom to our endeavors. Collectively we are able to provide a reflective space where the day-to-day work of the company is considered against our long term obligations to our audience, funders and supporters. To ensure we do this as best we can we have committed to ongoing development as a team, focusing in 2015 and 2016 on building our financial and risk management competency.

Likewise, the company will continue its ongoing commitment to make work that reflects our dynamic society. Where the digital sits alongside the analog, where performance and installation, recorded and live, song and sound are no longer distinct categories. Chamber Made Opera is a risk taker within the Australian art landscape, weaving music, performance and the voice into new forms.

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*For over 25 years Chamber Made Opera  
has created new works that challenge and  
re-define the artform*

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## **Vision Statement**

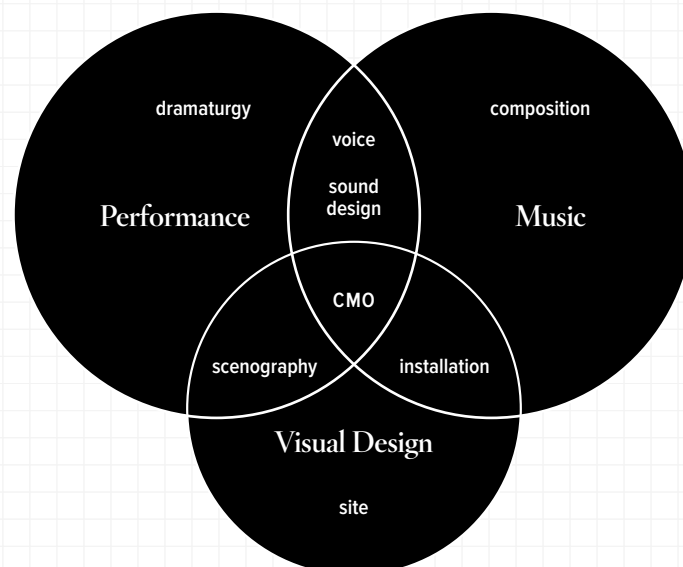
Chamber Made Opera aspires to be recognised nationally and internationally for creating outstanding interdisciplinary performance works.

## **Mission Statement**

Chamber Made Opera creates new works that re-imagine how music, performance and design can converge.

## **Values**

Collaboration . Complexity . Newness . Rigour





# Creative Director's Report

*Tim Stitz*

We had a busy and varied constellation of activities in 2015, working with a range of artists, organisations and partners. February saw *Captives of the City*, a collaboration with Lemony S Puppet Theatre (led by CMO Artistic Associate Sarah Kriegler), provide a subterranean theatrical experience for audiences in unusual spaces at Arts Centre Melbourne. This fusion of digital puppetry, live animation, new music and performance was a radical exploration of the desire for change, particularly that urge which stems from ordinary people feeling let down and disillusioned by those in authority.

Two new Little Operations came into being in 2016. *The Perfect Human*, a new work in development by Emerging Artist-in-Residence Aviva Edean in collaboration with two of Melbourne's most adventurous vocalists, Carolyn Connors and Jenny Barnes. And *The Sky is Well Designed*, a work-in-progress from Fabricated Rooms, a collaboration between writer-director Patrick McCarthy and composer Robert Jordan.

Both events allowed these artists to test ideas in front of an audience and inform their next stage of development.

We presented two Salons, where we invited audiences to be part of dynamic conversations about various aspects of artistic practice. The April Salon focussed on Agile Opera, our 3 year Australia Research Council Linkage project with RMIT University, Fed Square and the Australia Council. In October we presented and celebrated a screening of *Turbulence*, a film by Peter Humble that re-imagines the 2013 Living Room Opera composed by Juliana Hodkinson with libretto by Cynthia Troup. This also included a special, public screening of the work at Federation Square. The Agile Opera project had two Microlabs where participants engaged with our research into the conceptualisation, creation and application of digital iterations of CMO works.

Two new works had development periods in 2016. In July we sent a posse of artists to Chendgu,

“Chamber Made Opera has consistently sought new ways of operatic expression and presentation... Opera needs to be constantly challenged and reimagined.”

– *Tim Stitz in The Australian (June 2015)*

China as part of the Chengdu Teahouse Project. The development included public performances in a teahouse in The Narrow Alley and Wangjianglou Park. Meanwhile, director Tamara Saulwick (CMO Artistic Associate) and composer Kate Neal have been developing *Permission to Speak*, a new choral/performance work, which mines the thematic territory of the parent/child, child/parent relationship as it exists and evolves through time.

We headed into the year's end with #IntimatelyEpic, an experiment in placing sound, music and image installations in a variety of businesses throughout North Melbourne. Our goal was to provide 'art that interrupts the everyday' and engage the general public with digital iterations and re-imaginings of a number of CMO works. CMO Artistic Associate Christie Stott led this adventurous digital / analogue investigation.

Also in November, we started pre-production for *Another Other*, a work which had its preview season at Punctum's ICU in Castlemaine in late 2014. Lead by Artistic Associate, Erkki Veltheim in collaboration with three of Australia's leading experimental artists Natasha Anderson, Sabina Maselli and Anthony Pateras, this unique blend of contemporary opera, expanded cinema and sound installation will have its World Premiere in Melbourne in February 2016.

Our final celebration and event was a concert by the Children of The Venny. As in previous years, Chamber Made Opera, led by Artistic Associate Sarah Kriegler, has been involved with The Venny (a communal backyard and drop in centre for children-at-risk and the wider community of Kensington). In 2015 we ran 14 weeks of music lessons from September to December in partnership with the amazing staff at The Venny, and the result was a joyful celebration of song, voice and music by this extraordinary community of young people.

Thank you to all of our 2015 artists, audiences, funding partners, project partners, advocates and champions, for another year of tremendous support. I'd like to especially thank our enthusiastic and dedicated Board and the generous and deeply valued donors who are part of our Navigator program. Your support in a year that saw the Australian arts world significantly shaken has been unwavering and essential.

# Credits

## STAFF

Tim Stitz  
*Creative Director /  
CEO*

Sarah Kriegler  
*Artistic Associate*

Tamara Saulwick  
*Artistic Associate*

Christie Stott  
*Artistic Associate*

Erkki Veltheim  
*Artistic Associate*

Imbi Neeme  
*Program Coordinator*

Emilie Collyer  
*Communications  
Coordinator*

Sally Goldner  
*Finance Officer*

Bek Berger  
*Associate Producer  
(April-May 2015)*

Hannah Rundman  
*Associate Producer;  
#IntimatelyEpic  
Project (October-  
December 2015)*

Aviva Endean  
*Emerging Artist in  
Residence, October  
2014 – July 2015 (VCA  
Professional Pathways  
Scholarship)*

## COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Michael Bink  
*Chair*

Greer Evans  
*Treasurer*

Kylie Trounson  
*Secretary*

David Maney

Erin Milne

Michael Roper

Fiona Sweet

## ARTISTIC COLLABORATORS 2015

Esther Anatolitis  
*arts leader & microlab  
participant*

Natasha Anderson  
*musician/composer*

Jenny Barnes  
*performer*

Steve Berrick  
*visual artist &  
microlab participant*

Anneli Bjorasen  
*performer*

Danni von der Borch  
*community artist*

Margaret Cameron  
*director, writer  
and performer*

Mark Cauvin  
*bassist*

Guo Si-Cen  
*musician*

Carolyn Connors  
*vocalist*

Raimondo Cortese  
*dramaturg*

Georgie Darvidis  
*vocalist*

Ben Eltham  
*journalist & microlab  
participant*

Aviva Endean  
*musician & composer*

Edward Fairlie  
*performer*

Greg Forrest  
*academic*

Felix Ching Ching Ho  
*director*

Juliana Hodkinson  
*composer*

Zhu Hui-Qian  
*vocalist*

Madeleine Flynn  
*sound artist*

Ben Grant  
*performer/dramaturg*

Lawrence Harvey  
*academic*

Greg Hooper  
*neuroscientist, media  
artist & microlab  
participant*

Peter Humble  
*film-maker &  
microlab participant*

Tim Humphrey  
*sound artist*

Dave Jones  
*animator*

Rob Jordan  
*composer*

Deborah Kayser  
*vocalist & ukulele  
player*

Kofi Kunkpe  
*percussionist*

Sarah Kriegler  
*writer/director*

Joshua Kyle  
*vocalist*

Tom Lane  
*composer*

Caroline Lee  
*voice artist, actor*

Kang Yan-Long  
*vocalist*

Sabina Maselli  
*video artist*

Patrick McCarthy  
*writer/director*

Sam McGilp  
*PhD candidate Agile  
Opera project*

Alexia Maddox  
*digital sociologist &  
microlab participant*

Mick Meagher  
*guitarist*

Greg More  
*academic*

Kate Neal  
*composer*

Daisy Noyes  
*photographer*

Anthony Pateras  
*musician/composer*

Adam Pierzchalski  
*actor*

Josh Price  
*performer*

Hannah Rundman  
*associate producer*

Sophie Ross  
*performer*

Kendyl Rossi  
*public art producer*

Tamara Saulwick  
*performance maker &  
dramaturg*

Matthias Schack-  
Arnott  
*percussionist*

Wang Shuai  
*percussionist*

Gian Slater  
*vocalist*

Tim Stitz  
*creative director*

Maeve Stone  
*director*

Christie Stott  
*digital artist*

Kate Sulan  
*outside eye*

Rainbow Sweeny  
*production manager*

Cynthia Troup  
*librettist*

Margaret Trail  
*academic &  
performance maker*

Nick Tsiavos  
*bassist*

Erkki Velthiem  
*musician/composer*

Kim Vines  
*academic*

Jacob Williams  
*puppeteer*

Mark Williams  
*lawyer & microlab  
participant*

Jethro Woodward  
*sound designer*

David Young  
*composer*

Jeremy Yuille  
*academic*

Wang Zheng-Ting  
*master Sheng player*

The children of  
The Venny *devisors,  
musicians, performers*



# The Year at a Glance

## JANUARY

Tim attends *Australian Theatre Forum*, Sydney

## FEBRUARY

*Captives of the City*, performance season,  
Arts Centre Melbourne

## MARCH

Tim and Wang Zheng-Ting visit Chengdu

## APRIL

*Salon: Agile Opera*, RMIT Design Hub,  
Melbourne

*Agile Opera Microlab*, RMIT Design Hub,  
Melbourne

Tim attends *IETM (international network  
of performing arts)*, Bergamo, Italy

## JUNE

*Permission to Speak*, creative development,  
Melbourne

*Little Operations* with Aviva Endean, Footscray  
Community Arts Centre

## JULY

*Chengdu Teahouse project*, artistic exchange/  
residency, full creative team, Chengdu

## AUGUST

*The Chengdu Teahouse Project*, open artists  
debrief, Northcote

Weekly workshops at *The Venny*, Kensington

## SEPTEMBER

Weekly workshops at *The Venny*, Kensington

## OCTOBER

*Turbulence*, Special Screening & Salon Event,  
Fed Square, Melbourne

*Agile Opera Microlab*, RMIT Design Hub,  
Melbourne

Weekly workshops at *The Venny*, Kensington

## NOVEMBER

*Little Operations* with Fabricated Rooms,  
RMIT Design Hub, Melbourne

*IntimatelyEpic*, Digital Installation Project,  
North Melbourne

Weekly workshops at *The Venny*, Kensington

## DECEMBER

Weekly workshops at *The Venny*, Kensington

A Community Concert at *The Venny*,  
Kensington

A close-up photograph of a person with long hair, wearing a black shirt, playing a suspended gong. The gong is held by a metal ring and a blue carabiner. The person is using two wooden mallets with white, fuzzy heads to strike the gong. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the person's hands and the gong. The text "Works Live Performance" is overlaid in white, serif font in the upper center of the image.

# Works Live Performance

# Captives of the City

*A subterranean performance*

## World Premiere

11 - 14 February 2015

**Captives of the City** was a collaboration between independent company Lemony S Puppet Theatre and Chamber Made Opera.

This project was assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

## Artistic Credits

Created by  
Chamber Made Opera and  
Lemony S Puppet Theatre

Sarah Kriegler  
*Director & Writer*

Ben Grant  
*Writer & Dramaturg*

David Young  
*Composer*

Dave Jones  
*Animation & Digital Puppetry  
Design*

Jethro Woodward  
*Sound Design & Musical  
Direction*

Jacob Williams  
*Maker/Designer & Puppeteer*

Rainbow Sweeney  
*Production Manager*

Adam Pierschalski  
*Actor*

Mark Cauvin  
*Double Bass*

Matthias Schack-Arnott  
*Percussionist*

Caroline Lee  
*Voice Artist*

**Captives of the City** won two Green Room Awards:

- Design and Realisation in Contemporary Performance
- Puppetry Performance

**Captives of the City** took audiences into a subterranean theatrical experience. Underground and unusual spaces at the Arts Centre Melbourne provided the setting for this new chamber opera.

A fusion of digital puppetry, live animation, music and performance, **Captives of the City** was a radical exploration of the desire for change. The Captives faced the choice between the terrifying uncertainty of embracing change and the safety of maintaining the status quo.

This work for our time captured the urge which stems when ordinary people feel let down and disillusioned by their leaders and must ask which way to turn.

*“Schack-Arnott’s solo improvisation on a close-miked cage with knitting needles ... conjures silvery tones, phasing swathes of sound and deep bass notes out of the bars... The show has a simple message about the power of citizen journalism and artistic freedom that is cleverly and cleanly communicated through digital puppetry and stunning musical performances.”*

- PARTIAL DURATIONS / REALTIME, April 2015

*“Suggestions of invasion, revolution and technological apocalypse are abstracted, letting the audience fill the gaps between allusions to the role of the artist in resistance and the ruling party’s struggle to retain the status quo.”*

- THE AGE, February 2015



“As an act of digital puppetry, it’s astounding...”

*THE AGE, February 2015*



# Permission to Speak

*What will we say?*

## Creative Development

*15 – 18 June 2015*

**Permission to Speak** is a Chamber Made Opera production.

It is the first collaboration between director Tamara Saulwick and composer Kate Neal.

**Commissioned** by Chamber Made Opera with support from Helen and Peter Murdoch and the Australian government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

## Artistic Credits

Created and performed by  
Chamber Made Opera

Tamara Saulwick  
*Director*

Kate Neal  
*Composer*

Jethro Woodward  
*Sound Design*

Georgie Darvidis, Edward Fairlie,  
Josh Kyle, Gian Slater  
*Vocalists*

What do we want to say to the people who brought us into this world? What do we want to say to those whom we leave behind?

**Permission to Speak** is a new choral/performance work, which mines the thematic territory of the parent/child, child/parent relationship as it exists and evolves through time. Through a diverse range of voices and perspectives drawn from multiple interview participants, the work finds voice for the complexities, parallels and paradoxes that reside in this most universal of relationships.

In **Permission To Speak** the live presence of the four performers is accompanied by a community of pre-recorded voices from project contributors, which offer multiple and at times contradictory perspectives on contemporary experience.

What do we want to say to those who are important to us? Thoughts, diatribes, longings, regrets & hopes find voice in **Permission to Speak**.

**Permission to Speak** will have its World Premiere season in November 2016.

# The Chengdu Teahouse Project

*A new intercultural work*

**Creative Development / Artistic Residency**  
*13 – 26 July 2015*

The Chengdu Teahouse Project is a new, interdisciplinary collaboration between Chamber Made Opera and artists from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, China.

This project has been made possible with support from the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body. Preliminary planning for this collaboration was enabled with support from the Playking Foundation.

## Artistic Credits

Created by Chamber Made Opera and participating Chinese artists

**Creative Development Team**  
- Australia

Wang Zheng-Ting  
*Musician/Composer*

Felix Ching Ching Ho  
*Theatre Maker*

Carolyn Connors  
*Vocalist*

Madeleine Flynn  
*Sound artist*

Tim Humphrey  
*Sound artist*

Tim Stitz  
*Creative Producer*

Christie Stott  
*Digital Artist*

**Creative Development Team**  
- China

Kan Yan-Long  
*Vocalist*

Zhu Hui-Qian  
*Vocalist*

Guo Si-Cen  
*Musician*

Wang Shuai  
*Percussionist*

What would a new, intercultural chamber opera created by an accomplished and diverse groups of artists from China and Australia be like?

The Chengdu Teahouse Project is a group devised music/theatre work that uses the context of the teahouse, and associated social and everyday interactions, as the framework to create an immersive performance work. The development of this work has been a unique collaboration. The composition process has emerged from genuine artistic exchange and dialogue between different musical cultures and languages.


In 2015 Chamber Made Opera artists visited Chengdu for a two-week development residency to commence the task of creating a new performance work for three vocalists and four instrumentalists.

The Chengdu Teahouse Project will have a further development period in 2016, with Chinese artists travelling to Australia.

The work is slated for potential presentation opportunities in 2017. Two key Australian festivals have expressed interest in programming the work. The project also has an invitation from the Chengdu International Youth Musical Festival for presentation in China.

*“The Teahouse Project was deeply inspiring and surprisingly educational, as our work quickly uncovered a range of harmonic, tonal, and cultural complexities.”*

– CAROLYN CONNORS



“The spirit of adventure is taken up by such outfits as Chamber Made Opera in Melbourne, which has consistently sought new ways of operatic expression and presentation.”

– *The Australian* (Matthew Westwood)

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# Works Digital Performance

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# Turbulence

*Conflict as an act of intimacy*

## Season Details

Digital Film Launch

2 June 2015, e-book *LIGE*

Film Screening

14 October 2015, Federation Square, Melbourne

Film version created in 2015 as part of the internet eBook *LIGE* for the Danish Ministry of Gender Equality in collaboration with the Danish Agency for Culture and the Royal Danish College of Art.

## Artistic Credits

Peter Humble  
*Filmmaker*

Juliana Hodkinson  
*Composer*

Cynthia Troup  
*Librettist*

Jethro Woodward  
*Sound Design*

Deborah Kayser  
*Vocalist*

Anneli Bjoransen  
*Performer*

Peter Weinsheimer  
*Audio mix and mastering*  
*picaroMedia*

Juliana Hodkinson  
& David Young  
*Executive Producers*

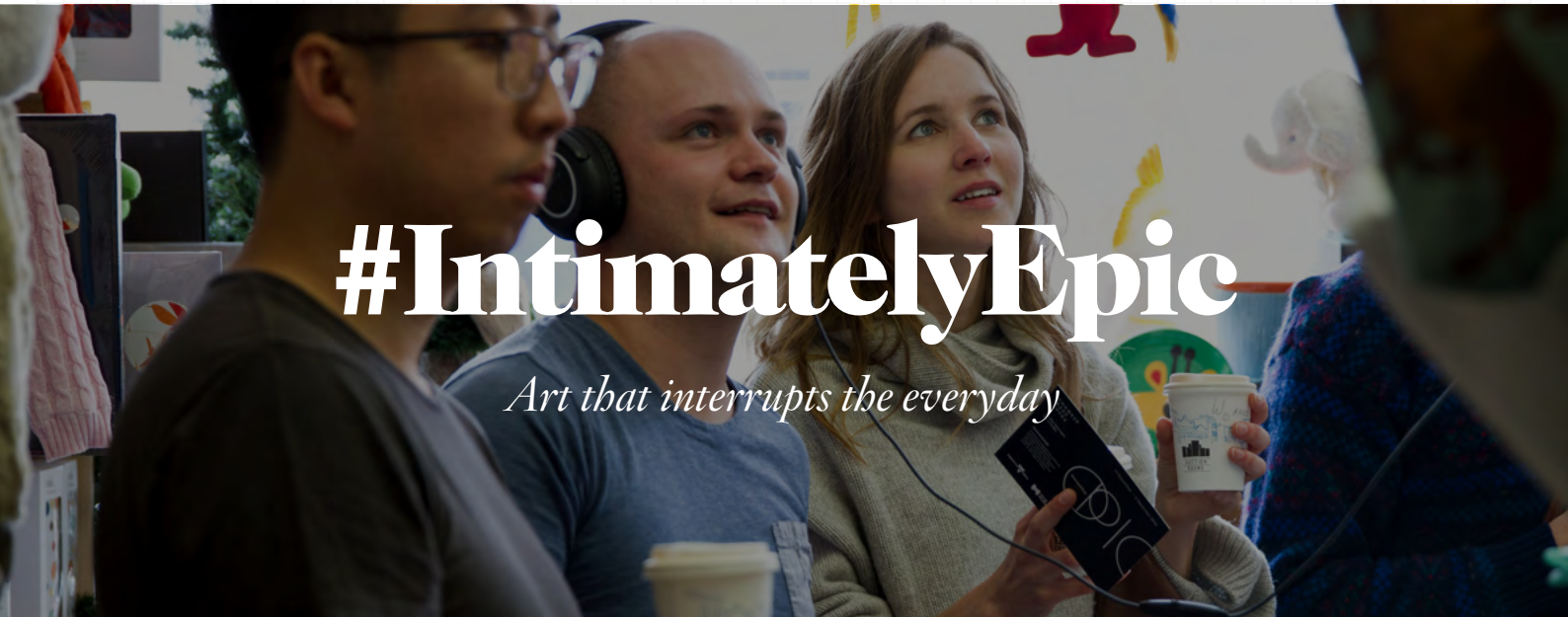
Juliana Hodkinson's chamber opera, *Turbulence* from 2013, with libretto by Cynthia Troup, played out as a musical drama between mother and daughter high in the air, in the cabin of an airliner.

In collaboration with Chamber Made Opera, filmmaker Peter Humble, former artistic director David Young, composer Juliana Hodkinson and librettist Cynthia Troup produced this film-video performance to a live audio recording of *Turbulence* from the premiere Living Room Opera season in Northcote, Melbourne 2013.

Parallel monologues, the singing Mother (soprano) and her speaking Daughter (actress) alternately intertwine, collide and sometimes disappear into pure noise sounds as the only common language. The sound environment of their articulations is set in and consists of, among other things, a noisy and unreliable flight intercom system, an amplified transistor radio, and a hand-luggage-sized synthesiser (or Pocket Piano).

*"Turbulence resembles a two-channel video installation that you might see at an art gallery; but in its subtle, minimalist way, the opera's emotional content is mainly communicated through the expressive voices, as it should be."*

– THE AUSTRALIAN, July 2015



# #IntimatelyEpic

*Art that interrupts the everyday*

## Installation Project

17 November – 5 December 2015,  
North Melbourne

This project was made possible via Creative Victoria's Marketing Innovation Fund.

## Artistic Credits

Produced by  
Chamber Made Opera

Christie Stott  
*Project Director*

Hannah Rundman  
*Project Associate Producer*

Intimately Epic used existing Chamber Made Opera artworks and re-presented or re-imagined them for this installation context.

Works used in the installation project were:

The Minotaur Trilogy

Turbulence

Wake

Captives of the City

The Box

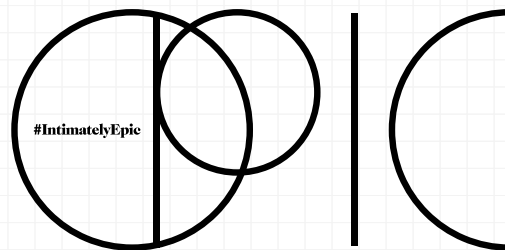
Another Lament

Ophelia doesn't live here anymore

Stories from the Suitcase  
(The Venny Project)

Opera for a small mammal

The Itch



Intimately Epic was a series of installations scattered across North Melbourne. Everyday acts were transformed into epic moments via film, images, music and sound from the edge of opera.

The general public was invited to engage with Intimately Epic at each site, by watching, listening and at times responding via the written word or a brief activity.

The project also involved online engagement with people invited to share their responses and/ or photographs on social media using #IntimatelyEpic.

*“Bringing all of these elements into the presentation of opera to a modern audience is what makes Chamber Made so dynamic and is what will make this current series of installations so unique. It allows that old passive experience to be transformed into an engaging one. It might be one that you just happen to stroll into because that's where you're going to get your coffee, or borrow a book, over this week and next. But hopefully it will, even then, be an experience that will grab you and make you curious for more.”*

– THE SOUND BARRIER, PBS FM November 2015

BASEMENT THEATRE

# Public Programs





# The Venny

*Weekly Music Classes and End of Year Concert*

## Weekly workshops

*10 August – 21 September and  
12 October – 7 December 2015*

## Concert

*11 December 2014*

*Produced by Chamber Made Opera in partnership  
with The Venny, Kensington*

*Supported by The Hugh Williamson Foundation  
and the Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust*

## Artistic Credits

Sarah Kriegler  
*Co-Director*

Rainbow Sweeny  
*Production Manager*

Danielle von der Borch  
*Co-Director & Community  
Liaison*

Dave Kutcher  
*Manager, The Venny*

Abshiro Hussein  
*Workshop Assistant*

**The Kids of The Venny**  
Abdiraman, Abigail, Adam,  
Aisha, Aleasha, Ali, Ariana,  
Brandon, Chloe, Fadumo,  
Fatma, Jack, M, Jack, T,  
Jafir, Jonathon, Joseph, Jules,  
Marc-Anthony, Mohamed,  
Muzzammil, Nabat, Phoenix,  
Sarah, Shakira, Shannon, Skye,  
Tenisha, Tony.

Lloyd Greenland  
*Workshop Assistant*

Deborah Kayser  
*Voice/Ukelele*

Mick Meagher  
*Bass Guitar*

Kofi Kunkpe  
*Percussion/Drumming*

Matthias Schack-Arnott  
*Percussion/Drumming*

Nick Tsiavos  
*Bass Guitar*

In 2015, Chamber Made Opera ran two school terms of music workshops at The Venny.

The children were given group classes in singing, ukulele, bass guitar and percussion by professional musicians working at the top of their field.

An end of year concert was performed by the children at which they shared skills they had learned with family and friends.

This was the fourth year that Chamber Made Opera have collaborated with the staff and children of The Venny.

*'The partnership is an example of best practice in the delivery of a high quality arts project in a community context. The young people made statement after statement that confirmed the sense of pride, belonging and self-empowerment they experienced as a result of the project, and importantly... that it is the creative act that instilled these qualities. As well as this, having their artistic offerings valued by engaged adult artists had a huge impact on the quality of the experience for the young people.'*

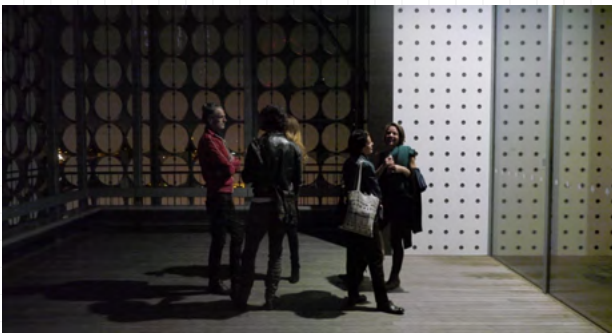
Assessment by independent evaluator Dr Ricci-Jane Adams

*'It felt really good when my ideas were listened to and included.'* *'We get to make our own choices. We always get to input our ideas.'* *'Doing everything that I haven't done before. I've achieved something.'* *'I was nervous when I was telling the story of the boy and the treasure. [I was] happy when it went well.'* *[In answer to the question: What feels deepened or strong in you?]* *'My voice.'*

Feedback from the children of the Venny

# Salons

Chamber Made Opera's Salon series continued in 2015 with a particular focus on the Agile Opera Project, the three-year Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project investigating new operational models for performing arts organisations in Australia.



## Agile Opera

15 April 2015  
RMIT Design Hub

Co-presented with RMIT SIAL Studio and the Australian Research Council Agile Opera Linkage Project.

### Artistic Credits

Tim Stitz  
*Creative Director*

Lawrence Harvey  
*SIAL Sound Studios, RMIT University*

David Forrest  
*School of Education & School of Art, RMIT*

Kim Vincs  
*Deakin Motion Lab*

In 2014, we challenged ourselves with the re-imagining of chamber opera in the digital era by joining forces with RMIT, Fed Square and the Australia Council on the three-year Agile Opera project. An Australia Research Council (ARC) Linkage project, Agile Opera is asking us to consider the digital world and how its virtual platforms might impact on our art-making, our mode of presentation and distribution, as well as our operations.

This Salon event introduced the project to an interested audience keen to hear about research findings so far, practical applications and where the project was heading.



## Intimacy & Turbulence

14 October 2015  
Secret Location at Federation Square, Melbourne

Co-presented with RMIT's SIAL, Australia Council for the Arts and Fed Square's Creative Program as part of the Agile Opera ARC Linkage Project.

### Artistic Credits

Tim Stitz  
*Creative Director,  
Chamber Made Opera*

Lawrence Harvey  
*Associate Professor, RMIT*

Peter Humble  
*Film-maker*

Cynthia Troup  
*Librettist*

Deborah Kayser  
*Performer*

Anneli Bjorasen  
*Performer*

This Salon event commenced with an update on the Agile Opera research project by Associate Professor Lawrence Harvey (RMIT). Attendees then headed out into the main square for a big-screen screening of *Turbulence*, a film by Peter Humble that re-imagines the 2013 Living Room Opera by Julia Hodkinson and Cynthia Troup. Afterwards, there was a casual Q&A session over drinks and nibbles with some of the artists involved in the film.

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# Research & Development

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# Agile Opera

## *Chamber Opera in a New Era*

### **An Australia Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project**

2014 – 2017

*A partnership between Chamber Made Opera, RMIT University, the Australia Council for the Arts and Fed Square.*

RMIT University  
(Administering Organisation)  
Associate Professor Lawrence Harvey (SIAL),  
Professor David Forrest (School of Art / School  
of Education), Greg More (SIAL – Spatial  
Information Architecture Laboratory)

Australia Council for the Arts  
(Emerging and Experimental Arts)  
Andrew Donovan / David Sudmalis

Fed Square  
Matt Jones, Renee Dudfield & Kendyl de Rossi

Chamber Made Opera  
Tim Stitz, Christie Stott & the other Artistic  
Associates

Research Associate: Dr Margaret Trail, RMIT

PbD Candidate: Sam McGilp, RMIT

The Agile Opera project continued in 2015, with meetings between the research team and project partners throughout the year. There were two Project Microlabs in 2015; April & October.

An outcome of note was a piece of writing by digital sociologist Dr Alexia Maddox for the project eBook, that investigated the connection between digital and physical spaces and relevant sociological connotations. The chapter was titled: 'A social science reflection on the built environments of the Chamber Made Opera – from physical place to code.'

Ex-Artistic Director Dr David Young also wrote an essay titled 'Desperate Measures' that reflects on his time with the company and in particular the Living Room Opera series. This essay, and artefacts from the Living Room Opera series will be a main feature of the project eBook.

Another point of focus for the second year of the project was the question of digital platforms. What is the best way to make digital available and accessible so it can reflect the kind of intimacy achieved via live performances of chamber work?

We look forward to further developments and consolidation of this project in 2016.

The project is based at RMIT University's state-of-the art Design Hub.

# Little Operations

The Little Operations series are one-night-only public showings of new works in development which aim to spotlight fresh ideas. Little Operations events are an opportunity for artists and groups, emerging and established, to enter into a conversation with Chamber Made Opera and our audience. Each Little Operations project is supported through a small amount of seed funding, as well as having access to space, Chamber Made Opera staff and appropriate resources.



## Little Operations with Aviva Endean: The Perfect Human

18 June 2015

Basement Theatre, Footscray Community Arts Centre,  
Footscray

Presented by Chamber Made Opera in association with  
Footscray Community Arts Centre

### Artistic Credits

*Created by* Aviva Endean, CMO Emerging Artist-in-Residence  
in collaboration with Carolyn Connors and Jenny Barnes

Aviva Endean, Carolyn Connors & Jenny Barnes  
*Performers*

**The Perfect Human** takes its title from Jørgen Leth's 1967 short film 'Det perfekte menneske' which depicts a man and a woman, both labeled 'the perfect human', functioning in a white boundless room.

Inspired by Leth's aesthetic, **The Perfect Human** explored acapella vocal textures, vocal preparations, and physical exertion in a performative work that contrasted the ageless fascination with the human voice with the disposable nature of lo-fi lighting purchased from a \$2 shop.



## Little Operations with Fabricated Rooms: The Sky Is Well Designed

10 November 2015

Multi-Purpose Room, RMIT Design Hub, Melbourne

Presented by Chamber Made Opera in association with RMIT's  
SIAL Studios.

### Artistic Credits

Patrick McCarthy  
*Writer & Director*

Raimondo Cortese  
*Dramaturg*

Rob Jordan  
*Composer*

Josh Price & Sophie Ross  
*Performers*

An experimental chamber opera, **The Sky Is Well Designed** examines the ways in which our relationship to transience and nature is shifting amidst the dual forces of digital existence and climate change.

A collaboration between writer-director Patrick McCarthy and composer Robert Jordan, this public showing featured a reading of the performance text by performers Sophie Ross and Josh Price, accompanied by a live electronic score.





# Emerging Artist-In-Residence

## *Aviva Endean*

*In 2015, Chamber Made Opera continued our commitment to providing ongoing professional development opportunities for emerging artists.*

After the success of Patrick McCarthy's residency as Emerging Writer in 2014, we were thrilled to welcome Aviva Endean as our Emerging Artist in Residence during the second half of her VCA Professional Pathways Scholarship – the first half having been spent with ASTRA.

Aviva Endean is a performance-maker, clarinetist and composer interested in expanding the audience experience of sound by creating site-specific, intimate contexts for listening. Her practice spans a wide variety of musical styles, including experimental and improvised music, contemporary chamber music, world music, and inter-arts collaborations.

Aviva joined us in late 2014 and contributed to the company in many different ways. As well as assisting in the day-to-day operations of the organisation, she also had a chance to observe and assist in the creative developments of three different works – **Another Other** (2014), **Permission to Speak** (2014) and **Captives of the City** (2015). She also greatly assisted with **Stories from the Suitcase**, our 2014 collaboration with the children and staff of The Venny.

Her residency culminated in June 2015 with a showing of **The Perfect Human**, a new work-in-progress developed in collaboration with Jenny Barnes and Carolyn Connors. This showing was presented through our Little Operations program at Footscray Community Arts Centre to a capacity crowd.

*The VCA & MCM Professional Pathway program is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.*

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# Relationships

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# Audience

Chamber Made Opera continues to ask key questions around audience. Who is our repeat audience and what keeps them coming back to our work? How do new audiences find us and how might we engage them further? Who is our potential audience and how might we reach them?

As in past years a primary way in which we answer some of these questions is via strategic partnerships. We capitalise on existing relationships with companies, artists, venues and festivals. We seek and force new relationships. Thus we expand not only the people and organisations with whom we work but also the extended networks and audiences with whom we can connect.

Ways in which we consolidated or expanded audience connection in 2015 included:

- **Captives of the City** was a collaboration with Lemony S Puppet Theatre. It was presented at Arts Centre Melbourne and was included in the venue's extensive marketing and communications activities, bringing awareness of Chamber Made Opera's work to a new audience sector.
- Tim Stitz attended MONA FOMA and started a dialogue about potential presentation of **Another Other** there for 2016, forging a valuable connection with this popular and fast becoming iconic festival, known for its focus on experimentation.
- **The Chengdu Teahouse Project** saw a team of Chamber Made Opera artists and associates travel to Chengdu, China where they made a profound connection with Chinese artists and key organisations. The potential new audience reach for this project is enormous, with possible presentations slated for both Australia and China in 2017.
- **'Little Operations with Aviva Endean'** connected Chamber Made Opera to an audience with a keen interest in new and experimental music. Presentation at the Footscray Community Arts Centre also allowed for a different audience reach.
- **'Little Operations with Fabricated Rooms'** brought a solid connection with the existing audience of this emerging theatre company, consolidating and expanding the theatre audience with whom Chamber Made Opera has an ongoing artistic conversation with.
- **#IntimatelyEpic** took Chamber Made Opera work and placed it within commercial businesses, an arts venue and a library within the North Melbourne shopping precinct. This experiment in installation and community engagement introduced the company to people who otherwise may not engage with opera, music or arts at all. It also represented a specific attempt to place the company within its locale, as a North Melbourne entity.
- Our Salon events, co-presented with the RMIT Design Hub SIAL Studios, continued to tap into audiences keen for engagement within an academic context.
- The public screening of **Turbulence** at Federation Square placed the work of Chamber Made Opera squarely in front of the general public. The relationship with Fed Square is a significant one in that it helps connect Chamber Made Opera with a broad audience base who are interested in arts and culture in general but may not be aware of our work.
- The digital iteration of **Turbulence** reached a vast online and international audience, placing the work of Chamber Made Opera more firmly within an international context and also foregrounding our interest in digital artwork and online spaces.



# Navigators

In 2015, we were thrilled to launch our Navigators program. Navigators came about after a process of re-imagining the way in which we wanted to connect, interact and form relationships with donors and patrons.

With the Navigators our vision expanded as we sought to nurture existing relationships and seek out new ones with a broader, more creative and adventurous focus.

We see our Navigators as:

- adventurous and committed champions of Chamber Made Opera
- vital supporters of the work and ongoing longevity of the company
- advocates for the unknown who urge us to explore the limits of the artform
- Navigators that give amounts of \$10,000 or more will be recognised as singular Commissioners and Instigators of nominated new works and projects

Our Navigators regularly attend Chamber Made Opera productions and events. They are valued and dear friends to the company and to the artists with whom we work.

We look forward to further exploring the Navigator program in 2016 as we continue to question and evolve notions of income, sustainability, growth and patronage in these challenging economic and political times.

# Marketing & Communications

We were delighted to receive Plus1 funding via Creative Partnerships Australia (a project also involving our Navigators) that enabled us to create a new Communications Coordinator position. After a call out for applications we appointed Emilie Collyer. Emilie will assist the organisation by focusing on various aspects of communication, marketing and development.



# Design & Branding

We continued to work closely with Sweet Creative in 2015 on our brand and design. They provide a consistent touch to programs, Annual Reports, Business Plans, invitations and flyers.

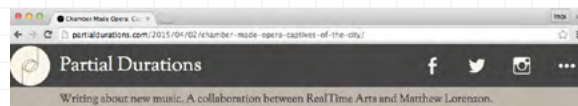
We also worked with independent designer Mitch Lenton and web developer Nathan Davis from Fine Thought on a brand new website which was listed on renowned web design site 'Site Inspire' because of its strong design elements.



# Media & Publicity

After working on the campaign for *Captives of the City*, at the end of the first quarter of 2015 we moved on from our long-fruited and valued relationship with Zilla & Brook Publicity. In the final quarter of the year we were pleased to begin working with Starling Communications – with its talented and knowledgeable Director Ben Starick working with us. Both Zilla & Brook and Starling Communications provided invaluable guidance around company PR and specific project needs.

## The Australian



## Chamber Made Opera: Captives of the City

Santh Krieger and Ben Grant's *Captives of the City* is a political fable set in the bowels of a dystopian regime. The show has a simple message about the power of citizen journalism and artistic freedom that is cleverly and clearly communicated through digital puppetry and stunning musical performances. The piece has been through several stages of development and reflects the Arab Spring and Widesch, as well as more recent events such as the Charlie Hebdo attacks.



The audience is met in the foyer of the Melbourne Arts Centre by an officious usher played by Adam Parnichal. Parnichal deems about matterfully, disposing of a dead pigeon and checking the cuffs of audience members for recording devices. The audience is taken in groups into the basement while a video screen mounted on the wall of the lift shows security camera footage.

The basement of the Arts Centre is a warren of cages. The main space is miked up, a sonic microcosm of the authoritarian state above. Two musicians, Mark Cavuin and Matthias Schack-Arnott, are captives of the city. They are taken in and out of cages by the usher and made to perform graphic scores by David Young. I'm not sure whether this is supposed to be a punishment, a moment of restricted freedom or indentured labour for the musicians. The standout performance for me was Schack-Arnott's who improvisation on a closed-necked cage with biting needles. Schack-Arnott conjures silvery tones, phasing swathes of sound and deep bass notes out of the bars.

As the performers go about their musical servitude, a magnificent rat made out of fragments of text scuttles around the walls, designed by Dave Jones and projected by Jacob Williams. The rat has mounds, inverting the foot size and style of its skin as it responds to the musicians. The rat is befriended by the musicians, who clearly pick the projection off of a wall with a score and "please" it

## The Australian



## Partial Durations

## Captives explores dark places where politics and art collide

**Liam Mannix**  
Down in the bowels of the Arts Centre, nine floors below sea level, where the rumblings from the surface finally grow silent, a troupe of artists are slogging out the city's dark web in their new chamber opera, *Captives of the City*.  
Captives attempts to weave together modern global politics – think the Arab Spring, the rise of Islamic State and the Charlie Hebdo attacks, the emergence of hacktivism, the Occupy movement, the creeping reduction in the major parties' votes in Australia – into a coherent narrative.  
It tells this story in one of the city's dark, hidden spaces – a physical manifestation of the internet's dark web of message boards, anonymous chatrooms and encrypted email chains.



*Captives of the City* artistic director Tim Siltz, playwright Sarah Krieger, double-bassist Mark Cavuin and a digital rat. Photo: Simon O'Dwyer  
This is where dissent ferments. "There was one common thing that bound them all together: a desire for mainstream politics to do things differently," says director and playwright Sarah Krieger. The actual venue within the Arts Centre is a secret. Attendees will

metaphorical – enables them to break free and bring their art to the masses.  
New technology has led to new modes of activism and expression. For *Captives*, it has given them a new cast member: a rat, a digital puppet, thrown up on the theatre's bare walls by a projector.  
The rat, a virtual representation of a glitch in the oppressive system, is controlled in real time via iPad as the play goes on, allowing it to interact with the flesh-and-bone. It was built by Dave Jones.  
"It came from a traditional animation background where, in a big day, you might get five seconds of animation done," he says.  
"There's always been this conversation between live performance, theatre, music and it's just been impossible for animation to get that."  
Says a clearly awestruck Krieger: "Technology has finally caught up with our ideas."  
Captives has been in development by Chamber Made Opera and Lemmy's Puppet Theatre since 2012, and with some political development has added fuel to Krieger's creative fire.  
Even when rehearsals started, Krieger and her company were still buffeted by the winds of current affairs. The Hebdo attacks happened as they started practicing lines, and necessitated another rewrite.  
"The right that an artist does have to express alternatives to the world is actually what we're talking about in this work," Krieger says. "It's a homage to artists around the world – everywhere where things are not as free as they could be."

## The Age

# Social Media

In 2015 we were fortunate to have independent producer Bek Berger spend a couple of months with us. One of her focuses was specifically on social media. Bek developed a social media guide that we have been following and her suggestions and insights assisted us to better understand and engage with a number of social media platforms.



*"2 years ago I commissioned @ChamberMadeOper to make a site-specific work for @artscentremelb. Thrilled to see the building itself performed"*  
 – Simon Abrahams [D@simonjabrahams](#) 11 Feb 2015

*"A great buzz around @ChamberMadeOper new production commissioned for @artscentremelb site. Worth a look to get beyond the normal stage view"*  
 – Bernoir [D@bernsta](#) 11 Feb 2015

*"Tonight: @ChamberMadeOper's CAPTIVES OF THE CITY at @artscentremelb. Puppets & opera in lifts, apparently. Plus a top notch production team."*  
 – Alison Croggon [D@alisoncroggon](#) 12 Feb 2015

*"Feels like a festival. 2 shows back to back in spaces that placed me anywhere in the world @ChamberMadeOper @MalthouseMelb #orchidandcrow"*  
 – Virginia Lovett [D@virginia\\_lovett](#) 13 Feb 2015

*"Robyn Archer: @OperaAustralia has a lot to learn from @ChamberMadeOper and @aphidslab on innovation and audience development #GetCreativeVic"*  
 – Esther Anatolitis [D@\\_esther](#) 29 Jun 2015

*"Here's a good reason to head to North Melbourne that could very well turn into many courtesy of @ChamberMadeOper;"*  
 – Paul Selar [D@OperaChaser](#) 16 Nov 2015  
 Melbourne, Victoria

## 1,092

*Facebook Likes*

(23.1% increase from 887 end 2014, compared with 15% the previous year)

## 1,885

*Twitter Followers*

(14.3% increase from 1650 end 2014 compared with 20% the previous year)

## 1,308

*e-news subscribers*

A total of ten eNews communications sent out to 1308 subscribers with an average open rate of 37.63% and an average click rate of 7.71%.

## 12,329

*Website Visits*

### 8,949

*Unique Visitors*

### 30,265

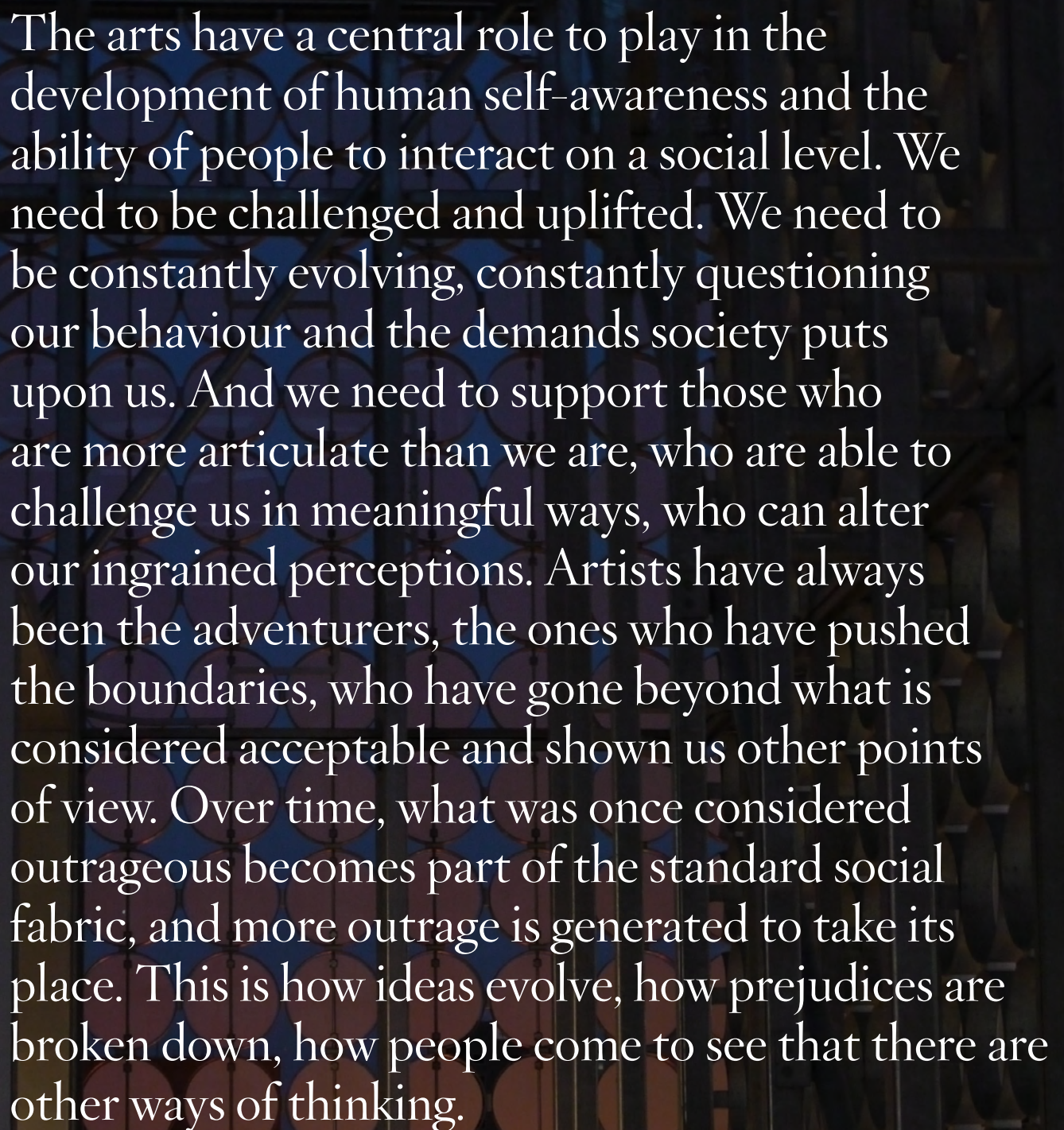
*Page Views*

### 71.6%

*New Visitors  
(8,822 Visitors)*

### 28.4%

*Returning Visitors  
(3,502 Visitors)*

A person is standing on a walkway in front of a large, illuminated architectural structure. The structure features a prominent circular pattern of light-colored panels, possibly made of metal or stone, set against a dark background. The person is silhouetted against the bright light of the structure. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the architectural elements themselves.

The arts have a central role to play in the development of human self-awareness and the ability of people to interact on a social level. We need to be challenged and uplifted. We need to be constantly evolving, constantly questioning our behaviour and the demands society puts upon us. And we need to support those who are more articulate than we are, who are able to challenge us in meaningful ways, who can alter our ingrained perceptions. Artists have always been the adventurers, the ones who have pushed the boundaries, who have gone beyond what is considered acceptable and shown us other points of view. Over time, what was once considered outrageous becomes part of the standard social fabric, and more outrage is generated to take its place. This is how ideas evolve, how prejudices are broken down, how people come to see that there are other ways of thinking.

– *Helen Murdoch*  
*company supporter (quotation from her Submission to the Australian Senate Inquiry into Arts Funding)*”



# Supporters & Partners

## *Our Navigators* (Donations of \$1,000 or more)

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Michael Bink, Gillian & Paul Carter, Charles Davidson, Robert Gibbs, Sue Kirkham, Margaret Leggatt & Eugene Schlusser, Virginia Lovett & Rose Hiscock, Helen & Peter Murdoch, Sweet Creative, Tim Stitz & Petra Kalive, Kylie Trounson, Anonymous (4)

## *Explorers* (Donations between \$200 – \$999)

Greer & Stuart Evans, Lawrence Harvey, Maryanne Lynch, Erin Milne, Ian Parsons, Michael Roper, Anonymous (5)

## *Stowaways* (Donations under \$200)

Simon Abrahams, Nicole Beyer, Anonymous (4)

## *Government Partners*

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## *Trusts & Foundations*

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Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust



## *Business Partners*

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SWEET

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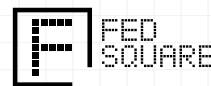
Starling Communications

## *Project Partners*

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creative partnerships australia



FACULTY OF VCA & MCM



Chamber Made Opera is a proud member of the New Music Network and a supporter of PBS and 3RRR.

*Photographs by: Daisy Noyes, Jeff Busby, Aviva Endean, Tim Stitz, Pier Carthew.*



“We have come to think of opera as something that you sit and watch and listen, passive, comfortable, and unilateral. But Melbourne’s Chamber Made Opera has always challenged operatic conventions and has always sought out ways of moving beyond even its own traditions.”

– Ian Parsons, *PBS FM*

“You approach this with rigour, admirable rigour. You’ve opened the intimacy of your practice: the very spaces in which you define and approach and then teeter at your limits. And that’s a delicious prospect for any artist, audience member, even investor.

– *Esther Anatolitis*



It is time for everyone – for OA, for audiences, for artists, for funding bodies – to think outside of the standard paradigms of how opera and musicals should be. It is time to imagine how operas and musicals could look if we claimed them for ourselves, and to create something truly Australian and multifaceted.

– *Kill Your Darlings (Jane Howard)*

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CHAMBER  
MADE  
OPERA

Meat Market  
Office 22, 44 Courtney Street  
North Melbourne VIC 3051  
AUSTRALIA

PO Box 302  
North Melbourne VIC 3051  
AUSTRALIA  
+61 3 9090 7095

[chambermadeopera.com](http://chambermadeopera.com)

ABN 84 490 162 765