

Mudlark Theatre Inc Company Resume

Mudlark Theatre Inc is a strong, professional regional theatre company, with a growing national profile for rich creative collaborations and producing an eclectic annual season of new & contemporary work and hidden classics. Mudlark aims to provide a strong, regional theatre voice which acts as an exciting articulation of the talent of Tasmanian theatre artists and their capacity to develop, transform and inspire.

Established through the evolution of *zygy* theatre works into an incorporated company with an adult-contemporary focus, Mudlark is headed by professional theatre practitioners Jane Johnson and Carrie McLean (artistic directors) with Stuart Loone (general manager), Stephanie Briarwood & Darren Willmott (artistic associates).

Mudlark engages with emerging and professional artists, and the Tasmanian community, on a three-fold platform:

- the production of first-class adult contemporary theatre (whether original works or re-investigations of text)
- the staging of experimental, mentored work & the generation of artist development opportunities
- a commitment to act as an advocate for performing arts in both regional and metropolitan Tasmania

The composition of the annual program reflects a commitment to developing Mudlark's audience base through programming shows which appeal to audience members of wide ranging backgrounds and ages. Alternate venues including black box theatres are utilised to enhance the immediate impact of the live theatre experience.

Cross is the 'lynchpin' production for Mudlark in 2008, having been partially funded by Arts Tasmania and then bought by Theatre North for inclusion its 2008 Subscription Season. This production has all the qualities necessary to make a viable option for touring nationally in the following years. Potential avenues include Regional Arts Victoria showcase, Tasmania Performs, the Regional Wave Cohort and direct festival marketing.

Mudlark's demonstrates a commitment to articulate our sense of regionality, through production of shows with a robust narrative, artist development and first-class theatre practice.

The upcoming 08/09 seasons seek to build national recognition for Tasmanian regional theatre. **Two Hundred Ks** is an epic collaboration between 7 regional theatre writers, and will be staged and toured as a co-production of Mudlark and JUTE Theatre (Cairns, QLD); the production of **Cross** as part of Theatre North's 2008 Subscription Season is a major springboard for touring; and **Beautiful** (2009), is a powerful work which explores Tasmanian notions of regionality.

Mudlark embraces its responsibility to foster the growing professionalism in regional theatre by managing a focused sustainable program. Mudlark seeks to engage high calibre artists, and enters into profit-share agreements with artists, if government or corporate funding is not in place. It also engages with other regional theatre companies in artistic and strategic endeavors. Mudlark is in regular contact with JUTE Theatre in Cairns about future evolution and in 2008 is also hosting/producing **The Flowering**, written and performed by Queensland artist Donna Cameron.

In order to foster new experimental work and work practice, Mudlark is also formulating its development program, which provides formal and informal skills training, as well as accepting submissions from emerging artists to have small-scale 'fringe' theatre supported and produced in alternative venues. This program (the Full Moon Program) will be launched in 2008 and aims to foster the creative community in Tasmania, giving artists the resources to be able to experiment with new ideas and theatre techniques. The successful applicants receive mentorship from professional artists, a venue for a four week hands-on process and production assistance to unveil a staging of new, original theatre under a full moon. It is this energising of emerging artists and the supporting of their ideas which will foster new works for Mudlark's mainstage seasons in the future.

Mudlark values the employment of Tasmanian artists and is engaging with nationally recognised intra- and interstate artists. In 2008 Mudlark worked with acclaimed performer/writer/dramaturg Kathryn Ash (QLD) and stage combat guru Kyle Rowling (NSW) on two separate creative developments, with both artists conducting artist development workshops. The 08/09 seasons will see Mudlark working with a wide range of acclaimed artists including: Donna Cameron (performer/writer), Peter Matheson (dramaturg), Robert Jarman (director), Suellen Maunder (director), Frank Newman (theatre creator), L'hibou Hornung (director), Theresa O'Connor (theatre creator) and Dominie Hooper (designer).

Mudlark has formed important partnerships and relationships with other artists nationally. In 2008 Mudlark will host a creative development of the epic **200Ks** project, which engages 7 regional writers nationally and support and auspice the **Silver Strings** creative development project.

Strong organisational and financial systems are in place and the company has a skilled and dedicated board of six community leaders, who bring a wealth of professional, community, creative and administrative knowledge to Mudlark. The company is audited yearly and is administered by the core company members. The strategic plan 2008 to 2010 has set an ambitious and sustainable framework in which the company can develop. Mudlark is also in the initial stages of applying for Deductible Gift Recipient status. The company engages with the local theatre community with the aim of securing a space that broadens the income base of Mudlark and contribute to the cultural economy of the region.

Core Creative Team

Artistic Director	Jane Johnson - actor, director, small business, youth theatre facilitator
Artistic Director	Carrie McLean - actor, playwright, director
General Manager	Stuart Loone - director, production manager, actor
Artistic Associate	Stephanie Briarwood - playwright, actor
Artistic Associate	Darren Willmott - theatre technician, lighting designer

Board of Management

Chair	Dr Sharon Pittaway	university lecturer in education & radio presenter/producer
Vice Chair	Dr Timothy Moss	university lecturer in education
Secretary	Natalee Pennicott	arts administrator for Theatre North
Treasurer	Veronica Terry	financial consultant
Member	Anne Fitzgerald	entertainment producer & ex-ABC radio presenter
Member	Julie Porteus	teacher, university lecturer, ex-TasDance board member
Member	John Swindells	film producer/director and TAFE tutor

2008 Program

One Day 6 4 new works written, rehearsed, produced and performed in just 24 hours
The next installment of Launceston's edgiest and most exciting theatre event. 4 writers, 4 directors, 12 actors and 6 producers and technicians create a thrilling evening of one act plays in the space of a day and a perfect opportunity to launch Mudlark's terrific 2008 season.

The Flowering written & performed by Donna Cameron
A lyrical monodrama performed in and using a porcelain installation created by multi-award winning ceramic artist Julie Shepherd. It takes the audience from raucous laughter through harrowing silence to tears of joyful recognition as it follows the story of Chloe as she returns home to find her mother drinking herself to death. To save her from her course of destruction Chloe begins to relate the story she has always kept from her - what happened during her disappearance at 18 years of age. In so doing she unearths the fact that the history, dreams and conditioning of the mother are inseparable from the daughter, as inseparable as life and death.

Cross a new work by Stephanie Briarwood
An epic road-trip featuring puppetry and striking design. Two sisters on a road trip to a geographical destination, find themselves on a pilgrimage to an emotional destination. The unrelenting white line divides their lives as each struggles to come to terms with their past, their present and their future. 'Cross' is a spiritual odyssey; a paradoxical highway to unlocking the secrets of those so close to you that 'blind spots', and 'dangerous curves' take on new meaning. They're journey is humorous, painful and rather mysterious.
AS PART OF THEATRE NORTH'S 2008 SUBSCRIPTION SEASON

The Full Moon Program

3 small-scale experimental works, selected by application, where artists have the opportunity to extend the boundaries of theatre to breaking point. Features *Infraction*, *AsteRISK* and a reading of an exciting new script. All performed under the full moon.

Creative Development Partnership Silver Strings

A railway track, with the audience seated in an open cart. The track leads into a large, old industrial building, and all that can be seen is a single puppeteer operating a human-like marionette. Silver string lines run from above the puppeteers, controlling them, lifting them away from the earth's surface. But who is in control of these strings? The humans operate the puppets but are they puppets themselves?
The creative team of Silver Strings will bring together a combination of disciplines and theatre backgrounds to develop this new theatre work that can both be produced as a large-scale production and then reworked into a touring production.

2007 Season

Café a new work by Carrie McLean

A multi-media work that toured schools statewide, funded by Arts Tasmania, the Regional Arts Fund and the Launceston City Council

Underneath the Lintel by Glen Berger

A remount of Centr Stage's 2004 surprise hit monodrama, Launceston & Deloraine.

Junk Rooms by Stephanie Briarwood

Poetic & explicit one-woman-show with Launceston & Hobart seasons

Rooted by Alexander Buzo

A revival of a classic piece of 1969 Australian theatre

Development & Workshops

- 2007 Rehearsed readings of *Café* by Carrie McLean (To elicit advice of health professionals and young people on the work)
Dramaturgy workshop (general public): Kathryn Ash
Stage Combat workshop (general public): Kyle Rowling
Playwright's Group established (once monthly)
Auspicing: Stuart & Jane Loone grant monies (Arts Tasmania & Regional Arts Fund)
Auspicing: Carrie McLean grant monies (Arts Tasmania)
Auspicing: Theresa O'Connor Silver Strings Project (Regional Arts Fund & Comm Dev Fund)

In 2007, Mudlark reached 1967 people with its program. Average occupancy of mainstage theatre shows was 53% while both skills development workshops reached capacity. The company utilised 9 separate venues in 2007 in Launceston, Hobart and Deloraine, while the schools show, Café, was staged for 15 schools around the state.

Previous Work

- 2004 **What is the Matter with Mary Jane?** by Wendy Harmer
powerful one-woman show confronting body image touring to Secondary Schools.

Successful Government & Philanthropic Funding

- 2004 Arts Tasmania – Individual: employment of key artists on *What is the Matter with Mary Jane?*
Office of Youth Affairs: educational outreach of *What is the Matter with Mary Jane?*
- 2006 Arts Tasmania - Organisation: employment during script development and rehearsal of *Café*
Arts Tasmania - Individual: dramaturgy and stage craft development of *F:Emails*
Regional Arts Fund: employment of emerging actor on *Café*
Launceston City Council: costs associated with *Café*
- 2007 Arts Tasmania – Organisation: employment during development of **Cross**
Regional Arts Fund: support for the Full Moon Project –mentoring emerging artists and new work
Regional Arts Fund: artist employment for the development of Silver Strings (auspicing)
Tasmanian Community Development Fund: production equipment for Mudlark Theatre Inc (to support Silver Strings Project)

Current Corporate & Venue Partnerships

The Academy of Arts, University of Tasmania
Arts Alive
Backspace Theatre - is theatre ltd
Beachhouse Health and Fitness

Second Storey Youth Theatre
ZOOT Film Tasmania
Stories Bookshop
Launceston College

CRITICAL RESPONSES 2007

Café

"While depression and suicide remain taboo topics for many, Mudlark is to be commended for taking the initiative and providing a platform on which to begin the conversation. As long as Mudlark continues having worthwhile things to say, you'd be well advised to listen."

Chris Rattray, SAUCE, 30 May 2007

Underneath the Lintel

"Stan Gottschalk engages us in an enthralling personal conversation. As director, Stuart Loone ... has made sure that humour, tension and pathos are equally blended. There is a great sense of intimacy to the production and the audience often has to stifle itself from engaging in a dialogue with the librarian. This is one of delights of this play and this production. Mudlark Theatre deserves our support."

Jeff Hayes, The Examiner, 4 August 2007

Junk Rooms

"*Junk Rooms*, presented by Mudlark Theatre, epitomises all this vibrant young company aims to bring to the Launceston theatre community... Despite the essentially dark nature of the subject matter, the script is peppered with hope, humanity and humour. These elements are wonderfully realised in the intense, engaging and totally credible performance of Jane Binning. Binning's performance is enhanced by Darren Willmott's deft lighting and technical direction."

Jeff Hayes, The Examiner, 6 September 2007

"Stephanie Briarwood with her words and Jane Binning with her f*&cking awe-inducing performance smash [a] convenient stereotype with *Junk Rooms*... The story of Jenny is so damn real, there is no drama, no sanctifying junkie goodness, no cliché except the reality that junkies are addicts, but here's the twist. Jenny is a person, a person who once felt of value, whose choices have reduced what was once clearly a beautiful and uniquely imaginative woman to human rubbish... Spend an hour and a half with Jenny and you will never feel the same way about junkies again."

Clara Murray, SAUCE, 17 October 2007

"A play about drug addiction may not seem to be much fun, so it was surprising that the audience found a lot to laugh about in this engaging one-hander. For over an hour, the production gripped the audience. This was an uplifting, often explicit, carefully crafted look into a junkie's life. Acting, writing and direction and technical expertise were beautifully showcased. Binning was wonderful. Her portrayal of Jenny was excellent, perhaps even inspired. The use of space, the excellent timing, faultless technical input from Willmott, and of course, the superb script, was wonderful. A play I could definitely see again, and a play I would recommend to teenagers and their parents, as an exercise in entertainment and as a cautionary tale."

Merlene Abbott, Stage Whispers, Nov/Dec 2007

Rooted

"*Rooted* was a theatrical marriage of farce, absurdism and satire. Loone's direction of this Australian classic was extremely crisp and secure. Geoff Dobson, as the hapless Bentley, gave a finely tuned performance. The empathy he created on opening night was palpable... Jane Johnson, as his wife, was deliciously wicked and brought to the stage a cool and calculating detachment that was quite complete. The wonderful ensemble were clearly up to the task of delivering this wickedly off-kilter piece of theatre. Mudlark may be new to Launceston but it possesses a wealth of experience that was on show last night at the Earl Arts Centre."

Marcus Bower, The Examiner, 11 October 2007

"*Rooted* is a play that has wide appeal, and presents like a shinier Kingswood Country, with the 70s sets, the satirical rapid-fire repartee, and the story of sweet and foolish Bentley who gets rooted by his mates, and his missus as power corrupts and the nice guy gets screwed. The strong cast of five veterans showcased their talents with grotesque-style characterizations, and they interacted fluently and naturally on the stage. The scenes flowed and the repartee bantered nicely, the comedy created mirth, and the alabaster toned and then wood veneered sets were a treat to behold. All up it was a bloody good show for everyone except that poor bastard Bentley. Get thee to a theatre with haste and don't get Rooted again."

Clara Murray, SAUCE, Feb 2008 (forthcoming)