

# VULCANA



## ANNUAL REPORT 2019

#### CHAIR'S REPORT – Bena Brown

Vulcana Circus came of age in 2019 – with planning and preparation to move from the Brisbane Powerhouse to our new, purpose-built training and performance home in Morningside. Vulcana Circus successfully secured the lease with Brisbane City Council for our Morningside venue, however until moving day 2019 was filled with uncertainty for students, trainers and staff who worked tirelessly while stressed to deliver high quality performance and circus classes. This is reflected in our lower student numbers in 2019, and subsequent lower income.

In 2019, the Vulcana community tapped into our “brave, strong, and daring” to continue to deliver an incredible performance calendar (lead by the forever talented Celia White), circus workshops and classes (lead by the always patient, calm and flexible Yonna Simon), and community engagement and development across multiple projects (lead by our visionary community go-getter Angela Wilcock). In 2019, Vulcana provided a supportive space and opportunities for women, trans and non-binary genders, youth and children and communities to explore, create, develop and express transformation, to challenge societal norms, and to champion diversity through the physical creation of circus arts. Vulcana holds an important place in the community, and 2019 was no exception. Vulcana would not exist today without the incredible support, and tireless work from our expert trainers, generous volunteers and donors, and from the Vulcana Board. I would like to thank you all from my heart - the trainers, performers, guest performers and artists who all contributed to new circus art in 2019, and to the Board for their commitment, dedication and service.

Special mention must go to Brisbane Powerhouse, who provided Vulcana Circus with the longest tenancy for an arts organisation in their precinct. They generously supported us until we were safely housed elsewhere, and for decades gave us fabulous venues in which to create and deliver circus to the community.

I would also like to thank Kath Quigley (previous Chair) and Jo Pratt (previous General Manager) for their service to Vulcana Circus, and for lighting the way to our success in 2020.

#### ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Celia White

In 2019 Vulcana continued to offer a diverse range of opportunities for skills development, artist development, creative development and performance outcomes for children, young people, women, trans and non-binary people and communities. By providing resources, quality facilitation, community engagement, performance making and presentation, Vulcana has continues to create a rich space for contemporary circus activities and performance that adds to the range of participation, representation, styles and stores in our region. 2019 was the last year of Vulcana's 20-year location at Brisbane Powerhouse. It was overshadowed by uncertainty as our negotiations for a new venue were slow, although ultimately successful and our lease arrangements at Brisbane Powerhouse were changing month by month.

Our thanks to Brisbane Powerhouse for hosting Vulcana for 20 years, and for being flexible around assisting our transition to a new venue.



## AS IF NO ONE IS WATCHING

In 2019, after a hugely successful season in 2018, Vulcana presented a version of this work at Newstead House as part of Anywhere Festival. This version focussed on the outdoor installations and stories. Audiences wandered the beautiful grounds of the site, listening to women's stories through headphones and via their mobile phones, while watching the solo performances connected to these stories, complimenting them with additional physical imagery. The ensemble of 10 performers, lead by singer Velvet Pesu, came together at intervals throughout the installation to celebrate their combined strength and determination.

It was a wonderful opportunity to represent the work in this new format, responding to feedback from the first season that audiences wanted more time to immerse themselves in this sonic and visual world of storytelling.



Image by Tobiah Booth-Remmers

This version was produced and funded by Vulcana, with ticket sales from the season. Thanks to the performers for their work and dedication, and to volunteers who assisted throughout the season.

## CIRQUETRY

Cirquetry was the second partnership project with Queensland Poetry. It was a very successful and enjoyable collaboration between six artists – poets and circus performers – exploring how to connect poetry to a body in movement. It was an idea proposed by a Vulcana trainer, poet and circus performer, and both Chloe Callistemon and Celia worked on the formulation and funding application for the work.

Cirquetry was a confluence of bodily risk and emotional risk in the body of the poet, the body of the circus performer and the body of the audience. It was presented as part of the Queensland Poetry Festival and Judith Wright Centre to poetry audiences and at Vulcana's Studio at Brisbane Powerhouse, for circus audiences. We surveyed both audiences for varying responses to the work to gauge how this meeting of artforms resonated with different audiences.



Image by Alana Freelance

Cirquetry was supported by Arts Queensland and Brisbane City Council through Creative Sparks.



## **INSERT AUDIENCE HERE Cabaret**

This cabaret was the chance to show new ideas that were bubbling up in minds and bodies of the Vulcana community of circus artists, with new directions in circus, costume and ideas.



## **STUFF**

Stuff Incubator invited the renowned, Melbourne based, circus artist, Debra Batton, to provide a masterclass for emerging and professional circus artists at Vulcana. It was very well received and supported many artists to explore and experiment with ways to creating new circus-based material.

This project was funded by Vulcana and the fees paid to participate in the masterclass.



## STUFF CABARET

Artists from a range of artforms were supported and invited to present short new works that were presented at a performance event in Vulcana's Studio.



Images by Alana Freelance



## ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

In 2019 Bianca Mackail developed, rehearsal and presented her solo work, *UNDER MY EYE*, directed by Celia White and under the GUSH banner, that explored her internal worlds. It was presented as part of Wonderland Festival.

Vulcana supported Collectivist, a new ensemble of artists from Vulcana and beyond to create *DWELL*, a motel where the most dangerous or the most mundane can occur, presented as part of Wonderland Festival 2019.

Vulcana supported Grace Law to create her short and magical work, *IMPRINTED*, a combination of sculpture and circus, presented at Woodford Folk Festival 2019.

## SHOWCASE 2019

This year's showcase was divided into Kids and Teens and Adults. The Kids and Teens had a separate event that was attended by families, carers and friends. We would like to thank Cindy Darabi, who inspired the Teens to be so creative. She has returned to Maleny to focus on her youth circus, *Sylph Circus*. We will continue to collaborate with Cindy where possible.



Image by Alana Freelance

The adult showcase invited short performance from students that were interspersed between class performance presentations to create a diverse offering of students' work. It was a playful representation of class achievements. Of particular poignancy was Tamyka Bells performance of *swinging cloud*, the last chance we had to offer this training in a space with the height and structure to support this circus apparatus. It was the final event of our 20 years in this venue.



Image by Alana Freelance

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT – Angela Willock**

### **VULCADEMY:**

2019 saw us deliver 4 terms of adult circus workshops and 3 x season school blocks across all kinds of skills and apparatus. We saw a decrease in our workshop attendees due to the uncertain nature of the impending venue move however were still able to deliver out terms with only minimal class cancellations.

Huge thanks go to our incredible team of trainers, who continue to make our workshops amongst the best in Australia.

Vulcana offered a number of bursary / discounted places to women trans and non-binary people who aren't in a position to be able to afford to pay themselves through our See Saw program, and delivered performance development programs that lead to performance.

### **VULCANA KIDS:**

Our kids and teens program continued to slowly gain momentum, and we delivered workshops across both locations at Brisbane Powerhouse and Junction Park State School. We were able to offer a number of bursary / discounted places to children who would not otherwise be able to attend, and finished the year with an amazing performance showcase around the themes of myths and fairytales.



## DEVELOPMENT:

There were a number of exciting new projects delivered in 2019 including a community capacity building series which included workshops such as arts marketing for artists and injury prevention for aerialists as well as more formal training opportunities for our trainers such as the Mental Health First Aid project delivered in partnership with ARAFMI, equipping our trainers to better deal with situations of students experiencing ill mental health. We also delivered several engaging online audience engagement programs such as the launch of our hugely successful Circus Photo Challenge.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

We delivered a series of workshops through our Roll Up, Step Up project, which worked with adults experiencing homelessness and looked at building healthy habits and self-confidence as well as increasing overall mental health and wellbeing through exercise and play.

