Welcome to Artback NT’s first newsletter for 2012 – a year which is flying by as we immerse ourselves in the amazingly talented and versatile visual and performing arts sector throughout the Territory. Artback NT hit the ground running with creative developments for Lynette Lewis and Gary Lang NT Dance Company, road safety song competitions throughout central Australia, Glenn Campbell’s exhibition Shrine touring down the track as well as five nationally touring exhibitions.

Major highlights are listed below but a sneak preview includes an overseas adventure for the Tjupi Band – from Papunya to the Solomon Islands - as well as intense activity in preparation for the launch of our new media screen work Stories in our Songs - Indigenous Musicians from the Northern Territory.

Welcome! by Louise Partos

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A key activity for the organisation in August year is hosting the national touring forum, Long Paddock. This a major industry event which will build strong clear pathways for the professional development of the NT performing arts industry, attract investment in the NT, identify new opportunities and build capacity for our industry.

Don’t forget to check out the last page which lists four amazing upcoming performing arts tours.

Exciting times ahead!

Shellie’s Story by Angela O’Donnell

Northern Territory singer songwriter Shellie Morris worked with Artback NT to deliver her national tour of Shellie’s Story. On the road from mid April to early June, Shellie’s Story reached audiences from remote parts of Western Australia, Regional Victoria, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Shellie’s Story was an intimate performance providing audiences with an insight into her extraordinary journey so far - a memorable tour that also incorporated workshops in song writing and master classes in many of her locations around Australia.

Accompanying Shellie was Francis Diatschenko, an exceptional multi instrumentalist of Argentinean and Ukrainian heritage who was raised in the Northern Territory. Francis has performed as a soloist and in ensemble, with recitals in some of the world’s most revered venues including Carnegie Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Union Chapel. Shellie and Francis were ably supported on this tour by another talented Territorian, Daniel Lade, who was both tour manager and sound engineer.

Shellie’s Story moved diverse audiences ranging from the Emerge Festival in Shepparton, Victoria to a community performance at the Pinjarra Massacre site in Western Australia and a gig at the National Gallery in Canberra. Artback NT was extremely proud to be delivering such an exciting tour from Darwin to locations around the Australia which was made possible by the generous support of Playing Australia.

Shellie Morris. Photographer: Mathew McHugh

www.artbacknt.com.au
Long Paddock
by Angela O’Donnell

Artback NT: Arts Development and Touring is the proud host of the 2012 Long Paddock National Touring Forum. This event, held for the first time in Darwin, brings together theatre makers, musicians, tour coordinators, venues and presenters to develop national tours which reach audiences all around the country and builds and strengthens networks within the performing arts sector.

Following a nationally competitive voting process, three NT works have received coveted pitch slots. Artback NT’s Performing Arts Touring Manager Angela O’Donnell is thrilled with this result.

‘It’s fantastic for NT artists to have the opportunity to pitch their work for touring to national presenters. We are very proud of the efforts that have gone into Mary Anne Butler’s Highway of Lost Hearts, The Chooky Dancers, and Levin Diatschenko’s Darwin Vs Matilda. Too often artists in the NT are isolated and their work doesn’t reach the national audience it deserves. This event allows these three acts to access national touring venues and to be part of those discussions.’

In addition to the opportunities offered through pitch slots at Long Paddock, Artback NT is working with artists and producers throughout the NT to ensure wider participation. Artback NT is also working with Darwin Festival to maximise delegate attendance at performances scheduled throughout the Darwin Festival program, including Chris and Natasha Raja’s The First Garden. Territory musicians will also woo delegates from across the country at networking events running alongside Long Paddock.

Long Paddock will take place at the Darwin Entertainment Centre on August 23-24. The Long Paddock National Touring Forum is coordinated by the Blue Heeler Network and locally presented by Artback NT. The event and accompanying professional development opportunities for NT artists are supported by the Northern Territory Government.

To find out more about registering for this event or being involved, contact Angela O’Donnell: tour@artbacknt.com.au or go to www.cyberpaddock.com.au

Images from top: Chooky Dancers, photo courtesy of Luthu Luthu Productions; Kadek Hobman, photo courtesy of Darwin Vs Matilda; Highway of Lost Hearts, photo courtesy of Mary Anne Butler.
Music Touring
by Vanessa Hutchins

We are over half way through 2012 already and Music Touring is as busy as ever.

The year began with advocacy trips to strengthen relationships for the music touring program. These included a trip to Canberra to meet with the Office of the Arts regarding the contemporary music touring program, and a trip to the Australia Council for the Arts in Sydney to discuss both the music and ATSIAB programs. In February Artback NT had a strong presence at the Australian Performing Arts Market in Adelaide, which was a great opportunity to investigate the national touring opportunities available to NT musicians.

At the end of March we had some fantastic news. Tjupi Band received funding from both Arts NT and Centrecorp to assist them in presenting their pitch at the Long Paddock National Touring Conference at the Albury Entertainment Centre. The pitch was well received and demonstrated the strong potential to secure a national tour for the band in 2013, dependant on Playing Australia funds. This trip also included another performance opportunity for Tjupi Band at the Northcote Social Club, where they supported Frank Yamma and George Telek under the Wantok banner.

Another exciting development was that Wide Open Space received support to assist East Desert Metal to perform at this year’s concert.

June was the month for Road Safety Songs as the music touring program rolled out a concert every weekend. The concerts in Yuelumu, Santa Teresa, Haasts Bluff and Tennant Creek were well attended and an album of the winners of the Road Safety Song Contest will be released at the end of July.

The Music Touring program assisted Mark Hilton and Dave Garnham with their application to the Contemporary Music Touring program to support them getting to Tamworth Country Music Festival next year.

Tjupi Band have just returned from their first overseas tour. They attended the wonderfully diverse and multicultural Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara, Solomon Islands. Representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of the Australian delegation, Tjupi Band performed at key events and played to their largest audience so far, of over 12,000 people.

Looking ahead, plans are running smoothly for Songs from Stone Country, a presentation of contemporary music from West Arnhem Land at the Darwin Festival Lighthouse venue. The bands will travel to Darwin from Oenpelli to perform on Friday 24th August and then return to Oenpelli to play at the Stone Country Festival on Saturday 25th August.

Reggae Dave is currently planning a tour with his band The Irie’s that will travel from Townsville to Broome, including Palm Island, Daydream Island and Magnetic Island, accompanied by Music Touring program staff. Supported by the Contemporary Music Touring program through the Office of the Arts, Reggae Dave and the Irie’s will spend all of September on the road, linking the NT with Queensland and Western Australian music lovers.

And finally, with Artback NT’s support through tour management, Tjupi Band won the headline spot for the Sandtracks tour. In partnership with Country Arts WA and Artback NT, Tjupi Band will play the Bush Band Concert and six other communities in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands with support, Blackstone Band.
Stories in our Songs - Indigenous Musicians of the Northern Territory is a new media screen work that highlights the musical landscape of Indigenous musicians across the Territory from the Central Desert region to the Top End. The work traverses both time and space, using digital imagery, text, animations, video footage and audio, illustrating the importance of music as an expression of culture and ideas.

The exploration of gospel, rock, country, soul and traditional Yolngu music reveals the triumphs, hardships and joy expressed by Aboriginal musicians. The work underlines the political, social and cultural issues expressed as stories in songs both past and present, supporting Indigenous musicians to further these stories. Special stories, such as those of musicians reconnecting with their family lineage through a celebration of song and music, share the screen with classic songs such as Land Rights (1994) by The Sunrize Band, Jailanguru Pakarnu (Out of Jail) (1993) by the Warumpi Band, and Timeless Land (1993) by Yothu Yindi. The stories behind these songs are as relevant today as they were when they were first released.

The concept of this project has been developed over a period of four years with initial research being conducted in the first three years. Over the past twelve months it has gained fresh momentum, with the intense and focused approach of a dedicated producer and director, Artback NT’s Visual Arts Manager, Simha Koether.

Simha has been committed to consultations with participating band members and has forged partnerships within the sector. She has consulted with relevant stakeholders to curate material, conduct audio visual interviews and gain clearance from relevant parties for permission to utilise the material. In May 2012, editor and animator Chris Wilson joined the team and has worked closely with Simha during the post production stage. The screen work will premier as part of the Alice Desert Festival Cinema by the River ‘New Indigenous Cinema’ night on 30th September 2012.

This screen work will tour for a period of three years to festivals and communities within the Northern Territory and be screened at public events and celebrations of Indigenous heritage nationally. The audiences for this screen work are community festival attendees, the featured musicians and their extended families, and the wider Australian community.
Indigenous Traditional Dance Program
by Renita Glencross

The Indigenous Traditional Dance Program is currently in its final year of program support in Tennant Creek and Artback NT is proposing that the next regional venue for DanceSite be Borroloola. In September 2011, immediately after the DanceSite-Wurrpurjingtta event in Tennant Creek, Artback NT approached the Borroloola dancers to enquire if they might be interested in hosting DanceSite in the future. In line with DanceSite and ITDP strategic planning, the Artback NT ITDP Coordinator travelled to Borroloola in March this year to confirm broader community support for the event to be placed in Borroloola 2013-2015.

Meetings were held over 5 days with the community Traditional Owners, Waralungku Arts and cultural advisors, local service and resource organisations, Northern Land Council (NLC) and the Roper Gulf Shire. At these forums a broad overview of the program was given including:

- the DanceSite strategies, objectives and relationship to other community festivals or events;
- the overall costs of the event and how Artback NT will seek finance through funding submissions and sponsorship;
- the responsibilities, commitment and contributions required from community, both in-kind and financial; and
- the timeline for event preparation and planning.

The first forum at Waralungku Arts brought more than twenty people together representing the four different clan groups in Borroloola – Yanyuwa, Garawa, Gudanji and Mara – as well as art centre staff and NLC staff. Information gathered at this meeting produced a ‘stakeholder map’ of the event and other independent meetings with Mabunji Corporation, McArthur River Mining Company and the Roper Gulf Shire were also very successful.

The map was left to hang on the Art Centre wall for inspiration and as a reminder of the commitments made by the community stakeholders as well as all the preparation and planning that is yet to come! With great community support we are looking forward to a fantastic DanceSite festival partnership through 2013-2015.

Images, clockwise from top: DanceSite 12 poster, photo of Tiffany Albert by Wayne Quilliam; Renita Glencross and Marjorie Ngardji. Photographer: Miriam Charlie; Stakeholder map from forum at Waralungku Arts. Photographer: Renita Glencross.
GIFT OF LIFE

*Gift of Life* is a heartfelt and informative story of an Indigenous woman who is struggling with end stage kidney disease. The performance follows her journey through the difficult process of dialysis to receiving a kidney transplant. It is a story about family, loss and love and the extraordinary gift of giving through organ and tissue donation.

The script was researched and written by Ben Graetz. Audiences were moved to laughter and to tears by fantastic performances from Ben Graetz, Tessa Rose and Ella Watson-Russell. The play was co-directed by Alex Galeazzi and Ben Graetz. A documentary film-maker accompanied the cast and crew on occasions, and a short documentary and an archival recording of the performance have been created as part of this project.

In 2012, *Gift of Life* was run as a pilot project funded by the Australian Organ and Tissue Foundation, and was launched at Darwin Entertainment Centre on June 15. The cast and crew then travelled to Alice Springs and Santa Teresa delivering performances, as well as participating in the inaugural Kidney Festival at Nguiu on Tiwi Island. Palmerston Senior College students and residents at Don Dale Correction Centre were also treated to performances.

Artback NT is seeking to develop an extensive tour of communities across Australia in 2013.

THE DEMOCRATIC SET

In May, Artback NT and Arts Access (Darwin) and Barkly Regional Arts (Tennant Creek) partnered with Back to Back Theatre and Performing Lines to bring THE DEMOCRATIC SET to the Northern Territory. THE DEMOCRATIC SET is an experimental residency model that engages with communities, capturing motion snapshots of individuals and groups that, when edited into a single film, provide a unique glimpse of the place and time they were made. Residencies involve members of the public, local artists with and without disabilities working in theatre, dance, sound, music, the visual arts and film.

In form, THE DEMOCRATIC SET is an empty room constructed for the purpose of the project. Groups and individuals were invited to come into the space and work with a director to create a video portraiture. Over a five day period, in both Darwin and Tennant Creek, the set was built and a wide variety of performances took place, were filmed, edited, and the film was screened. Participants sang, danced, spoke with passion in mother tongues, threw hundreds of pieces of paper in the air, slapped fish against walls, dressed up in fantastic costumes, played musical instruments, painted, juggled, cooked, boxed and practiced yoga.

The Darwin film was screened at Darwin Community Arts, and the Tennant Creek film was shown at Nyinnka Nyunyu Aboriginal Art and Culture Centre. Both attracted large audiences, who cheered and clapped at the familiar faces on the screen. Both films will be screened again in Darwin at Deckchair Cinema as part of Disability Awareness Week.

If you’re not in Darwin, or you just can’t wait that long, you can see both films online. Go to http://democraticset.backtobacktheatre.com/ and then click on Darwin or Tennant Creek on the map.
Remote Community Festivals Networking Meeting
by Project Manager: Janice McEwen

‘This is also about community – this is who we are and this is what we want to show you. It includes looking after country.’ Tom E Lewis

Indigenous organisers of remote community festivals across the Top End come together in an inaugural meeting on March 21 and 22 this year.

The enthusiastic two-day networking meeting, which was organised by Artback NT, provided an opportunity for remote festival organisers to come together for the first time ever. There was a unanimous decision to form and ongoing coalition and meet annually to work together into the future.

The meeting enabled these community organisers to workshop the hurdles encountered when presenting remote Indigenous festivals, as well as celebrating and learning from successes.

Facilitator - Dennis Stokes

Attendance -
• nineteen delegates from ten Indigenous community festival organising committees
• two communities were prevented from attending because of Sorry Business
• one community was prevented from attending because it was flooded in
• fifteen participants from supporting organisations
• four Artback NT staff.

Participants shared their experiences of all aspects of running a remote festival from the basics – such as the provision of food and toilets – to the bigger picture aspects, such as attracting audiences and volunteers, providing appropriate training for festival staff and sourcing much-needed funding.

Special guest speakers included Tom E Lewis, Artistic Director of the Walking With Spirits Festival, Artback NT’s Vanessa Hutchins and Keith Garadhawal and Lisa Muthamulawuy from the Elcho Island Healthy Lifestyle Festival organising committee.

Conclusions -
• That festivals are part of a year-long (continuous) cultural program, not short term single events.
• That communities value festivals for their support for culture and language and the ways in which they unite families and communities in positive action.
• That the benefits of festivals in terms of skills development and community harmony are greatly undervalued outside of communities.
• That much funding for festivals is used to pay outside providers for infrastructure, equipment and services that could more economically and beneficially be built up in communities themselves.
• That funding support for festivals is uncertain, increasingly competitive and the NT shire councils do not often fulfil the supporting role for festivals and cultural programs that is played by local councils in other states and territories.
• That this meeting agrees to form a coalition of NT Indigenous community festivals to advocate on their behalf to all levels of government, and to share information that will build the skills of organising committees and community members.

‘It is a successful festival if you make the dirt fly up’

Jason de Santis

The Remote Festivals meeting was supported by the Aboriginals Benefit Account.

The Honorable Gerry McCarthy, Minister for the Arts, and Dennis Stokes at the Remote Community Festivals Networking Meeting. Photographer: Louise Partos.
Coming soon...
See the Artback NT website for tour dates

**CARAVAN BURLESQUE**

Finucane and Smith with Regional Arts Victoria

_Caravan Burlesque_ is a raunchy fun cabaret experience. Funded by Playing Australia this production is touring nationally with intensive workshops in Alice Springs and Darwin, assisting local performers to develop their skills and incorporating them into the show. Touring the NT in August/September.

**CHASING THE LOLLYMAN**

‘As original as it is Aboriginal’ - Time Off

_Chasing the Lollyman_ is a one man show devised and performed by one of Queensland’s most dynamic and funny Indigenous performers, Mark Sheppard. It is a joyous sharing of stories, a celebration of urban Indigenous identity and takes a satirical look at the media and popular culture. Playing a variety of characters, weaving stand up with storytelling and clown, Mark pokes fun at everything from Neighbours (what would it be like if a Murri family moved into Ramsey Street) to politics.

National tour managed and coordinated by arTour – a business unit of Queensland Arts Council. Touring the NT in October.

**BINDJAREB PINJARRA**

_Bindjareb Pinjarra_ is WA’s longest running theatre production. This iconic ‘comedy about a massacre’ has garnered great reviews and ovations throughout Australia. Re-imagined and restaged in late 2009 to mark the 175th anniversary of the Pinjarra Massacre, this has been a hit of the Dreaming Festival in QLD.

Touring nationally through Playing Australia we are pleased to deliver performances in Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek with Country Arts WA during August.

**LITTLE BIG SHOTS**

Perfect for families and kids aged 2 to 15, _Little Big Shots_ is Australia’s major annual and travelling children’s film festival. An inspiring, meaningful and fun-filled festival, _Little Big Shots_ features the best in local and international children’s shorts, animations, documentaries and, amazingly, child-produced films. The films screening in _Little Big Shots_ inspire discussion of world cultures, different languages, cultural diversity, emotional intelligence and human values. Better still, we guarantee they will make kids laugh, whoop, think and create. _Little Big Shots_ takes to the road bringing great films from around the globe to cities and towns across the NT in late 2012. Screenings will be accompanied by animation workshops for young people.

All images this page courtesy of the artists.