

**MEDIA RELEASE EMBARGO: 19 June 2020**

## Merrigong announces recipients of 12 new artist grants

Wollongong's home of performing arts, Merrigong Theatre Company, has today announced the 12 independent artists who will receive a share of \$24,000 in funding towards the development of new performance projects.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, and its effect on employment opportunities for performing artists, Merrigong Theatre Company 'Rebooted' its **MERRIGONGX** Artists' Program for 2020, with an injection of repurposed funds for new projects from independent artists. Artists who reside in, or have strong links to, the Illawarra region were invited to apply for small grants of \$2,000 - \$4,000 to contribute to the creation of new work.

The successful projects span a breadth of performance types and genres, including dance, theatre, circus, livestreamed gigs, puppetry, orchestral experiences and more.

The successful applicants are:

Artist	Project
Kraig Grady	Development of new shadow puppet show <i>The Pilgrimage of Creatures</i> .
Daryl Wallis	First stage development of immersive musical work <i>The Hour of Land</i> .
Robbie Curtis	First stage development of new children's circus work <i>A Bee Story</i> .
Sonya Holowell	Development of <i>Danger/Dancer Seeking Silence Cartographies</i> a new cross platform work from First Nations artist Sonya Holowell and collaborator James Hazel.
Katja Handt	One-week development of new work <i>Fault Lines</i> exploring the relationship between location, community, ecology and human systems.
Jodi Phillis	A livestreamed fortnightly music gig <i>Lounge 'O' Sound</i> .

Alicia Battestini	Development of a new theatre work, <i>Elsie for Vestri</i> , anchored in a conversation with Wollongong's artist and LGBTQI communities about our own mental health.
Renae Pinazza	Development of an immersive orchestral experience <i>Inside the Octet</i> .
Solomon Thomas	Development of a videographic performance that documents the landing of a spaceship in a regional town titled <i>UFO</i> .
Duncan Fellows	Digital presentation of Duncan Fellows' character Glenn Twenty exploring the Illawarra.
Lisa Maris McDonell	The creation and presentation of 25 bite-sized video portraits of dance artists with links to the Illawarra.
Heidi Hillier	Development of Heidi's new Circus & Magic show <i>Seamless</i> .

*“We had an unprecedented number of submissions - 44 in total. The caliber of the projects and artists that applied is an indication of the incredible depth of creative talent that exists in the Illawarra,”* said **Leland Kean**, Artistic Development Manager for Merrigong Theatre Company. *“I look forward to seeing the fantastic, innovative works that come out of this initiative, continuing what has become the trademark of the **MERRIGONGX** program.”*

Merrigong’s Artistic Director / CEO **Simon Hinton** said, *“Our industry has been very badly affected by the closure of venues across the country. Locally, Merrigong has had to cancel 372 performances to date, and we are now looking at a \$4 million downturn in operating revenue for 2020, and an 85% reduction in venue visitation year on year. It is without a doubt the darkest hour I’ve witnessed in my 15 years at Merrigong. Despite these challenges, the welfare of artists is at the forefront of our minds, and we are working hard to ensure that we’re supporting local artists in our community to continue to create and connect. We can’t wait to share these exciting new projects with our audiences.”*

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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