



About Us

Polyglot Theatre is a world-renowned contemporary theatre company based in Melbourne making exceptional arts experiences for children and families.

Our unique brand of theatre encompasses a wide variety of forms, and is shared with audiences everywhere, from the world's most prestigious theatres to the football grounds of regional Australia. Polyglot's artistic and philosophical approach of child-centred practice has earned us a strong reputation at home and abroad as a leader in the theatre for young audiences (TYA) sector, celebrated for creating distinctive, participatory works that are playful and conceptually rigorous. Access is central to our work at Polyglot, driven by the right of all children to experience growth and resilience through creative play.



Bees. Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Our Vision

Polyglot places children at the heart of our art. Our vision is of a world where all children are powerful: artistically, socially and culturally.

Polyglot acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and we pay our deep respect to Elders past and present. For more than 65,000 years, children and families have created and played on these lands and continue to do so. We are grateful to be able to make our art on this country too. Always was, always will be.

Our Values

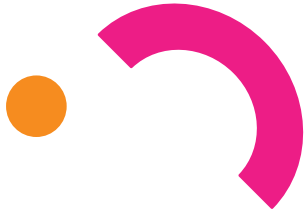
- Children are central to our art as collaborators and participants. Our work exists to give children the power to be in control, to have an effect and experience freedom.
- Our artistic approach is one of unbridled curiosity, rigour and daring; we champion innovation and invite the unexpected.
- We work with respect, resourcefulness and a spirit of genuine collaboration in the pursuit of a sustainable future – environmentally, creatively and economically.
- We work with inclusive practice and a strong focus on accessibility, understanding the need for equitable engagement in the arts.
- We believe in leading change and pursuing best practice for our staff, our artists and our Board.

Our Mission

Polyglot's mission is to make innovative and daring theatre which provides children everywhere the opportunity for imagination and adventure through participation. We offer transformational, playful arts experiences that are alive and human in their content and connection. We relish the endless possibilities in theatre and performance for this very specific audience, providing scope for an extraordinary range of forms and styles. We are committed to advocating for the right of all children to experience arts and culture, and to promoting the importance of young people as a discerning audience from the earliest years.

Polyglot People

Polyglot's strength lies in our people – our Board, our Staff, our Artists and our Audience.



The company works with a co-CEO model of Artistic Director and Executive Director, who lead a multi-skilled staff. We have an expert Board of Directors, and an informal ensemble of 25 highly skilled freelance artists who deeply understand the company's artistic approach and ethos - the Generator group. Children are central to our work, both as collaborators and as participatory audiences. Polyglot Inspiring People Society (PIPS) is a group of young people who contribute to new idea development, strategic planning and policy, and shared creative exchange.

Board of Directors

Sarah Hunt – Chair
Rasika Mohan – Deputy Chair
Sandra Stoklossa – Treasurer
Dr. Mark Williams – Secretary
Jacob Boehme (to August)
Matthew Hall
Greg Ireton (to April)
Geoffrey Renton
Sandra Robertson

Staff

Sue Giles AM - Artistic Director & co-CEO
Katherine Fyffe - Executive Director & co-CEO
Emily Tomlins - Associate Director
Lucy Day - Business Manager
Rainbow Sweeny - Producer
Julie Wright - Producer
Lexie Wood - Project Manager
Freya McGrath - Assistant Producer
Erica Heller-Wagner - Marketing & Development Manager
Kate Prinsley – Development Manager (to June)
Sunari Sooriaaratchi – Marketing & Access Coordinator (from August)
Sophie Overett - Administration & Operations Coordinator
Fleur Brett – Bookkeeper (to April)
Luke McLennan of The Wandering CFO – Bookkeeper (from April)

PIPS

Alex J, Alex T, Ava, Charlie, Chester, Daniel, Dash, Emily, Frank, Freya, Gabe, Huxley, Izzy, Julian, Lulu, Maisie, Marly, Matilda, Naiya, Reema, Rosie, Scout, Vivi, Wirran, ZayZay

Artists, Facilitators and Production Staff

Afsaneh Torabi, Alex Joy, Alice Coffey, Alice Qin, Andrea Vuong, Angela Nguyen, Ashlee Hughes, Azizeh Naeibi, Betiel Beyin, Blayne Welsh, Bridget Milesi, Briony Farrell, Cam Goodall, Chantel Marks, Clem Baade, Dan Goronszy, Daniel Holmes, David Pidd, Ellie Griffiths, Elvis Tran, Gaby Forsell, Glen Walton, Graham Coffey, Hannah Murphy, Hugo Wright, Ian Pidd, Inez Whitehouse, Jacqueline Luty, Jacqueline Tran, James Douglas, Jax Jacki Brown, Jennifer Tran, John Marc Desengano, Justine Warner, Kaite Head, Kate Sulan, Katrina Gaskell, Kuda Mapeza, Lachlan MacLeod, Lauren Kemp, Lauren Sheree, Lauren Swain, Martin del Amo, Matilda Woodroffe, Mischa Long, Morwenna Schenk, Natalie Petralis, Nick Barlow, Olivia Walker, Perri Campbell, Phil Jackson, Rafael Lopez, Rebecca Diele, Richard Vabre, Rosie Pidd, Sonya Soares, Sophia Derkenne, Steph O'Harra, Sylvie Meltzer, Tamara Rewse, Tanja Beer, Tirese Ballard, Victoria Phantharangsi, Zak Pidd



*Come Back Home development.
Photographer: AlvieAlive, courtesy of
Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay*

Achievements



15,300 People reached



393 Artist employment opportunities

175 Performances delivered

160 Workshops delivered

107 Creative development sessions

85 Voice Lab conversations

4 New works premiered

1 award received

19,449 Visits to our new, accessible website



Top left: When the World Turns. Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Top right: Sound Shadows. Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Bottom right: We Built this City. Photo by ArtWork Agency, courtesy of Placemakers Gold Coast, BLEACH* 2022*

Chair's Message

Sarah Hunt

2022 was an ambitious year of renewed activity and re-connection for Polyglot. As we returned to consistent, in-person engagement with our audiences, it was wonderful to see the learnings of 2020 and 2021 come to life in our work, particularly around access and equity.

In July, Sue Giles announced that she would step down as Artistic Director and co-CEO at the end of 2022, to focus on her significant advocacy work as President of ASSITEJ International. Across her 22-year tenure, Sue guided Polyglot to remarkable heights of artistic achievement, creative exploration and international recognition, and championed our strong, collaborative working culture, which is key to our success. We are immensely grateful for Sue's leadership, and she remains a close friend of the company.

In October, it was our great pleasure to announce Cat Sewell's appointment as Polyglot's next Artistic Director and co-CEO. She will be an exemplary leader for our next phase; creative, deeply connected to our child-centred vision and collaborative way of working, and an empathetic and astute leader. Her track record of developing and delivering exciting play-based arts, health and education projects, and her commitment to sector development, will ensure Polyglot continues to be an international leader of theatre for young people. On behalf of the Board, I thank Tony Grierson of Aegeus Executive Search for leading the global recruitment process.

2022 saw us farewell two Board members - Jacob Boehme and Greg Ireton - who both joined in 2019. Jacob is a Melbourne-born-and-raised multi-disciplinary artist of the Narangga and Kurna Nations, South Australia, and his knowledge and connections in First Nations artistic communities benefited the company greatly. Greg brought his invaluable expertise in disaster management and recovery, public safety and research. We thank them for their generous service.

It is a testament to Polyglot's organisational strength that amongst these exciting, yet seismic, changes, four premiere seasons were delivered as part of our annual program of activity. After years of creative development, deep thinking, and considered engagement, much of it remote, it was a thrill to share *Bees*, *Sound Shadows*, *Pram People* and *When the World Turns*, our collaboration with Oily Cart (UK), with audiences. Each of these works has garnered significant interest from local and international presenting partners, with future seasons confirmed or in the pipeline. In 2022 alone, Polyglot delivered five more seasons of *Bees*.

This calibre and quantity of work is only possible with robust support. I extend my sincere thanks to the government agencies (federal, state and local), philanthropic organisations, and generous donors, whose substantial investments in our work provide the stability from which our creativity can bloom, and our art can soar into the world.

In closing, I offer a heartfelt thank you to my fellow Board members who guide the organisation with discerning judgement and warmth. Their commitment brings exceptional energy to Polyglot and its practice, and it is a privilege to serve alongside them.

Bees. Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Executive Director's Message

Katherine Fyffe

The development of the four new works that premiered in 2022 – *Bees*, *Sound Shadows*, *When the World Turns* and *Pram People* – was woven throughout the year, anchoring our program and providing immense creative challenge and freedom for our artists.

Creative development and testing shaped the first months of 2022, before seasons of *Paper Planet* at ArtPlay and *Boats* at a rescheduled Wyndham City Children's Week Picnic took place in March. In April we welcomed our first audiences to *Bees* in the gardens of the Abbotsford Convent before a season in Wangaratta, while our USA partners Inlet Dance delivered a season of *Ants* at Without Walls Festival in San Diego. In May, Associate Director Emily Tomlins directed an online rehearsal process for *Bees* with Inlet Dance, before the work enjoyed USA seasons in Des Moines, Charlotte and Cleveland. We are grateful to our presenting and delivery partners for the opportunity to continue sharing our work while international travel remained uncertain.

Closer to home, *Bees* was presented by Bayside City Council in May, and new interactive work *Sound Shadows* premiered at Cardinia Cultural Centre in June. Audience responses demonstrated the depth and nuance our Generator artists bring to their practice as they led new creative exploration for the company. May finished with *Ants* at Cairns Children's Festival.

In June we delivered *Feast* at Monash University, and in August we toured the much loved *We Built This City* to BLEACH* Festival on

2022 was a year of purposeful change, as we consolidated the lessons of recent years and embraced new creative inspiration to connect with children and families. It was full to the brim with premieres, performances, workshops and creative development, along with a welcome return to touring.

the Gold Coast. September saw the premiere of our collaboration with Oily Cart (UK), *When the World Turns*, at Arts Centre Melbourne's Alter State Festival, and October provided our final premiere for the year with a joyful season of *Pram People* at Melbourne Museum with Melbourne Fringe.

Throughout 2022, several new works continued their exploration: the First Nations-led *Totems* project took shape during developments in Kempsey in regional NSW; the *Rumba Shop!* creative collaboration with Rumbalara Football Netball Club in Shepparton continued; and *Family Forts* explored the notion of home in early learning centres across the City of Casey. Another highlight was the delivery of nine week-long residencies of *Paper Planet* in specialist and special development schools across regional and metropolitan Victoria.

By the time the office closed for the holiday break in December, we had delivered 175 performances, 160

workshops, undertaken a massive 107 creative development sessions, had 85 Voice Lab conversations, and reached an audience of 15,300, generating 393 artist employment opportunities.

The smooth delivery of this level of activity is a testament to the skill and generosity of spirit shown across our Polyglot teams – in the office, in the rehearsal room and on tour. I extend my deep thanks and gratitude to them all for their work this year.

Amidst it all, there was significant change on the horizon, with Sue's announcement in July that she would step down after 22 years leading the company. The ensuing process of recruitment and leadership transition was marked by the care and creative ambition inherent in Polyglot's culture. I heard many people describe Sue's impact on them as we celebrated her time at the company, and I'm so grateful to have learnt from her incredible leadership too. Thank you Sue – for everything.

In October, Polyglot's founder and friend, Naomi Tippet AM, passed away. Naomi was with Polyglot every step of the way, engaged in and supportive of our ambitions, growth and changes. We continue her enormous legacy of passion for making theatre and art possible and accessible for all children. Vale Naomi, and thank you for your enduring friendship.

In reflecting on 2022, I thank our Board and many supporters and funders for enabling us to achieve all that we could, and positioning us to embrace the exciting changes that 2023 will bring.



Naomi Tippet AM, 2018.
Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Outgoing Artistic Director's Message

Sue Giles AM



2022 was the last year for me, in a long relationship with Polyglot Theatre as its Artistic Director and co-CEO.



We Built This City premiere, 2001.

For Polyglot, it was intensely productive, with works that had been in development across the last two years coming to presentation – meaning four premiere seasons in 2022. There was a feeling that the company's culture had distilled to something very potent; in our relationships with artists, with presenters and with our peers. The work we brought to audiences in 2022 is complex, nuanced and powerfully about participation, with a strong emphasis on the adult-child relationship.

Leadership was shared visibly with our Generator artists, with *Pram People* taking space and place, winning hearts and awards, *Bees* creating hives of playful energy, and *Sound Shadows*, strange and wonderfully simple, inciting dance and play through interactive light.

We can feel proud of the diversity in our work, in our audiences and in our artists. With *When the World Turns*, we saw the premiere of a long-term collaboration between Polyglot, Oily Cart in the UK and eco-scenographer Tanja Beer, bringing Disabled audiences and thousands of living plants to Arts Centre Melbourne for the new arts and disability festival *Alter State*. We can feel proud of our work that engages communities across ages and generations, and delights and surprises through presentation.

2022 recognised the impact of authentic collaboration and inclusive process – still juggling the fallout of COVID-19 disruption but successfully navigating the pitfalls in true Polyglot style: cheerful, flexible, inventive and professional. We can feel proud of the way we have worked together to keep Polyglot leading the way to greater value and respect for children as discerning audiences.

This company has been my incredible privilege to lead over the past 22 years. There are not enough words to express the learning and adventure that Polyglot has given me. I have been shaped, as well as been part of the shaping. Thank you to all my friends and welcome to the next exciting adventure for this unique company.

Sue Giles



Top and right: Portraits of Sue Giles AM. Photographer: Ian Bickerstaff

Industry Leadership

In 2022, Polyglot continued to lead the TYA sector and broader arts industry in areas of creative and professional practice, innovation and the value of diverse artistic exchange.

Sue Giles AM is President of ASSITEJ International, the global association for theatre and performance for children and young people. In 2022 she attended the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering in Sweden, addressing issues for TYA with members from all over the world. She was in Jordan and Indonesia for ASSITEJ regional workshops and Executive meetings. Sue continues serving as a Board member for Theatre Network Australia (TNA).

2022 Highlights

- Victorian College of the Arts two week residency, led by Associate Director Emily Tomlins
- Deakin University students observing *Bees* and Q&A
- Creative exchanges with Rawcus and Western Edge
- Sue Giles and Lachlan MacLeod presentation, Child Friendly Cities and Communities
- Participation in: National Youth Arts Connections (NYAC) advocacy resource creation with Patternmakers; Creative Victoria CEP Roundtable – Youth Organisations, Javanese delegation; NYAC Summit, Sydney; TYA sector submission for the National Cultural Policy; NYAC quarterly meetings; Griffith University research project - *Culture for Climate: Exploring the role that Australian theatre organisations can play in addressing the ecological crisis*
- Online Professional Development workshop, Blumenthal Arts Centre, Charlotte (USA).

Policies

With the Commission for Children and Young People releasing new Child Safe Standards for implementation in July 2022, Polyglot undertook an extensive review of our Child Safe Policy to ensure both compliance with the new Standards and relevance to the Polyglot of today and the future. We released our new Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy, along with a new Child Safety & Wellbeing Procedure, to our staff and artists in June, guiding them through the changes, ahead of sharing it on our website in July.

As part of our commitment to strengthening the sector, we share our policies with our peers and partners, including our Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy and COVID-safe plan. These are available on the TNA Public Policy Database.

Mentoring

- Sue Giles mentored Pablo Latona (Canberra artist undertaking a Kids x Art residence); Big Mouse Theatre, Macau and various Generator artists in their independent practice.
- Kath Fyfe mentored Lucy Pitt, General Manager, Western Edge Youth Arts.



Top image:
Pram People.
Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Bottom image:
Lachlan MacLeod, Generator artist.
Photographer: Ian Bickerstaff

The Generator

The Generator is a capacity-building program that supports Polyglot's artistic vibrancy and sustainability. Through the Generator, our core artists undertake creative leadership roles, represent Polyglot at conferences and events, deliver training and mentorship to artists and educators, and receive professional development opportunities.

Our artists' engagement in The Generator shapes and informs their work with Polyglot as well as strengthening their individual practices as creative practitioners. It is essential in maintaining the robust, reciprocal connections between our people and our organisation: the foundation from which our work is possible. Creative exchange is integral to our focus on sustainable pathways into both the organisation and our work and the TYA sector, as well as deepening our collective artistic practice.

The majority of new Polyglot works in development are Generator-driven, embedding artistic rigour, new voices and diverse approaches across the organisation to ensure the strongest creative experiences for our young audiences.

In 2022, Generator activity included:

- Emily Tomlins continuing in the inaugural Associate Director position
- Creative developments and premiere seasons: *Bees* and *Sound Shadows*
- Creative developments: *Family Forts* and *Totems*
- PIPS leadership and strategy
- Creative exchanges with Rawcus and Western Edge
- Remote artist training with Inlet Dance Theatre (USA);
- Leading workshops with Child Friendly Cities and Communities, as well as Victorian College of the Arts and Deakin University students.

The Generator is generously supported by the Canny Quine Foundation and the Besen Family Foundation.



Pram People. Photographer: Scott Hone.



*When The World Turns.
Photographer: Theresa Harrison*

“The Generator Program offers much more than project development opportunities. It fosters us as artists, collaborators and contributors to the work, artistic culture and community of Polyglot. Being given opportunities to develop skills or take on leadership or facilitation responsibilities stretches us beyond the creativity of our roles with children and each other on the ground, to support the essential value of the arts for children more broadly. It really deepens our working relationships and our understanding and connection to Polyglot's ethos, vision and practice; and allows for a strong sense of belonging for everyone.”

~ Tirese Ballard,
Generator artist

Touring Repertoire



Ants

An interactive performance which brings children together to explore the landscape around them. Ants as big as humans work together intently, collecting and placing hundreds of giant bread crumbs, and children are irresistibly drawn closer to find out how they can join in.

~ La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival, California, delivered in partnership with Inlet Dance Theatre (April)

~ Cairns Children's Festival (May)

Ants. Photo courtesy of Cairns Regional Council



Paper Planet

Children and families are invited into a forest of tall cardboard trees, and after exploring the space, they add to this strange and delicate planet using only paper, tape and their imaginations. Theatre and play merge in this magical place, as creatures, plants, costumes, characters, stories and adventures spring to life.

~ Moomba Festival, ArtPlay, Melbourne (March)

"It was very five senses and I felt like I was really in the world of *Paper Planet*." ~ Parent

Paper Planet. Photographer: Theresa Harrison

"Live creative experiences are particularly important because... they can be approached on the child's own terms and they respond to the viewer. And I love them, genuinely surprising and joy making!"

"[Creative experiences are] very important for us because it creates memories and special feelings... It's like the roots building inside [my] child's heart and growing something..."

~ Parents, on the importance of creative experiences



Boats

You will find *Boats* in the strangest of places – on dry land! Children and their families use their imaginations and small colourful boats to go on exciting, sea-faring adventures across the wide-open oceans of town squares and park lawns.

~ Wyndham City Children's Week Picnic, Werribee (March)

Boats. Photo courtesy of Wyndham City Council



We Built This City

A wonderland of a construction site that brings whole communities together to think big and build the city shapes of their dreams. Faced with thousands and thousands of cardboard boxes in a big, open space, children and families follow their impulses and create unique structures inspired by their relationship to their city.

~ BLEACH* Festival, Gold Coast (August)

We Built This City. Photo by ArtWork Agency, courtesy of Placemakers Gold Coast, BLEACH* 2022*

"I loved that the performance was not gendered. A lot of parenting stuff is all about "mums and dads" which, as a non-binary parent makes me feel really excluded and invisible. This was a lovely change."

~ Parent, Pram People



Pram People.
Photographer: Scott Hone

"I felt like I was seen as a parent. It was nice to feel recognised and part of a community."

~ Parent, Pram People



Pram People.
Photographer: Sarah Walker

New Work and Innovation

Premieres

In 2022, Polyglot delivered four world premiere seasons:



Photographer: Theresa Harrison



Photographer: Theresa Harrison

“Creating a work for children during a pandemic is challenging enough. But through the passion, hard work and unwavering vision and curiosity of the team, we did it! *Bees* premiered in April. What we have gained over the last 2.5 years is the ability to imagine into difficult places. Can we train 13 dancers on the other side of the world to do this new show, without ever getting on a plane? Yes we can! Will it work? Well, we’re going to make it work! And it did.

Bees is still a new show, so the Inlet dancers are not only learning it, they are contributing to its richness and evolution.”

Emily Tomlins, Associate Director and *Bees* Director

Bees

Explore a buzzing, humming hive of activity.

Bees is a joyful interactive work in which children are welcomed into a world of community, communication, wonder and imagination.



Creative Development

Abbotsford Convent (Jan, Feb)

Premiere

Convent Kids, Abbotsford Convent (April)

Performances

King George Gardens, Rural City of Wangaratta (April)

Bayside Autumn Fest, Bayside City Council (May)

Polyglot worked in partnership with Inlet Dance Theatre to deliver three USA seasons:

Des Moines Performing Arts, Iowa (July)

BorderLight Festival, Cleveland Public Library (July)

Charlotte International Arts Festival (Sep-Oct)

Bees was developed through Polyglot’s Generator program, with support from the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, and the Sidney Myer Fund. The premiere season was supported by the City of Yarra.

Sound Shadows

A playful, sensory space for children and families to engage with sound, movement and light.

Sound Shadows is a colourful, ever-changing and unexpected world of interactive projection and music.

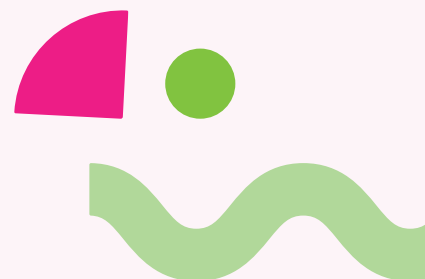


Creative Development Siteworks (June)

Premiere

Cardinia Cultural Centre (June-July)

Sound Shadows was developed through Polyglot’s Generator program, with support from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, The Robert Salzer Foundation and the Sidney Myer Fund.





Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Pram People

A moment in time for children who ride in prams, and the adults who push them.

A celebration of community, *Pram People* rolls out the red carpet for every pram, big or small.



Creative Development ArtPlay (March)

Carlton Primary School, Flemington
Primary School (June)

The Venny (July)

Rehearsals (with audiences)
Kensington Town Hall (October)

Premiere
Melbourne Museum for Melbourne
Fringe (October)

Pram People was developed with support from the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government initiative, and the City of Melbourne through the Arts and Creative Investment Partnership fund and ArtPlay.



Pram People was awarded 'Best Participatory Work for Families' at the 2022 Melbourne Fringe Awards.



Photographer: Theresa Harrison

When the World Turns

A collaboration between Polyglot Theatre (Aus) and Oily Cart (UK)

When we are still we can feel the world turning.

A fantastical experience for young people with complex disability and their families, leading a participating audience into a sensory state of mind and body. In a landscape of living foliage, through sound, light, scents and shadows, *When the World Turns* playfully explores our connection with each other and with the world. In this place humans are equal parts of a new, inclusive ecology.



Creative Development
Coburg Special Development
School (May, July-Aug)


Glenroy Specialist School, Coburg
Special Development School and
Arts Centre Melbourne (August)

Rehearsals (with audiences)
ArtPlay and Arts Centre Melbourne
(Aug-Sep)

Premiere
Arts Centre Melbourne (September)

Commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne for major arts and disability festival Alter State, When the World Turns is supported by the UK/Australia Season Patrons Board, the British Council and the Australian Government as part of the UK/Australia Season, with further support from the Cassandra Gantner Foundation, State Trustees Australia Foundation, the Jennifer Prescott Family Foundation, the Marian and E.H. Flack Trust, ArtPlay and Arts Council England. Polyglot Theatre thanks ecoDynamics for supporting When the World Turns with the provision of thousands of living plants.

“Eventually, the child audience members realise they are leading the performance. The performers are responding to their noises and sounds; these are creating the shape and experience of the performance... There is an exquisite sense of joy and play permeating the room.”

 Dr Sarah Austin,
The Conversation,
When the World Turns

Creative Development

Creative development continued for two new works:

Family Forts – reflections on play in the home

Family Forts is a playful, creative project with children that investigates the experience of home, family and community from their perspective. Through workshops in early learning centres, we are exploring the connections between children and their adults – parents, carers and educators – in creating playing spaces, imagined worlds, and stories that illuminate the child's world view. This process will culminate in a model of work that can be shared with other centres, and a public exhibition of the children's creations.

Valley Brook Kinder (May, Aug)

Rangebank Kinder (May, Nov)

Botanic Ridge Kinder (June, Nov)

Lynbrook Kindergarten (June)

“This is my favourite day! I remember doing this when I was little.” (ie. the start of the year)

~ Child, 4 years old

Family Forts is proudly supported by the City of Casey.

Come Back Home

Come Back Home is being developed through a collaborative process of creation at a distance. Since 2021, artists from Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and Polyglot Theatre have worked together to make a new, participatory experience for and with children. In this creative experiment, the artists collaborate via remote digital connection and play: sharing skills, stimulating ideas and becoming a creative team. Collaboration with children has taken place at schools and early learning centres in both countries. In March and November, Polyglot artists travelled to Singapore for in-person creative development at the Esplanade. The premiere season will be presented at the Esplanade March On festival in 2023.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore (March)

March On, Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, work-in-progress showing (March)

Abbotsford Convent - design intensive, Spensley Street Primary School (April)

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (Nov-Dec)

Come Back Home by Polyglot Theatre is an Esplanade Commission, co-produced by Polyglot Theatre (Australia) and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (Singapore) in collaboration with artists in both countries. Polyglot Theatre's involvement is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.



Family Forts.
Photographer: Suzanne Phoenix



Come Back Home development.
Photographer: AlvieAlive, courtesy of Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay



Family Forts.
Photographer: Suzanne Phoenix



“It has given me lots of ideas for play at home (although he is getting a bit sick of me tweeting at him through the toilet roll).”

Parent, *When the World Turns* creative development

When the World Turns.
Photographer: Theresa Harrison

“So nice to access an event where no explanations are needed and you’re not made to feel different.”

Parent, *When the World Turns* creative development



Voice Lab

Voice Lab is our unique module for collecting the thoughts and opinions of children.

It encourages reflective thinking and the articulation of feelings. Voice Lab is curious and pays close attention to what children communicate. It is an immersive, creative experience for children, one at a time. In a world where the child's voice is often unheard, Voice Lab provides a way for children to have a say about their present and their future.

2022 saw Voice Lab explore new conversations and connections with children across the country, working with four dynamic organisations that amplify the voice of the child. The online module developed during the pandemic has proved its value working alongside the in-person module to ensure no voice goes unheard.

In January, Voice Lab Online spoke to 14 children at the Satellite Foundation's school holiday workshops about self, family and home, before discussing Satellite's workshops.



Voice Lab.
Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Q: If your voice could be heard by the whole world, what would you say?

A: Always remember that you're not alone. We all feel the same way, but if we all express our feelings together, we might put an end to the bad things that happen.

In April, Voice Lab travelled to Bendigo to deliver its only in-person sessions for the year. With Communities for Children, it spoke to children at the Lightning Reef Early Learning Centre, aged 4-5. They talked broadly about self, life, friends, families, and what they like doing when they're not at kinder.

Q: What makes you feel happy?

A: I actually like eating stuff to make me happy.

Q: What things help you feel safe?

A: When I just sit down and snuggle to my toy.

The second Bendigo engagement in April was with Noah's Ark Inc, children who have a support worker (Key Worker) with the organisation, and their siblings, aged 3-10. The children spoke about themselves, their lives, and their favourite things to do, before Voice Lab asked specific questions about their Key Worker – why they visit, what they like to do together, what they like about their Key Worker, and what they've learned from them.

Q: If you could change one thing about the world, what would you change?

A: No being bad to each other and being mean, no bullies.

Q: If you had a superpower, what would it be?

A: Maybe to read minds so I know if people are lying to me or have a different mood or something, so I can help them.

In November, Voice Lab Online spoke to 32 children in the Carers WA Young Carers Peer Support Program, which runs across three primary schools. They talked about their experiences as young carers, what they like doing with the person they care for, and what it's like to be part of the program.

Q: How does it feel to be a young carer?

A: Good. I feel good looking out for my brothers. Sometimes I can just get a little bit tired of doing it, but basically I feel really happy for doing it, for looking out for my brothers.

Q: How does it feel to be a part of a group with other young carers?

A: It makes me feel that I've got friends going through the same thing that I'm going through.

Workshops

Polyglot Theatre's workshop program is designed to inspire children to explore their imaginative potential. We invite children to experience the joys of creativity and collaboration, while developing their critical thinking skills.

In our workshops, our experienced artists give children attention and respect. Through a creative exchange built on trust and fun, children understand that their contributions are valid and interesting, and can be part of something bigger than their own classroom, school or community. In return, our artists gain the benefit of the children's insight and energy, and the opportunity to challenge their preconceptions of what children think and how they act.

"It was great to see the students' willingness to work together in groups with a shared vision with no prompting at all. We were able to go around and really ask questions about what the building was, who used it and how it contributed to their community... The space was so full and alive. A real bustling township!"

Artists' report, Wish Street



Feast

Family Fiesta, Monash University
Performing Arts Centres
(June-July)

Paper and Tape

Wyndham City Libraries (April)
Aitkin College (May, October)

Paper Planet – specialist and special development schools

Ascot Vale Heights Specialist
School (March-April)
Glenroy Specialist School (May)
Hume Valley School (May)
South Gippsland Specialist School
(June)
Broadmeadows Special
Development School (June)

*These engagements were supported
by the Victorian Department of
Education and Training Positive
Start in 2022 initiative.*

Springvale Park Special
Development School (Aug-Sep)
Sunbury and Macedon Ranges
Specialist School (October)
Coburg Special Development
School (Nov-Dec)
Croydon Special Development
School (December)

*These engagements were supported
by the Victorian Department of
Education and Training Strategic
Partnerships Program.*

Shadow Tricks

Our Lady of the Immaculate
Conception (July)

Thoughtaculture

Preston North East Primary School
(March)
Ivanhoe Girls Grammar Junior
Campus (September)
Kalinda Primary School (November)

Professional Development for Teachers

Arts in Greater Dandenong
(February)

Wish Street, in partnership with Satellite Foundation

A new workshop that explores the
intersection of playing and sharing.
Tylden Primary School (November)

The Art of Play, in collaboration with Western Edge

A new workshop that explores
the joy and necessity of play and
collaboration in everyday life.
VicHealth Future Reset Youth
Summit (October)

*Polyglot's school workshop
program is generously sponsored
by Lucas Dental Care.*

"Paper Planet encouraged imaginative play, sensory play, fine motor work, social experience, language experience, maths concepts... all while the kids were having fun."

Educator, specialist school

Paper Planet. Photographer: Lexie Wood

Kids Collaborations

Rumba Shop!

Building on a strong relationship developed through *First On The Ladder* (our three-year art-meets-sport program), Polyglot's collaboration with the young people from the Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE) and Rumbalara Football Netball Club continues. *Rumba Shop!* works with the art and insight of the young people to bring the Club's ethos to the wider community, celebrating the strength of First Nations culture and family. Rumbalara's vision includes an ongoing partnership with Polyglot as they work towards embedding art alongside sport, health and education in the lives of young people in their community.



In 2022, the Polyglot team attended eight home games between April-August, engaging with 168 young people and 57 participating adults. They also met with previous participants, other adults and Elders, recovering connection and ground that had been lost in the preceding years. The Aunties who manage afternoon tea were our champions, introducing our team to families who didn't know Polyglot, and encouraging engagement and conversation.

We arrived with cardboard boxes, paper, tape, texas, glue, card, scissors, conversation, and the readiness to make and follow creative offers. We used local storage for our materials, and ensured all of the young people's creations remained intact. Initially, many cardboard box houses were made, some with extensions to house a sibling or friend. One group made a large community house in which eight people could comfortably sit.

From here, shops were built, then goods for the shops, and imaginative play ensued, with cardboard devices being used to organise meet ups at the 'community oval' (a piece of fake turf) and to make appointments. Rumba Mall grew out of this construction and invention.

The older participants worked on video and audio documentation, creating tour guide narratives and interviewing adults and Elders around the grounds. A huge banner was also created for NAIDOC Week, featuring the 2022 theme: *Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!* This was used as a backdrop for family photos.



*Rumba Shop! Kids Collaboration.
Photos courtesy of Polyglot artists*

The Polyglot team met between games to plan and shift focus, depending on what was discovered. Flexibility and responsive action was essential, and the ability of our artists to follow the participants' vision meant that all activity was authentic and cohesive.

At the final home game, Rumba Mall came to life, with the football oval and netball courts in the town centre, and the shops around the edge, decorated with the young people's artwork. After the opening ceremony and ribbon cutting, the Club community was invited in to the open shops, complete with 'Rumba Dollars'.

The young people took complete ownership of the Mall and its operation, becoming guides, security guards, mascots, and shop owners. They were incredibly proud of what they had created, and the community loved seeing their flag, their imagination and their leadership front and centre.

Rumba Shop! is supported by the Newsboys Foundation.



Polyglot pays our deep respects and thanks to the Rumbalara community and leaders for their friendship, guidance and support.

Totems

Totems is a collaboration led by two Polyglot artists: First Nations writer Blayne Welsh, and designer and puppet-maker Tamara Rewse, in partnership with the Kinchela Boys Home in Kempsey NSW, and local schools in Kempsey and Melbourne. It follows creative protocols of cultural engagement and is a long-form, multi-year development.

Totems is an interactive work for primary school children based on significant stories and animals of different communities. It is being created by engaging directly with communities, and asks the question, "What do you want the kids of Australia to know about this place?" Using local totems or moieties, the story is formed by the community, working with Blayne Welsh as writer and facilitator, and with both artists deeply engaging with children in the re-telling.

- ~ Kempsey Primary School, Kinchela Boys Home (April)
- ~ NAIDOC Festival, Kempsey Primary School (June)
- ~ Fredrickson Public School, Kempsey Adventist School, Kempsey West Primary School and Kempsey South Primary School (September)
- ~ South Kempsey Primary School (November)

Totems is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, and the Sidney Myer Fund.

"It's rare that you would find a company that would offer the opportunity for an artist to work in a way that's harmonious with Indigenous ways of Knowing, Being and Doing, but Polyglot has provided such a space for the newly developing *Totems* project that I've had the privilege of working on with the talented Tamara Rewse...

I really feel from the experience we've already had, and the excitement and potential for the creative power of the kids in Kempsey South, *Totems* is set to become

a deeply Indigenised program, offering children and community voices from some of the remotest regions to be heard and shared with children from all over the country.

And on top of this, a great way to open a space for First Nations peoples to share with the children living on their respective Country, and create something beautiful to share with the nation, which they have generated with the children, and they maintain ownership over."

~ Blayne Welsh

Polyglot Inspiring People Society (PIPS)

Briony Farrell
PIPS Coordinator

My first year as the PIPS Coordinator was filled with inspiring collaborations, new works, and more pink envelopes than I ever thought possible.

We kicked off the year with a buzz - the final dress rehearsal of *Bees*, a work that many of our PIPS had helped develop. The excitement was palpable as a large group turned up one sunny April morning to witness the culmination of their collaborative efforts. We played and pollinated together at the Convent, finishing up with feedback over food. A few months later, we held the final public rehearsal of *Sound Shadows*, another new work that had been in development for some time. As we moved through the sensory space, dancing and responding to sound and light, the PIPS' responses were invaluable. Their enthusiasm and willingness to participate and give feedback on both works was a reminder of what this program is all about - collaboration.

Of course, we couldn't always be together in person, but that didn't stop us from staying connected. Pink envelopes filled with craft supplies and creative provocations arrived in mailboxes around Victoria. From bees made with toilet rolls to clay mascots and mini magazines about gratitude, the PIPS kept their creative spirits alive and well.

But perhaps the most exciting moment of the year came during our Catalyst Day in late September. Our artists gathered to share skills and worked with the PIPS to review and update our child safety standards and processes. We spent the morning creatively exploring what safety meant to them. The discoveries we made are now being used to create versions of our policies written by young people, for young people, to access on our website.

As we move into 2023, we see an opportunity to develop our program further. Our first-ever biannual newsletter has posed some thought-provoking questions to the PIPS:

Why are you a PIP? What would you like to do more of? What new ideas could we trial? Would you want to co-create our content, activities and help run gatherings?

We hope these discussions will help us find new ways to deepen their involvement in Polyglot. By putting them at the heart of the program's continued evolution, we hope to empower future champions for our sector - young people who are passionate about the arts, collaboration, and community.



Illustration:
Nick Barlow

Access and Equity

Access, equity and diversity are embedded in Polyglot's values and strategy. We are driven by the right of all children to experience growth and resilience through creative play and are committed to ensuring we reach the broadest audiences with safety and care. We know greater access, equity and diversity bring strength and success to Polyglot and the TYA sector, so we are also forging new pathways into our organisation and practice for artists and arts workers.

In 2022, we continued implementing our 'Audience Access and Access to Audiences' strategy. This was developed in 2021 to build greater connections with Disabled children and their families for *When the World Turns*, and it now encompasses all of our activity. This saw us foster relationships with four organisations who work with Disabled children and their families. We invited their communities to participate in creative developments, and they shared information about our public seasons to their wider networks.

Other activity included: providing detailed venue and performance access information for 16 seasons, creating visual stories for six public seasons, and translating *Pram People* event information into Arabic, Somali and Vietnamese. In August, we created a new, ongoing role for a Marketing and Access Coordinator, ensuring we have a core staff team member dedicated to access.

When the World Turns

When the World Turns, our collaboration across time and distance with Oily Cart (UK), is a theatrical production created for and with young people with complex disability who have the greatest barriers to access. It is an intergenerational work for them to experience with their families and prioritises their point of view, inviting participation through all the senses.

During our 2022 creative development, Polyglot engaged deeply with the students and educators at Coburg Special Development School and Glenroy Specialist School, spending time with classes to understand fully the audience and their reaction to theatrical elements.

When the World Turns premiered at Arts Centre Melbourne as part of Alter State, a new arts and disability festival. The family shows sold out over a month before the season, confirming the appetite for work made with and for children with complex disability. Our creative development sessions at ArtPlay also sold out. For Polyglot, this reiterated the vital importance of creating art that includes all children in ways that are comfortable for them.

Paper Planet workshops

Our *Paper Planet* workshop offers an immersive environment that illustrates the complexity, power and intricacy of students' creativity. Since 2018, we have toured it to Victorian specialist and special development schools, creating and playing with Disabled young people who face the most barriers in accessing arts experiences. In 2022, we visited 9 schools, connecting with 957 students.

Creative exchange and employment

In 2022, Polyglot facilitated creative exchanges between the Generator and artists from Western Edge and Rawcus. Through this pathway, three artists have now joined The Generator, bringing their valuable artistic expertise and lived experience to Polyglot's practice. We also offered a paid internship for a Disabled arts worker to join a *Pram People* development period.

"It was a wonderful experience for our whole family. We always walk past Arts Centre Melbourne but never imagined we would get the opportunity to see a show."

Parent, *When the World Turns*

When the World Turns. Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Fundraising

2022 saw an increase in opportunities for in-person engagement with our deeply-invested supporters. We welcomed donors and funding stakeholders to premiere seasons and special events, and we loved sharing these high points of connection and celebration with the people who had helped bring them to life. It is the combination of multi-year investment, project-specific funding, and individual donations which allows Polyglot to achieve everything we do, and we are grateful for the relationships we have with our entire supporter community.

Annual Giving

Polyglot raised over \$40,000 in individual donations across 2022, with more than \$37,000 given during our mid-year campaign. This focused on our engine room – our people – and employing them so that our work can continue and children everywhere can access the growth and resilience that comes from engaging in trailblazing arts experiences. 93% of those who gave to our mid-year appeal were returning donors, and we reached both our annual and mid-year targets.

Trusts and Foundations

In 2021, several key trusts and foundations made the welcome move towards providing multi-year operational support to Polyglot, and we especially thank our funding champions whose support continued or commenced in 2022. A range of projects were made possible through philanthropic funding, and these included social impact programs in schools and communities and organisational capacity building projects, as well as creative development.

A full list of funders can be found on the following page.



Illustration: Nick Barlow



We Built This City. Photo by ArtWork Agency, courtesy of Placemakers Gold Coast, BLEACH* 2022*

"It's a pleasure to be able to support Polyglot again this year! I continue to marvel at the wonderful new works and audience connections that the company develops despite the pressure of funding, world events, etc. The fact that this is after 44 years is a fantastic testament to all the Polyglot community."

Donor



When the World Turns. Photographer: Theresa Harrison

Polyglot's Circle



Polyglot's Circle is an annual giving program for individuals and families. These donors play a crucial role in strengthening the company through financial support and advocacy.

Inspiring \$10,000+

James McCaughey

Growing \$5000+

Greg Shalit and Miriam Faine

Sustaining \$2500+

Simon Bedford

David & Merryn Hanrahan

Julian Pocock

Empowering \$1000+

Australian Decorative and
Fine Arts Society Melbourne

Rotary Club of Flemington
Kensington

Clarke Thuys

Naomi Tippet AM

Encouraging \$500+

Monica & Sam Abrahams

Jen & Bill Barlow

Ruth Giles

Sarah Giles

Sue Giles AM & Ian Pidd

John & Tom Gutteridge

Dr Neal Harvey & Jayne Lovelock

Émer Harrington

Sarah Hunt

Dr Kim Sweeny & Neredah Burns

Dr Mark Williams & Fiona Gruber

Anonymous (1)

Sharing \$250+

Skye Abrahams

Simon Abrahams

Nicole Beyer

Dr John & Diana Chew

Kathy Fox

Kath Fyffe & Cam Goodall

Andrew Giles

Erica Heller-Wagner

Damien Hodgkinson

Roger & Oscar Luo

David McCarthy

mcmahon & nerlich

Fairlie Nassau

Nami Nelson

Naomi Nicholson

Geoffrey Renton

Sandra Robertson

Viv Rosman

Molly Wagner

Dr Fiona Wahr & family



Illustrations: Nick Barlow

Funders

We thank the following government agencies and philanthropic organisations for their generous support.

Government



City of Casey

Philanthropic



Sponsorship

Polyglot Theatre is grateful for the support and services of two sponsors in 2022.

Lucas Dental Care

Lucas Dental Care has sponsored our school workshop program since 2010, ensuring more students across Victoria can benefit from Polyglot's work.



ecoDynamics

ecoDynamics generously supported the premiere season of *When the World Turns*. Their collaborative energy, tireless commitment to the process and vision, and the 11,000 plants they shared with us, were integral to the great success of this work.



Thank You

Family

We extend a huge thank you to the partners, families and friends of our staff, artists and Board members.

Key school contributors

Botanic Ridge Kinder
Carlton Primary School
Clifton Hill Primary School
Coburg Special
Development School
Flemington Primary School
Glenroy Specialist School
Kempsey South Primary School
Lynbrook Kinder
Rangebank Kinder
Spensley Street Primary School
Tylden Primary School
Valley Brook Kinder

Polyglot Friends

Jeff Challis, David Farrington and Aakonsult
Collette Brennan and Abbotsford Convent Foundation
Tony Grierson and Aegeus Executive Search
Steph Urruty, Tanya Dickson and ArtPlay
Caroline Bowditch and Arts Access Victoria
Mary Harvey, Clare Christensen, Wendy O'Neill, Arts Centre Melbourne and Alter State
Danielle Rowe and the Association for Children with a Disability
Ally Bruce and BAM Arts
David Major and Bunnings
James Fischer and Cardinia Cultural Centre
Das T-Shirt Automat
Daniel Payne, Sonia Bonadio and Down Syndrome Victoria
Nick Somes and ecoDynamics
Laura Colby and Elsie Management
Rachel Lim and Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Nick Crowther, Wayne Psaila and Freerange Future
Gianna Rosica, Roslyn Buzza and Gianna Rosica Accounting for the Arts
Bill Wade, Libby Koba and Inlet Dance Theatre
ITelligent
Jeet Chatterjee and Kent Specialised Storage Laverton
Jo Kelly and Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation
Dr James Lucas and Lucas Dental Care
Matt Cann and MaxIT
Peter Wilson and MCA Insurance Brokers
Jen Brook, Justin Wright and Melbourne Museum
Simon Abrahams and Melbourne Fringe
Ellie Griffiths, Zöe Lally and Oily Cart (UK)
Sam Osborn
Kate Sulan and Rawcus
Belinda Briggs and the Rumbalara Football Netball Club community
Alana Barker-Tompson and Said and Done Media
Sarah Walker Photography
Rose Cuff and Satellite Foundation
Suzanne Phoenix Photography
Nicole Beyer and Theatre Network Australia
Theresa Harrison Photography
Danni von der Borch and The Venny community
Dr Sarah Austin and the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne
Penny Harpham and Western Edge Youth Arts
The staff of our government and philanthropic funding partners



Family Forts.
Photography: Suzanne Phoenix



Boats. Photo courtesy of Wyndham City Council

Financials

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2022

Assets	2022	2021
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,307,302	1,840,026
Other Current Assets	121,891	59,811
Total Current Assets	1,429,193	1,899,837
Non-current Assets		
Property, Plant and Equipment	51,622	67,615
Total Non-Current Assets	51,622	67,615
Total Assets	1,480,815	1,967,452
Liabilities	2022	2021
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	65,364	101,446
Provisions	78,280	99,790
Other Current Liabilities	417,865	900,351
Total Current Liabilities	561,509	1,101,587
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provisions	17,102	8,084
Other Current Liabilities	229,200	229,200
Total Non-Current Liabilities	246,302	237,284
Total Liabilities	807,811	1,338,871
Net Assets	673,004	628,581
Equity	2022	2021
Retained Earnings	463,004	418,581
Reserves - Future Fund	210,000	210,000
Total Equity	673,004	628,581

Statement of profit and loss as at 31 December 2022

Income	2022	2021
Grants		
Government Funding	789,365	644,008
Philanthropic Organisations	298,001	209,139
Other Grants	-	2,000
Total Grants Income	1,087,366	855,147
Other Earned Income		
Performance and Audience Sales	584,778	403,934
Resources Income	9,926	1,000
Sponsorship and Fundraising	55,700	66,012
Business Related Income	15,485	7,156
Government Support - COVID-19	-	103,300
Total Other Earned Income	665,889	581,402
Total Income	1,753,255	1,436,549
Expenses	2022	2021
Administration	863,344	772,781
Marketing and Promotion	67,974	76,614
Production Costs	777,514	473,464
Total Expenses	1,708,832	1,322,859
Surplus (deficit)	44,423	113,690

Let's get social

Instagram @polyglottheatre
Facebook /POlygl0tTheatre
Twitter @PolyglotTheatre
YouTube /PolyglotTheatre
LinkedIn /polyglot-theatre



Talk to us

+61 3 9826 3301
info@polyglot.org.au
www.polyglot.org.au



Find us

Abbotsford Convent
SH1.05, Sacred Heart Building
1 St Heliers St, Abbotsford, VIC, 3067