



## About Us

Polyglot Theatre is a world-renowned contemporary theatre company based in Melbourne/Naarm 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.

Our 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 and inclusive works that are playful and conceptually rigorous. Access is fundamental to our work at Polyglot; we are driven by the right of all children to experience growth and resilience through creative play.



### Vision

At Polyglot, children are central. Our vision is a world where all children are empowered: artistically, socially and culturally.



### Mission

Polyglot's mission is to make transformational, playful arts experiences for children everywhere. Through immersive participation, our work gives children the agency to be in control, to communicate their ideas and imagination, and experience joy and connection.



### Values

- Children are central – as participants, agents, creators and collaborators.
- Play – the basis for our creative exploration and vital for children's development, health and wellbeing.
- Equity – we respect all people and strive for equitable engagement. Access and inclusion are prioritised in everything we do.
- Sustainability – we make decisions holistically to ensure an environmentally, creatively and economically sustainable future.
- Leadership – we lead with courage, conviction and care.
- Innovation – we approach our art and work with curiosity, rigour and daring.

*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 respects 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.*



Top: Pass It On. Photo: Alvin Ho, Esplanade Singapore. Left: Rumba Play! Photo: Darcy Kent. Middle: Art Tree. Photo: Sarah Walker. Front cover: Whirlwind. Photo: Laura May Grogan.



# Polyglot People

Polyglot's strength lies in our people – our artists, staff, Board and audiences. Our people are key to Polyglot's resilience and recognition, and the force behind our adaptability and constant innovation.

The company works with a Co-CEO model of Artistic Director and Executive Director, who lead a multi-skilled and dedicated staff. A genuine partnership and collaborative approach powers Polyglot's leadership.

Polyglot is supported by an expert Board of Directors, along with the Generator - an informal ensemble of highly skilled freelance artists who deeply understand the company's artistic approach and ethos. 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 regularly contribute to new ideas, strategic planning and policy, and shared creative exchange. Our local delivery partners overseas ensure we can reach more audiences internationally.

## Board of Directors

**Sandra Robertson** – Chair  
**David Ryding** – Deputy Chair  
**Sandra Stoklossa** – Treasurer  
**Angela Aroozoo** – Secretary  
**Tzo Zen Ang** (from June)  
**Romi Kupfer**  
**Lisa Newman** (from June)  
**Dr. Vivian Romero**  
**Shannon Joseph** – Observer

## Staff

**Cat Sewell** – Artistic Director & Co-CEO  
**Kath Fyffe** – Executive Director & Co-CEO  
**Emily Tomlins** – Associate Director  
**Lucy Day** – Business Manager  
**Rainbow Sweeny** – Producer  
**Julie Wright** – Producer  
**Lexie Wood** – Project Manager  
**Erica Heller-Wagner** – Marketing & Development Manager  
**Nanda Soe** – Marketing & Access Coordinator  
**Sophie Overett** – Administration & Operations Coordinator  
**Luke McLennan & Danni Faul** – The Wandering CFO, Bookkeepers

## Artists, Facilitators & Production Staff

Clement Baade, Tirese Ballard, Nick Barlow, Betiel Beyin, Maisy Butchart, Moses Carr, Alice Coffey, Archie Coffey, Graham Coffey, Gryff Connah, Niamh Corcoran, Paul Dellas, Sophia Derkenne, John Marc Desengano, Briony Farrell, Katrina Gaskell, Sue Giles AM, Kaite Head, Ashlee Hughes, Keira Jensen, Sasha Kaiser, Youbi Lee, Jacqueline Luty, Lachlan MacLeod, Bec Matthews, Sylvie Meltzer, Jessica Moody, Sadie Mustoe, Steph O'Hara, Sam Osborn-Rassaby, Zak Pidd, Joseph Pike, Alice Qin, Tamara Rewse, Morwenna Schenck, Lauren Sheree, Sonya Soares, Lauren Swain, Meg Taranto, Afsaneh Torabi, Jennifer Tran, Lillie Walker, Justine Warner, Dr. Blayne Welsh, Danni Wright, Hugo Wright, Sunny Youngsmith, Amanda Zeidaks



*Right & back cover: Forest. Photos: Laura May Grogan.*

## Local delivery partnerships

### Inlet Dance Theatre (USA):

Bill Wade, Libby Koba, Emma McBride, Lauren Satink, Hannah Stephens, Bird Thurman

**Rom for Dans (NO):** Camilla Myhre, Ida M. Halvorsen, Tora Brekke, Chollada Phinitduang, Emma Öberg, Emilie Østby, Raket Nesje

## Polyglot Inspiring People Society (PIPS)

Archie, Charlie, Charlie, Chester, Dash, Delilah, Dolly, Eli, Felix, Fenna, Frank, Gabe, Goldie, Hudson, Huxley, Ivy, Joey, Julian, Kai, Lettie, Lulu, Maisie, Mat, Michael, Milaan, Miro, Molly, Naiya, Oscar, Remy, Scout, Toby, Vivi, Wirran, ZayZay



## Achievements

**43,924** People reached



**90%** Accessed our work for free

**67%** International

**373** Artist employment opportunities

**273** Performances delivered

**245** In-school & kindergarten sessions

**60** Kids Collaborations sessions

**66** Sessions & shows in regional/remote Australia

**9** International seasons across **6** countries

**19** Creative development sessions

**1** Award received: *Whirlwind* Best in Kids, Melbourne Fringe

*Whirlwind. Photo: Laura May Grogan.*

## International



## National



## Leadership Reflection

2025 was exciting. The year was bookended by two premieres: *Art Tree*, presented by Moorabbin Music + Arts at Kingston City Hall in February, and *Whirlwind* in October as part of Melbourne Fringe at the Immigration Museum – a season we were thrilled to see recognised with the Best in Kids Melbourne Fringe Award.

It also marked the beginning of significant multi-year projects to strengthen our sector and elevate children's voices. Co-CEOs Cat Sewell and Kath Fyffe continued to lead a thriving company grounded in a culture of creative exploration, collaboration and care.

Through touring, in-school programs, Kids Collaborations and creative developments with more than 35 presenting and collaborating partners, Polyglot reached 43,924 children and families – an incredible nine-year high – across seven countries. The company's achievements exemplify the expertise and generosity of our people: artists, staff, Board and PIPS. We thank them for their energy and excellence.

In June, Polyglot welcomed two new Board members: Tzo Zen Ang bringing consulting and leadership experience from McKinsey, the Royal Academy of Arts and the Courtauld Institute,

**Sandra Robertson, Chair**  
**Cat Sewell, Artistic Director & Co-CEO**

and Lisa Newman, a People and Culture specialist with extensive experience in the not-for-profit, legal, and arts sectors. The Board participated in The Observership Program for the first time, with Shannon Joseph attending meetings throughout the year and subsequently joining the Board. We thank all our Board members for their deep commitment, expertise and service, which resonates throughout our organisation.

In October, Kath Fyffe announced that she would step down as Executive Director & Co-CEO at the end of 2025 to take up the role of Executive Director at State Theatre Company South Australia. Across her eight-year tenure, five of those as Executive Director, Kath led Polyglot through major transitions, including new Artistic Directorship, a vigorous return to international and national touring post-COVID, and securing new funding. Her commitment to fostering a strong culture built on Polyglot's core values was vital to how the company navigated the past five years, and we are immensely grateful for her leadership.

In December, we were delighted to announce Ally Harvey's appointment as Executive Director & Co-CEO. With more than three decades of experience across theatre, dance, music, and large-scale events, she brings dedication to ambitious new work, ethical and sustainable practice, and a belief in the essential role of play and curiosity in cultural life. Ally has held senior positions at Lucy Guerin Inc, RISING and Back to Back Theatre, and we are excited at

how she will build on Polyglot's long legacy of great leaders.

In December, we learned that Polyglot was successful in our application for four-year investment through the Victorian Government Creative Enterprises Program. This renewal of support from Creative Victoria provides essential stability to power us across 2026-2029 and into the future.


Our supporters continue to make our reach and impact possible. Many of our champions have underpinned Polyglot's work for much of its 47-year history, and we are deeply grateful to our warm, generous community. We thank our presenting and collaborating partners, government agencies (federal, state and local), philanthropic bodies, sponsors and donors. By sharing our vision and investing in a world where all children are empowered – artistically, socially and culturally – our supporters ensure Polyglot creates and shares our art everywhere.

Above all, it is our audiences that bring Polyglot's work to life. Our biggest thanks go to the children, families and educators who so generously share their ideas and imaginations as we create, play and adventure together.




*Cat Sewell at Forest. Photo: Laura May Grogan.*

**“Being involved in the artistic practice of Polyglot, to lead and direct projects, to be a creative, and just even be around the artistic community that we have is such a privilege. Every day that I get to do that part of my job is an absolute joy.”**

 **Cat Sewell, Artistic Director & Co-CEO**



**“I have a deep well of gratitude for all that Polyglot has given me. I’ve learnt so much about leadership and creative generosity from Artistic Directors Sue Giles and Cat Sewell, and worked alongside a world-class team and artistic community to bring joy and beauty into children’s lives. Thank you to the supporters and champions of Polyglot who make such important work possible. I couldn’t love this company more, which makes me so very excited for its future.”**

 **Kath Fyffe, outgoing Executive Director & Co-CEO**

*Top: Cat Sewell at Whirlwind. Photo: Laura May Grogan. Left: Cat Sewell & Kath Fyffe, Perth/Boorloo. Right: Kath Fyffe at Catch the Light. Photo: Laura May Grogan, Flow Festival Australia.*

# Child Voice

**Polyglot takes a rights-based approach to working with children by placing their voices at the heart of our practice.**

**We create safe, inclusive spaces where children are respected and actively empowered as collaborators with distinct views and insights.**

Across all forms of our work, our skilled artists use their expertise in child-led, participatory practice to engage audiences. Whether playfully participating in our shows, making art for their community in our Kids Collaborations, or having conversations with Voice Lab, Polyglot offers children the space to create and share in their own way, elevating their valuable contributions and insights.

## Highlights

~ **Polyglot Inspiring People Society (PIPS):** A consulting group of young people who contribute to the testing of new ideas, strategic planning and policy, shared creative exchange, and the company's ever-deepening understanding of how children think and collaborate. They offer their opinions, creativity, energy and joy.

- Creative developments: *Forest* at Gresswell Reserve (May, Nov); *Whirlwind* at Brunswick Mechanics Institute (Jul), Kensington Town Hall (Oct).

- Public seasons: *Ants* at Melbourne Museum (Jan); *Cubbyhood* at Abbotsford Convent (Jun); *Paper Planet* at Brighton Town Hall (Jul) and Glenroy Community Hub (Oct); *Whirlwind* at Immigration Museum (Oct).

~ **Arts-Health:** Across a multi-year partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH), we are exploring new ways to support children to share their voices through creativity and play. In 2025, our artists and researchers worked with children in community healthcare and early learning settings, using Voice Lab, as well as making with paper, tape and drawing. The findings are being used to refine the CCCH Voice of the Child Toolkit – a free, evidence-based resource designed for researchers, service providers, clinicians and others keen to include children and embed their voices in meaningful, ethical ways. (See page 23)

~ **Voice Lab:** Our unique module for collecting the thoughts and opinions of children, Voice Lab's purpose is to listen to children's voices and use the information they provide to make meaningful changes that can improve lives. (See page 24)

~ **Feedback approach:** Our artists, facilitators and production staff are highly attuned to our audience and collate statistical and anecdotal data and feedback in our show and workshop reports. When we can use a Polyglot survey to gather feedback, we include a question for the child/children, asking if they have anything to share with us in their own words.



**“You can put all your worries away whenever you need to and come to Polyglot! ...I felt like I could just be myself and do whatever I wanted, and I could make whatever I want... I could do anything my imagination would lead me to. So it was really fun, and the people who ran it inspired us to be ourselves and just be free I guess.”**

~ Child, on the importance of theatre



Voice Lab. Photo: Theresa Harrison.



**“The swirls were so satisfying.”**

~ Child, Art Tree



**“I can’t believe I got to make whatever I wanted.”**

~ Child, Paper Planet

“I feel inspired and like my imagination has took me off to a new world... Because it’s just so magical and inspiring and it makes me feel like I can believe in myself and do new things and try my best. So that’s what I feel when I do theatre.”

~ Child, on the importance of theatre



“A beautiful quote that came out of the day was one mum speaking on our moment where we echo to the audience: ‘It’s so powerful because it didn’t preference a type of language or communication’. Her son doesn’t speak, instead he communicates with sounds, but the echoing allowed him to feel like he was able to join the group.”

~ Show report, *When the World Turns*, Lincoln Center

Top: Art Tree. Photo: Sarah Walker.  
Middle: Paper Planet workshops (Osaka). Photo: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.  
Bottom: *When the World Turns*. Photo: Sachyn Mital, Lincoln Center.

# Industry Leadership

Polyglot is recognised nationally and internationally as an innovator in child-led practice and an advocate of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA).

We value collaboration, conversation and reflection, recognising that many of our artists work in other TYA organisations.

We regularly share policies, expertise and international market insight with peer companies and independent artists. By lifting each other up, we strengthen the quality, resilience and capacity of the sector. We advocate across industry for children's rights to arts and culture.

In 2025, we commenced a significant new three-year project to strengthen the Victorian TYA sector. Supported by The Ian Potter Foundation, Polyglot is engaging with other companies and independent artists to champion a healthy, state-wide arts ecosystem in which artists thrive under best practice, new voices are platformed, knowledge is shared for collective benefit, and the quality of arts experiences for children enriched. Designed to provide protective factors that bolster artist wellbeing, the program's focus is time together, relational practice, and supportive facilitation, without the pressure of creative outcomes.

## Project Highlights

~ **Creative exchange: Artists from diverse companies spend dedicated time together, sharing processes for making performance, exploring new ideas, and how and why we create our unique art.** 44 participants from Polyglot, Western Edge, Arena Theatre Company, Threshold, St Martins Youth Arts and Flow Festival Australia (creative and cultural exchange).

~ **Shared training: Artists develop bespoke skills to work with safety and care.** 68 participants (including independent artists) across: First Nations Cultural Awareness with Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA); Deaf Cultural Awareness with Luke King; Accessible Arts Practice with Arts Access Victoria.

~ **Employment pathways: Annual residency with Victorian College of Arts (VCA) students, promoting TYA as a viable, meaningful career focus; support early career artists' participation.** In March-April, we delivered our fourth annual two-week performance immersion residency with third-year VCA Theatre students. 19 early-career participants were engaged across creative exchange and training opportunities. Polyglot employed 11 early-career or new artists in 2025.

*Polyglot's project, 'Creative exchange, training and pathways to strengthen the Victorian Theatre for Young Audiences sector' is supported by The Ian Potter Foundation.*

## General Highlights

- ~ Professional development workshop delivery: The Centre for Community Child Health; North Carlton Children's Centre; Teater Ekamatra (Singapore).
- ~ Cat Sewell, Artistic Director & Co-CEO, attended inaugural Social Health Summit at Parliament House.
- ~ Kath Fyffe, Executive Director & Co-CEO attended: TYA/USA National Festival and Conference (Washington); InterActivity - Association for Children's Museums Conference (Albuquerque, USA); AAPPAC - the Association of Asia Pacific Performing Arts Centres (Daejeon, Korea).
- ~ Emily Tomlins, Associate Director, attended *ricca ricca festa* (Japan), engaging in the curated delegate program, and discussions as part of the Asian Alliance of Festivals for Young Audiences (ATYA) network convening.
- ~ Julie Wright, Producer, attended APAX - The Australian Performing Arts Exchange (Garramilla/Darwin).
- ~ WINNER - Best in Kids, Melbourne Fringe Awards: *Whirlwind* at Immigration Museum, presented by Melbourne Fringe and supported by Museums Victoria.
- ~ Cat and Kath participated in an exchange with Australian organisations as part of the Minderoo Foundation Elevate Diverse Voices Partnership project (Boorloo/Perth).

## Artistic Reflection - In Conversation

**Emily Tomlins:** The pathways and the connection between companies and artists in our sector is so incredibly important and such a tapestry. Being able to financially value artists' time is not something that happens very often.

It meant that people could undertake important training, and that we found ourselves in creative exchange rooms with people where they were paid just to be themselves and connect as artists. There were so many participants saying they never, ever get the opportunity to just come back to their own practice, and for that to be valued.

Being an artist who has been working in this sector and in the greater industry for a long time, just being valued in those kinds of seemingly simple ways, it keeps you going.

**Cat Sewell:** It builds community. It feeds the soul. The artists are the backbone of our sector; they deliver the work.

**Emily:** It's about respect and honouring the fact that they are all incredible experts in this field and providing them with support to continue that expertise. Plus, just to take a moment to be with each other. That cross pollination is just going to make our sector stronger.

**Cat:** And the cross pollination helps the ideas, the creative ideas, happen as well. It's the most beautifully unforced way to erupt new ideas.



**“The exchange has had an impact on me that feels both immediate and subtle. I know it will rejuvenate my work with young people. It seems obvious that investing in artists matters, we are the ones doing the work that leads to change for young people, but somehow a nourishing day of creativity for practicing artists still feels radical.”**

Artist reflection, creative exchange

**“I found it very fulfilling and satisfying to be in direct relationship with the audience, finding games and characters... that I couldn't have predicted or created without the input of the specific group of kids that experienced the work.”**

Student, VCA Residency



**“I'm hoping to learn more about the challenges that venues and colleagues are facing in the current environment, so that we find ways to meet them together with energy and innovation. There is deep generosity in gatherings and networks like this, and I've been lucky to learn from some great mentors and leaders.”**

Kath Fyffe, interview for AAPPAC Oct-Dec E-News

Top: Polyglot & Flow Festival creative & cultural exchange. Left: Polyglot & Western Edge creative exchange. Photos: Emily Tomlins. Right: AAPPAC. Photo: Kath Fyffe.

# The Generator

## The Generator is Polyglot's creative engine room.

Offering leadership to the Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) sector and increasing artistic exploration, diversity and sustainability, the program is distinctive for its reciprocity.

Generator artists gain the opportunity to pursue their ideas and step up as leaders, build career sustainability and ambition and hone their skills; Polyglot gains an injection of new voices and approaches, a team of people contributing to the vision and mission of the company and the capacity to make more work for new and underserved audiences.

### Highlights

~ **Associate Director:** Emily Tomlins continued in this role, leading multiple projects.



~ **Catalyst Days:** Paid professional development opportunities for our artists to gather, share creative practice and play, and interrogate how and why we make our art.

- **Feb:** Discussions about Polyglot's working culture of care and child safety; play and create session facilitated by Emily Tomlins.
- **Jun:** Movement workshop facilitated by Generator artist Tiresa Ballard; open play and making session.

~ **Polyglot Camp:** Our third annual Camp took place in November. This two-day in-depth Catalyst experience in nature is held on Bunurong Country at Phillip Island (Morrowl). It offers our artists the opportunity to slow down, reflect, and find new perspective, while collectively strengthening their creative practice.

~ **Training:** 18 artists and production staff were trained to deliver touring works.

~ **Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group:** Comprised of artists, staff and Board members, the Working Group reflects Polyglot's commitment to Reconciliation across the company. Three Generator artists sit on the group as paid representatives, covering their time to prepare for and attend regular meetings.

*The Generator is supported by the Betty Amsden Foundation and the Canny Quine Foundation.*

**“What I love most about my work with Polyglot is how much it has, and continues to, shape my own theatre-making practice outside the company. Beyond always having some paper and tape on hand, my work (whether with young people or not, within or outside of the arts) is deeply influenced by Polyglot's dedication to experimentation, exploration, collaboration, and playful processes truly led by the people we are making work with and for.”**

~ Briony Farrell,  
Generator artist



*Left: Catalyst Day, Feb. Photo: Sonya Suares. Right: Polyglot Camp. Photo: Rainbow Sweeny.*



“Through working with Polyglot, I’ve learnt that play is relational. Being 100% present in any interaction allows a moment to grow and may take it to places that are surprising, authentic, and fun. The same can be said for relationships that are playful, and I think this is a guiding principle amongst the community of Polyglot artists.”

~ Katrina Gaskell,  
Generator artist

“For me, Polyglot means making a child feel joy and comfort in our land of many wonders.”

~ Clement Baade,  
Generator artist

~ Excerpt of Polyglot Camp reflection by Sunny Youngsmith, joyfully written from the perspectives of birds on Phillip Island (Mallowl):

“Something I’ve learnt is Polyglotters are attentive. They focus on caring for the Humans as artists. Thank you for letting me, a simple Purple Swamphen, peer into the doorway and see so many moments. So much was revealed throughout the two days about everyone. I guess they only mentioned their headlines in the check-in because the rest of the days were when the rest of the stories would be told.

These Humans found the joy that I find in sticks and twigs. The beauty and the simplicity of the layers that are all around us everyday making for a deep and more connected moment.

Similar to how I rest in my nest, nourishing and looking after my egg, these Humans nourished and looked after each other. Listening and sharing and simply being was enough to be grateful for.”



Top: Polyglot Camp. Right: Catalyst Day, Feb. Photos: Emily Tomlins.

# Touring



## Ants

An interactive performance that 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.

~ Melbourne Museum, VIC (Jan)

*Ants at Melbourne Museum was supported by the City of Melbourne.*

*Ants/Maur - Rom for Dans partnership:*

~ Oslo, Norway (Jun)

~ Barnas Festdager, Norway (Aug)



## Bees

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

~ Things with Wings, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Theatre Royal, Hobart, TAS (Oct)

*Inlet Dance Theatre partnership:*

~ Artosphere, Walton Arts Center, Arkansas, USA (May)



## Boats

Engaging children and families in accessible play that transforms familiar space into something wild, unpredictable and fun.

~ *Rehearsal:* Glenroy Community Hub, VIC (Dec)

~ Williamstown Chamber of Commerce Christmas Picnic, VIC (Dec)



*Left to right: Ants. Photo: Theresa Harrison. Bees. Photo: Joe Kusumoto, Breck Create. Boats. Photo: Jason Lau, Arts Centre Melbourne. Boats. Photo: Julie Wright, Williamstown.*

## Artistic Reflection - In Conversation

**Cat Sewell:** At home, we had an amazing, long summer season of *Ants* at Melbourne Museum, supported by the City of Melbourne. Our local delivery partnerships with Inlet Dance Theatre in the USA and Rom for Dans in Norway meant we reached audiences in these places as well. It's amazing to see these large insects all around the world, from the snow, to deserts, to mountains, to renowned urban museums. It's beautiful to have play and art and theatre and culture, infused with the curiosity of science. It makes so much sense.

**Emily Tomlins:** And the knowledge that kids bring to these shows about the natural world and science is always a highlight.



### Cubbyhood

A playful, creative project with children aged 3-5 years that investigates the experience of home, family and community from their perspective.

~ Abbotsford Convent, VIC (Jun)



### 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.

~ Moomba Festival, ArtPlay, Melbourne, VIC (Mar)

~ Brighton Town Hall, Bayside City Council, VIC (Jul)

~ *Workshops:* World Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan (Jul)

~ We The Young Festival, Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand (Sep)

~ Glenroy Community Hub, Merri-bek City Council, VIC (Oct)

~ Staycation, City Hall, Theatre Royal, Hobart, TAS (Oct)

*Polyglot's Japan tour was supported by the Australian Government as part of Australia's participation in World Expo 2025 Osaka. Our Auckland tour was assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.*



### When the World Turns

*A collaboration between Polyglot Theatre (AUS) and Oily Cart (UK)*

A fantastical experience for young people with complex disability and their families, leading a participating audience into a sensory state of mind and body.

~ North American premiere: Big Umbrella Festival, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, USA (Apr)

Oily Cart's significant United Kingdom touring reached 777 people across 67 performances. Highlights include seasons at Imagine Festival at Southbank Centre and Edinburgh International Children's Festival.

*When the World Turns, a collaboration between Polyglot Theatre (AUS) and Oily Cart (UK), was originally commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne for major arts and disability festival Alter State 2022. Polyglot's USA season was assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body. Polyglot is also supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.*

*The original development and premiere was 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, Arts Council England and ecoDynamics.*



**“Overall my children were treated with real artistic and imaginative respect and inspired to carry that forward into the world. What more could we ask for? I wish everyone would do this.”**

~ Parent, *Paper Planet*, Moomba Festival

*Left to right: Cubbyhood. Photo: Suzanne Phoenix. Paper Planet. Photo: Sarah Walker. When the World Turns. Photo: Sachyn Mital, Lincoln Center. Cubbyhood. Photo: Julie Wright.*

## New Work

It is a joy for the whole company to experience ideas seeded in 2023, Cat Sewell's first year as Artistic Director & Co-CEO, now blossoming into fully realised productions.

In 2025, Polyglot delivered three world premiere seasons, the North American premiere of *When the World Turns*, commenced a new cross-cultural collaboration, and continued developing ongoing projects.

### World Premieres

#### Art Tree

This gentle, creative play space invites children and families to bring natural materials to life with colour and imagination. Spread your branches and reach for the sky. You are the art.

Directed by Cat Sewell, *Art Tree* was designed as an easily scalable installation for theatre or gallery foyers. Through development and premiere it has demonstrated its value as a space of respite for families.

#### Premiere

~ Moorabbin Music + Arts, Kingston City Council (Feb)



#### Whirlwind

A theatrical play space where the ridiculous is welcomed and creativity can float and fly, *Whirlwind* offers children the opportunity to take control of losing control. Filled with an array of recycled and discarded paper and fabric, the performance space is animated by many fans and many hands. Detritus reimaged.

Directed by Cat Sewell, *Whirlwind* hands power and play back to children by providing a space that offers the possibility of chaos, noise and movement. It also has a strong sustainability lens, repurposing and reimagining materials from other Polyglot productions.

#### Creative development

~ Brunswick Mechanics Institute, VIC (Jul)  
~ Kensington Town Hall, VIC (Oct)

#### Premiere

~ Melbourne Fringe, Immigration Museum (Oct)  
**WINNER – Best in Kids, Melbourne Fringe Awards**

*Whirlwind* was developed with support from Melbourne Fringe and The Robert Salzer Foundation. The premiere season was Fringe Funded, as part of XS, with thanks to Daniel Besen, and Rupert Myer AO and Annabel Myer, and supported by Museums Victoria. It was made more accessible with support from Access Fringe.

Top: *Whirlwind*. Photo: Laura May Grogan.  
Middle: *Art Tree*. Photo: Sarah Walker.



*“The Whirlwind* experience is immediate and makes us consider cause and effect. Moving air brings change. It sweeps us off our feet, helps us fly, it confuses and confounds. Air is sensory. It gives rise to patterns, observations of phenomena that become meditative and repetitive. By incorporating materials such as light paper, fabric and bubbles, we make the invisible visible. Our unseen imagination becomes seen. Air activates us. As we all spin and whirl on this globe we call home, *Whirlwind* gives our audiences the chance to spin and whirl in echo and in reverence. And also to laugh, and hoot, and sing into a fan, just as generations did before us. The simple pleasures are worth pursuing.”

~ Cat Sewell, Artistic Director & Co-CEO

## Pram People (Singapore)

We were fortunate to undertake our *Pram People* community engagement process in Singapore. In collaboration with our long-standing presenting partner Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, and Rare Disorders Society Singapore (RDSS), Director Emily Tomlins and Sound Designer Lachlan MacLeod facilitated creative workshops with children and families. Using simple materials, movement, sound, and storytelling, we explored the relationship between adult and baby. Personal stories and anecdotes were recorded, and woven into the soundscape, embedding local voices and experiences in the performance.



Emily Tomlins & Lachlan MacLeod, Singapore.

## Community Engagement (Mar)

- Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore
- Rare Disorders Society Singapore

## Premiere (Mar)

- March On, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

*This tour was assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.*



## North American Premiere

### When the World Turns

*When the World Turns* is a collaboration between Polyglot Theatre (AUS) and Oily Cart (UK), originally commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne for major arts and disability festival, Alter State 2022. In April, it was presented by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City (NYC) as part of their Big Umbrella Festival. Launched in 2018, the internationally recognised festival welcomes kids, teens, adults, and their families for a dynamic series of programming, designed with and for neurodiverse audiences.

Excitingly, the Polyglot creative team arrived in NYC to a sold-out season, and 120 families on the waiting list.

### Premiere

- Big Umbrella Festival, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, USA (Apr)

*When the World Turns, a collaboration between Polyglot Theatre (AUS) and Oily Cart (UK), was originally commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne for major arts and disability festival Alter State 2022. Polyglot's USA season was assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body. Polyglot is also supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.*

“It has been a huge time. We have had the privilege of speaking to, and playing with, some very generous local families...”

Our past week has been spent in an Esplanade dressing room - our “studio” - creating our soundtrack. We have so many beautiful stories to share with local audiences. We also worked with kids here to record new instructions for the adults to follow, and have even managed to get the famous Koel bird into the show.”

Emily Tomlins, Associate Director

“*When the World Turns* at Big Umbrella Festival was a big moment. Our relationship with the Lincoln Center stretches back a long time, and the team did an amazing job to make this tour happen... To see a production that centres children with disability and neurodiversity on the main stage in such a prestigious venue is a big deal. That’s what Polyglot works for, in terms of access.”

Cat Sewell, Artistic Director & Co-CEO

## Creative Development

### Catch the Light

Make. Offer. Transform. Huddle. Shine.

Polyglot and Flow Festival Australia are collaborating to create a new arts experience for children and families who are Deaf/hard of hearing. Following a creative and cultural exchange between the artists in July, public sessions took place in September as part of Flow Festival 2025. Inside a world where it is always dusk, with a full moon and the air filled with blue moths, families were invited to gather, create and shape memories under the glow. The moths are guardians of community and transformation, drawn to kindness and creation.

### Public sessions

~ Flow Festival, Abbotsford Convent, VIC (Sep)

*This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body, and ArtPlay City of Melbourne.*



“Being in a bilingual and bicultural space making something from the ground up for a specific audience, for Deaf children and families, was beautiful to be a part of.”

~ Emily Tomlins, Associate Director, *Catch the Light*

### Forest

*In the forest, tiny worlds meet giant worlds. Our imaginations breathe and our senses awaken. Listen. How does the forest call to you?*

*Forest* is a bold new production currently in development. Set and presented outdoors, it invites children and families to explore our connection to forests, and the creatures and characters within. Across two creative development periods in Bundoora, the artistic team continued to refine the dramaturgy and design, creating and playing with audiences in the wild spaces among the trees.

In 2026, *Forest* will be pitched at the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) in February, and premiere at Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne in May.

### Public sessions

~ Gresswell Forest Reserve, Bundoora, VIC (May, Nov)

*The development of Forest has been supported by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and ArtPlay City of Melbourne.*



“I loved how... we all just listened to the trees and how it wasn't really us making this happen, it was like the forest getting ready for its own show.”

~ Child, *Forest*

“We were captivated by the ways the artists chose to explore and experience the forest and inspired to follow suit! There was a strong sense of wonder, awe and joy!”

~ Parent, *Forest*

*Top & middle: Catch the Light. Bottom: Forest. Photos: Laura May Grogan.*

## Cross-Cultural Collaboration

### Pass It On

Take your time. Skip to a beat. Make your mark. *Pass It On* keeps it rolling.

*Pass It On* is a collaboration between artists in Australia (Polyglot) and Singapore (The Artground) celebrating intergenerational play across cultures. The first iteration took place in Singapore, with sessions at a nursing home for the elderly with an on-site childcare centre, specifically designed for intergenerational interaction, and public workshops for families. The second iteration took place in Melbourne, with Polyglot artists engaging with playgroups and families, and The Artground artists contributing online.

### Singapore

~ St. Joseph's Home; Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (Mar)

### Melbourne

~ ArtPlay; Australian Vietnamese Women's Association Playgroup, Maidstone; Ferntree Gully Intergenerational Playgroup (Nov)

*Pass It On is a cross-cultural exchange between artists in Australia (Polyglot Theatre) and Singapore (The Artground), supported by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay and ArtPlay. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.*



“It’s a fascinating experience with many levels of exploration; Australian and Singaporean artists getting to know each other, the cultural contexts of each place, and the audience - we haven’t specifically made work for grandparents and grandchildren before.”

~ Cat Sewell, Artistic Director & Co-CEO, *Pass It On*



*Pass It On. Photos: Alvin Ho, Esplanade Singapore.*



## Artistic Reflection - In Conversation

**Cat Sewell:** It’s a big step to have work that I’ve created with our teams be out in the world. It’s a beautiful process - from the seed of an idea to it actually finding a life and then seeing audiences play and enjoy it. It can be daunting and scary but ultimately, it’s very satisfying. It feels like a new chapter, to be adding to Polyglot’s incredible repertoire. *Art Tree* is very gentle. And then *Whirlwind* is full of wild abandon and energy. I’m really loving the fact that those two very different offerings are part of the mix now. And I’m certainly really excited about the premiere of *Forest* in 2026; that’s been a long, slow development.



Pass It On. Photo: Alvin Ho, Esplanade Singapore.

## Artistic Reflection - In Conversation

**Emily Tomlins:** It's amazing to speak to local people wherever we go with *Pram People*, and to infuse the show with their perspective. Not only because the sound of their voices are the sounds of our audience, but also their experiences are ones that our audiences can relate to. The challenge of access on public transport, what it's like to grow up in particular places where certain things will be expected... There's so many things that are very specific, which means that the local voice is really important.

I also love that there are things that are absolutely universal. Each time that we have those conversations, Lachlan, our Sound Designer, and I look at each other and go, 'Wow, that's exactly the same thing someone in the United Kingdom or Hong Kong or Australia said'. And yet it is still somehow a radical act to be in public with a small child.

With *Pram People*, we continue to make connections with organisations and communities and individual families across the world. It's this living organism that keeps morphing and getting richer.

**Cat Sewell:** And to have presenting partners supporting us to do that, like Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore, is so important. Esplanade has been a beautiful champion of Polyglot for a long time.



*Catch the Light. Photo: Laura May Grogan, Flow Festival Australia.*

## Arts-Health

Polyglot is proud to be working at the trailblazing intersection of arts and health with three leading Australian organisations.

### Mythical Hospital Creatures

#### Starlight Children's Foundation Australia

This collaboration builds on a long-term relationship between our organisations. Polyglot has delivered professional development workshops for Captain Starlight teams since 2016, and we share 'a common vision of transforming spaces with play and performance' (Starlight Children's Foundation). Our artistic explorations together focus on 'positively disrupting' hospital environments. Polyglot artists and Captain Starlight performers work together in paediatric hospital settings, engaging children in creative play.

Our Mythical Hospital Creatures collaboration was piloted at Monash Children's Hospital in November 2024. Here the Confetti Yetti was born, a vibrant paper character spreading positivity through... confetti! Children could feed the Yetti with their responses (notes, drawings and creations) to the question, 'what makes you happy?'



*"When the Yetti eats, they sneeze confetti. Simple but very effective. Lots of laughter and bravery. Heaps of passing staff got involved. Kids came down from their rooms. Other kids watched from their windows... The highlight of the afternoon was how we were able to completely change the vibe of the foyer from stark and quiet, to full of life and laughter."* Artist workshop report, 2024.

The 2025 iteration took place at The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne in October. Through a relaxed play and making workshop in the Starlight Express Room, the Wingy Thingy came to life: an enormous paper giant who loves dancing and can transform into a smaller winged creature.

As it roamed through the Hospital's 'Main Street', children, families and staff were invited to make butterflies from paper and tape. The Captain Starlight performers had distributed butterfly-making materials to children on wards, and our team was thrilled to see these displayed in windows. *'These felt like the legacy of the piece already - little ripples of joy!'* Artist workshop report, 2025.



**"One Captain noted how news of the creature spread through the Hospital, saying each time he heard about it from a kid, they seemed to have more information about it. The lore was building as the day went on!"**

Artist workshop report, Mythical Hospital Creatures

**"The way that we were able to change the feeling of the rooms that we walked through was so simple, but so extraordinary. For the children, staff and parents. Children's hospitals are incredible, but also full of anxiety. Offering light and colour and humour and silliness is a great privilege."**

Emily Tomlins, Associate Director, Mythical Hospital Creatures

Bottom left: Confetti Yetti. Photo: Nic Krieg, 2024. Top & bottom right: Wingy Thingy. Photos: Cat Sewell, 2025.

## Voice of the Child

### Centre for Community Child Health

Across a multi-year project with the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH), we are exploring new ways to support children under 12 years-old, particularly those under 8, to share their voices through creativity and play. In 2025, Polyglot artists and the CCCH researchers engaged with children in community healthcare and early learning settings, using Voice Lab, as well as making with paper, tape and drawing.

The findings are being used to refine the CCCH Voice of the Child Toolkit – a free, evidence-based resource designed for researchers, service providers, clinicians and others keen to include children and embed their voices in meaningful, ethical ways. The findings will also inform the development of capacity building materials that will support and empower communities, services and other organisations to ensure they are adequately responding to the needs of young children.

*With funding from Minderoo Foundation, 2025 activity took place in two early childhood education and care settings, creatively engaging children aged 3-5 years.*

*With funding from VicHealth through the Growing Healthy Communities grant, 2025 activity took place in three community healthcare settings across Victoria, creatively engaging children aged 3-12 years.*



## Wish Street

### Satellite Foundation

*Wish Street* is our ongoing collaboration with Satellite Foundation. A week-long in-schools residency program, it celebrates the unique and powerful intersection of theatre-making and family mental health awareness.

With a focus on community, mental wellbeing and play, facilitators from both organisations work with young people to build a large-scale neighbourhood directly from their imaginations and their real-life experiences. Here, anything is possible, and everything can be done together.

In 2025, *Wish Street* was delivered at Abbotsford Primary School in May, and Campbells Creek Primary School in October. Highlights included notable increases in student engagement, teamwork, enthusiasm and school attendance.



“One educator said that being part of the project has made them completely rethink how they run things for their class and has given them lots of ideas of how to better engage [their students]. They noted that play and impermanence actually meant that the kids... worked together in ways they’d never seen before.”

~ Artist workshop report, *Wish Street*

*Bottom left: Voice of the Child team. Photo: Cat Sewell. Top, middle & bottom right: Wish Street. Photos: Sarah Walker.*

## Voice Lab

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

It is curious and pays close attention to what they communicate.

The original, physical in-person mode is a beautifully designed, serene dome. Children crawl, by themselves, into a soft, comforting space filled with warm fluctuating light. Through headphones connected to the roof with a long cord, they speak to the space itself – Voice Lab.

In the online mode, Voice Lab operates over Zoom. It can be offered as an experience that children participate in from their own homes and devices, or in a centralised location, like a school or community centre. A lightweight, pop-up inflatable space is available, designed to imbue the online experience with the otherworldliness and magic that the original dome offers.

The theatrical premise of Voice Lab brings something unique to the way a child interacts; it provides a sense of ritual and focus, encouraging reflective thinking and the articulation of feelings. The questions can be completely tailored to explore children's worldviews and/or gather insight and feedback on their experiences in a variety of contexts.

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.



### In action

In May and December, as part of our Kids Collaboration with Rumbalara Football Netball Club, Voice Lab spoke to the Club's children about community, culture and creativity.

In June, as part of QPAC's Out of the Box Festival in Brisbane, QLD, Voice Lab spoke to children about happiness, hope and their dreams for the future.

Across the year, as part of Polyglot's partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health, Voice Lab spoke to children and young people in early childhood education and care and community healthcare settings about new places, sharing their feelings, and being heard by their adults.



Top: Voice Lab. Photo: Pete Wallis, QPAC.  
Right: Voice of the Child, CCCH. Photos: Lexie Wood.

**“Voice Lab : What do Elders mean to you?”**

Child: Everything. They mean pride, I love to respect them, and without them, we wouldn't be here today.”

**“Voice Lab: What does hope mean to you?”**

Child: It means that you really want something to happen even though something bad is happening that you're going through, and you hope that it will... something good will happen.”



**“Voice Lab: What is the best thing adults can learn from children?”**

Child: That children are stronger sometimes in these ways and they can do this, even if you think sometimes they can't.”



**“Voice Lab: If your voice could be heard by the whole world, what would you say?”**

Child: That we're all equal and that we should all be heard. No matter difference, culture, name, colour, skin.”

# Education

Our curriculum-aligned, in-school programs invite students to experience the joys of creativity and collaboration, while developing their critical thinking skills.

We tailor creative participation to individual children, and our experienced artists ensure an accessible, safe and welcoming space for all.

## When the World Turns: disability inclusive theatre in schools

*A collaboration between Polyglot Theatre (AUS) & Oily Cart (UK), commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne*

When the World Turns invites students with disability and their educators on an adventure into the heart of a living landscape, to become part of a wild place of the senses.

In a 2024-2025 award-winning partnership with Arts Centre Melbourne and the Victorian Department of Education Strategic Partnerships Program, with philanthropic and sponsorship support, Polyglot toured *When the World Turns* into VIC specialist/special development schools. This partnership will continue 2026-2029.

In 2024, Polyglot established a research partnership with The University of Melbourne (through The Creativity and Wellbeing Research Initiative - CAWRI) to explore agency and creative self-expression in *When the World Turns* audiences. Findings will be released in 2026.

- 🌊 Glenroy Specialist School (May)
- 🌊 Echuca Twin Rivers Specialist School (Jun)
- 🌊 Hume Valley School (Jun)
- 🌊 Ballarat Specialist School (Jun)

*When the World Turns (schools). Photo: Sarah Walker.*

- 🌊 Marnebek School (Jul-Aug)
- 🌊 Broadmeadows Special Developmental School (Aug)
- 🌊 Coburg Special Developmental School (Oct)

*When the World Turns: disability inclusive theatre in schools is a collaboration between Polyglot Theatre (AUS) and Oily Cart (UK), commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne and generously supported by the Cassandra Gantner Foundation. The 2025 schools tour is further supported by Arts Centre Melbourne and the Victorian Department of Education Strategic Partnerships Program, Mr Mark Robertson OAM and Mrs Anne Robertson, Maureen and Tony Wheeler, Gandel Foundation, Bec Wilkinson, Wendy Kozica. Polyglot thanks our ongoing plant sponsor ecoDynamics, and SÜK Workwear.*

## Cubbyhood

A playful, creative project with children that investigates the experience of home, family and community from their perspective. As part of our June season with Abbotsford Convent, free excursion sessions were offered to local kindergarten and prep classes.

- 🌊 Abbotsford Primary School
- 🌊 Dame Nellie Melba Kindergarten
- 🌊 Richmond West Primary School
- 🌊 University of Melbourne Early Learning Centre

## Wish Street

*A collaboration between Satellite Foundation and Polyglot Theatre*

*Wish Street* celebrates the unique and powerful intersection of theatre-making and family mental health awareness. With a focus on community, mental wellbeing

and play, facilitators from both organisations work with young people to build a large-scale neighbourhood directly from their imaginations and their real-life experiences. Here, anything is possible, and everything can be done together.

- 🌊 Abbotsford Primary School (May)
- 🌊 Campbells Creek Primary School (Oct)

## Ants / Maur

Ants as big as humans work together intently, collecting and placing hundreds of giant bread crumbs. Children are irresistibly drawn closer to find out how they can join in. *Ants / Maur* is delivered in partnership with Rom for Dans and Den kulturelle skolesekken (The Cultural Rucksack) in schools across Norway.

- 🌊 Schools across Oslo, Lillestrøm, Innlandet & Møre og Romsdal



## Kids Collaborations

### Rumba Play!

**We were grateful to return to Rumbalara Football Netball Club in 2025. Each year, our co-designed activity is based around free creative play and making workshops for the Club's children and young people on home Game Days.**

Rumbalara is a vital gathering place for Yorta Yorta families across sport, health and education, and Polyglot pays its deep respects to the Club's leaders and community for their friendship and support. Our ongoing reciprocal relationship provides invaluable creative and cultural development opportunities for Polyglot's artists and staff, enriching how we work and the art we make and share.

Our 2025 activity was anchored around the creation of Rumba Café. Delivered by a team of Polyglot artists who have all been part of the nine-year partnership, it encompassed a variety of artistic offerings: painting, including on ceramics and textiles; clay sculptures; exploring the Munarra garden herbs to make tea blends; storytelling and radio broadcasting.

The Club's children and young people always have full agency over their participation, dropping in and out as they like. In this safe, relaxed atmosphere they are deeply engaged, often using art and play to process life events.

Our workshops offer unique creative self-expression opportunities for kids, alongside Game Day sports, with regular participants (often those who are younger or perhaps less engaged in sport) experiencing a meaningful sense of connection and belonging.

The Rumba Café Grand Opening took place at the final 2025 Game Day workshop, with families, community members, Elders, and Polyglot artists and staff coming together to witness and celebrate the children's creations.

Following a ribbon-cutting ceremony and speeches, the kids prepared fantastical culinary creations to order in their cardboard and paper kitchen, serving visiting adults. The Listening Lounge offered an opportunity to hear the children's stories in their own words, gathered over the season. Special t-shirts and tea towels carried the memories home.

In 2026, we are excited to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Kids Collaboration. Yakama Rumba!

*Our 2025 Kids Collaboration with Rumbalara Football Netball Club is part of Polyglot's Creative Kids Thrive! project, supported by VicHealth through the Growing Healthy Communities grant.*



Rumba Play! Photos: Keneisha Howell.

## Sound Shadows

Polyglot was thrilled to return to Warringa Park School in 2025 with a *Sound Shadows* residency.

A specialist school in Hoppers Crossing, Warringa Park caters for students aged 5-18 years who have a diagnosed intellectual disability.

Across Term 3, artists spent two days each week engaging all classes in this colourful, ever-changing and unexpected world of interactive projection and music.

The benefit of having an entire term together was felt keenly, with our artists and the students and educators building strong, trusting relationships. As a result, all elements of the *Sound Shadows* experience were deeply explored: simple play with light and shadow, movement, colour investigation, sound creation and responses, through to the complete environment of motion-sensor integrated sound, light and movement play. Each session was captured on video, reflecting students' progress back to them throughout the process.

An artistic discovery that emerged was the use of two play spaces, both the front and back of the projection screen. This allows for a wider variety of creative expression, viewpoints and ways for students to connect.

In December, a special session, which included the screening of video highlights, took place as part of the school's end-of-year celebration.

*This project was supported through Creative Learning Partnerships — a Victorian Government initiative.*



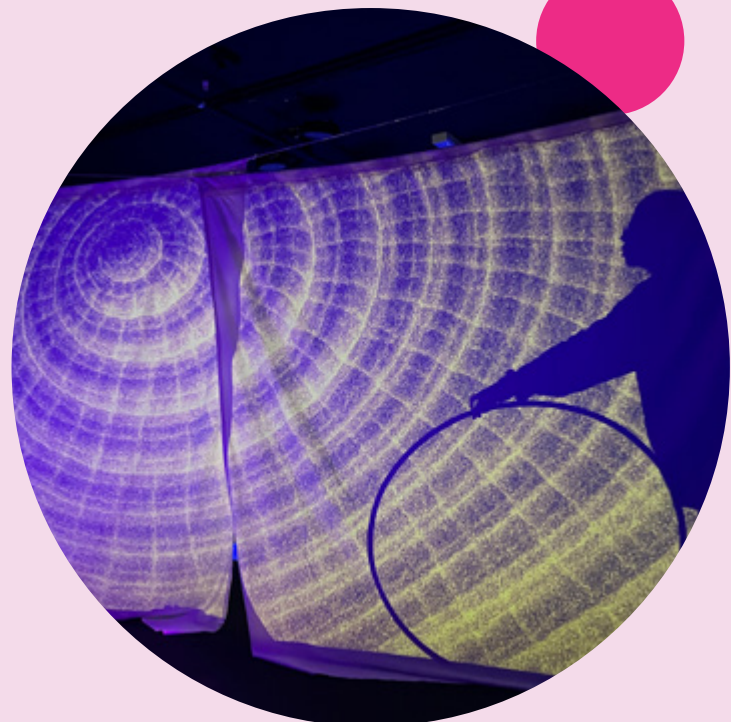
**“All classes had their own journey to own the space.”**

Artist workshop report,  
*Sound Shadows*



**“Thanks again for such tremendous work you all do, really appreciate your creativity and imagination ... the students need more!”**

Educator, Warringa Park School



*Sound Shadows. Photos: Steph O'Hara.*

# Access and Equity

**Polyglot is committed to reaching the broadest audience possible with safety and care.**

**We prioritise children who face the most barriers to accessing the arts, through geography, age, socio-economic status, cultural and linguistic diversity, or disability.**

Equity, inclusion and diversity are deeply embedded throughout the company, both creatively and organisationally, and our approach continues to evolve as we learn.

## Highlights

### Reducing financial barriers:

We are proud that most Polyglot work can be presented free of charge, or at low cost, for children and families. With the support of our presenting partners and funding champions, 90% of our annual audience accessed our work for free, a 5% increase from 2024. Our work in First Nations communities remains free for all participants.

### General & family access:

Across 24 public season What's On listings, 22 included detailed access information, and 18 included a Visual Story. This empowers families to decide if an event is right for them, and provides resources to help them prepare. 96% of Polyglot survey respondents noted our experiences were accessible for their family / students / school.

### Professional development:

We invest in equipping our staff and artists with skills and training to collaborate safely and meaningfully with our audiences and partners.

- As part of our project to strengthen the Victorian Theatre for Young Audiences sector, Polyglot facilitated shared training sessions: First Nations Cultural Awareness with Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA); Deaf Cultural Awareness with Luke King; Accessible Arts Practice with Arts Access Victoria. 68 artists from different organisations (including independents) participated. (See page 10)
- Cat Sewell, Artistic Director & Co-CEO, participated in Veronica Pardo's Culturally Safe Leadership Program.

### Reconciliation Action

**Plan:** Polyglot continued the important, ongoing work of developing a formal Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), with the Working Group gathering for eight meetings. Comprised of artists, staff and Board members, the Working Group reflects Polyglot's commitment to Reconciliation across the company. Our conversations have been slow and focused, exploring how Polyglot – through our art and as an organisation – can support the Reconciliation process and truth-telling.

**Staff wellbeing:** In May, Polyglot's staff team participated in the Galnyatj Nanyak Dana Art Journal Workshop with Kaiela Arts on Yorta Yorta Country, Shepparton.

### When the World Turns:

Presented by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City for their internationally recognised Big Umbrella Festival, the North American premiere season sold out. At home, through our award-winning partnership with Arts Centre Melbourne, *When the World Turns* reached 1154 students and educators across seven Victorian specialist and special development schools (five metro, two regional).

**Whirlwind:** The premiere season was made more accessible with support from Access Fringe:

- An access consultation was undertaken by Lefa Singleton Norton, Coordinator Consultation and Training at Arts Access Victoria
- An Auslan interpreter was present at four (of seven) performances.

**Catch the Light:** Our collaboration with Flow Festival Australia reached 69 Deaf children and families.

**Ants:** With support from the City of Melbourne, an Auslan interpreter was present for four performances at Melbourne Museum.

**“Absolutely fantastic for neurodiverse kids.”**

Parent, *Whirlwind*

**“What I saw was exploration, whether through touch, movement, sounds - with students who don’t have lots of opportunity to explore the world in their daily lives.”**

Educator, *When the World Turns*: disability inclusive theatre in schools

**“Keeping it free means anyone and everyone can attend and not have to budget for it during school holidays which feels hard at times with the cost of everything.”**

Parent, *Paper Planet*, Brighton Town Hall

**“When *The World Turns* allowed the students to connect, express themselves, and engage within the space, in ways that felt intuitive and joyful.”**

Educator, *When the World Turns*: disability inclusive theatre in schools



**“...the team had a beautiful way of interacting with the children... in a way that made them feel safe.”**

Parent, *Cubbyhood*, Abbotsford Convent

**“The visual story was excellent for my children (and me actually!)”**

Parent, *Whirlwind*

**“Our child has mobility issues and uses both a wheelchair and walker to assist their walking. It is always foremost in our mind if activities and venues will be accessible for them and provide equal opportunity. It was such a pleasure to experience accessibility. Thank you.”**

Parent, *Paper Planet*, Glenroy Community Hub

Left: *Catch the Light*. Photo: Laura May Grogan, *Flow Festival Australia*. Middle: *Whirlwind*. Photo: Laura May Grogan. Right, top to bottom: *When the World Turns*. Photo: Sachyn Mital, *Lincoln Center Paper Planet*. Photo: *Moomba Festival*.



**“Not all communication is done with words. It is so important to connect with others, and sometimes it’s better without language. Arts experiences can facilitate expression and connection.”**

Educator, on the importance of creative arts experiences



# Our Supporters

Polyglot's supporters provide vital stability from which we can create and share our art with children everywhere.

We are deeply grateful for the friendship and advocacy of our champions, who make up our strong foundation of multi-year investment, project-specific funding, sponsorship and individual giving. Thank you for sharing our vision, standing with us and helping us achieve our mission.

## Government



## Philanthropic



The Peggy & Leslie  
Cranbourne Foundation



BETTY  
AMSDEN  
FOUNDATION

Canny Quine  
FOUNDATION



Forest. Photos: Sarah Walker.

## Sponsorship

**ecoDynamics** collaborative energy, tireless commitment to the process and vision, and thousands of plants are integral to the great success of *When the World Turns*.



**Lucas Dental Care** have been proud sponsors since 2010. Their generous operational support ensures more children and families can access and enjoy Polyglot's work.



**SÜK Workwear** ensures our *When the World Turns* team and production staff are dressed for success.



## Polyglot's Circle

Polyglot's Circle is our annual individual giving program. The generous personal support we receive from our dedicated donors ripples throughout the company and makes our work possible – thank you.

### Inspiring \$10,000+

- ~ CBAH Asha Daan Trust

### Growing \$5000+

### Sustaining \$2500+

- ~ ArtsNational Melbourne (formerly ADFAS)
- ~ Simon Bedford
- ~ Julian Pocock

### Empowering \$1000+

- ~ Robert Niall
- ~ Dr. Neal Harvey
- ~ Clarke Thuys

### Encouraging \$500+

- ~ Monica & Sam Abrahams
- ~ The Aroozos
- ~ Associate Professor Jill Sewell
- ~ Dr. Kim Sweeny & Neredah Burns
- ~ Molly Wagner
- ~ Anonymous (1)

### Sharing \$250+

- ~ Simon Abrahams
- ~ Jen & Bill Barlow
- ~ Jenny & Loyd Fyffe
- ~ Kath Fyffe & Cam Goodall
- ~ Rachel Heller-Wagner
- ~ David McCarthy
- ~ Lesley McCarthy
- ~ Naomi Nicholson
- ~ Ian Renard
- ~ Geoffrey Renton
- ~ Sandra Robertson
- ~ Dr. Vivian Romero
- ~ Viv Rosman
- ~ Cat Sewell
- ~ Anonymous (3)



Top: *When the World Turns*. Photo: Sachyn Mital, Lincoln Center. Bottom left: *Catch the Light*. Photo: Laura May Grogan, Flow Festival Australia.

# Thank You

## Family

We thank the partners, families and friends of our artists, staff and Board members.

## Friends

ACD - Advocating for children with disability

Janice Florence, Sarah Fiddaman, Lefa Singleton Norton & Arts Access Victoria

Sue Giles AM & ASSITEJ International

Fatmata & ASRC Cleaning

Dr. Tanja Beer

Mary-Jo Capps & MJ Capps & Associates

Laura Colby & Elsie Management Gryff Connah

Nick Crowther & Freerange Future Hana Ebrahimi

Gareth Hart

Jeet, Barry & Kent Specialised Storage Laverton

Anna Dollard & Kids' Own Publishing

Dipika Shrestha & Kwik Kopy Coburg

Jess Kindynis & Abbie Price

Matt Cann & MaxIT

Brendan O'Connell

Dr. Glen Walton & Playable Streets

Peter Wilson, Charles Monet & MCA Insurance Brokers

Danni von der Borch & The Venny

Bill Nicholson, Katrina Larkham, & Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

## Collaborators

Justine Hyde & Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Mikako Atsuchi & Acchi Cocchi NPO

Christian Leavesley, Debra Allanson & Arena Theatre Company

Luanne Poh & The Artground (SG)

Cynthia Nolan Myers, Mary Harvey & Arts Centre Melbourne

Stephane Urruty, Tanya Dickson & ArtPlay City of Melbourne

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Marie Anders, Anders Gaarder Karterudseter and Den kulturelle skolesekken (The Cultural Schoolbag) Innlandet (NO)

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Bill Wade, Libby Koba & Inlet Dance Theatre (USA)

Ellie Griffiths, Zoë Lally & Oily Cart Katrina Cornwell, Morgan Rose & Rawcus

Camilla Myhre, Ida M. Halvorsen & Rom for Dans (NO)

Belinda Briggs, Kylie Briggs, Janelle Atkinson, Sue Oxley & Rumbalara Football Netball Club

Sylvie Meltzer, Ned Ryan, Kel Way & Satellite Foundation

The residents, children and staff at St. Joseph's Home & Childcare (SG)

Nadja Kostich & St Martins Youth Arts Centre

Jonathan Brand & Starlight Children's Foundation Australia Shaza Ishak & Teater Ekamatra (SG)

Sarah Lockwood, Tahli Corin & Threshold

Dr. Sarah Austin & the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne

John Marc Desengano, Chanella Macri & Western Edge

## Presenting Partners

Stephane Urruty, Tanya Dickson & ArtPlay, Moomba Festival

Jade Bull, Rosa Strati & Auckland Live

Helen Berwick & Bayside City Council

Fiona Symonds & City of Kingston Rachel Lim, Shivani D/O Thillai Nadarajan & Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay Singapore

Keir Semenov & Immigration Museum

Rebecca Podsednik & Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts Simon Abrahams & Melbourne Fringe

Jes Wawrzynski, Justin Wright & Melbourne Museum

Anna Held & Merri-bek City Council

Sarah Ozolins, Barbara Poliness and Osaka Expo Taskforce, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Katrina Torenbeek & Queensland Performing Arts Centre

Steve Mayhew & Theatre Royal Hobart

Sara Broome Jones & Walton Arts Centre

Rosemary Angyasy & Williamstown Chamber of Commerce

## Playgroups

Australian Vietnamese Women's Association Playgroup

Ferntree Gully Intergenerational Playgroup

## Schools

Abbotsford Primary School

Ballarat Specialist School

Broadmeadows Special Developmental School

Campbells Creek Primary School

Coburg Special Developmental School

Dame Nellie Melba Kindergarten Echuca Twin Rivers Specialist School

Glenroy Hub Children's Centre

Glenroy Specialist School

Hume Valley School

Marnebek School

Richmond West Primary School  
University of Melbourne Early  
Learning Centre

### Voice of the Child

We thank the children, educators,  
staff and families of the early  
childhood education centres and  
community healthcare settings.

### Funding Champions

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Creative Australia

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Alana Tompson & Said and Done  
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### Auslan Interpreters

Gemila Burgess

Dave Childs

Kirri Dangerfield

Marc Ethan

CJ Jonathan

Alex Notsis

Kellie Steele

Melissa Thompson



Left, top to bottom: Kath Fyffe & Bill Wade, Walton Arts Centre. Whirlwind creative team, Kensington Town Hall. Cat Sewell, Sasha Kaiser & Meg Taranto, Melbourne Fringe Awards. Right, top to bottom: Cat, Kath & Jess Moody, Flow Festival launch. Lauren Swain & Lexie Wood, Rumbalara FNC Junior Presentation. Asuka Hamano & Rainbow Sweeny, Paper Planet workshops. Photo: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

# Financials

## Statement of profit and loss as at 31 December 2025

Income	2025	2024
<b>Grants</b>		
Government Grants	<b>897,130</b>	<b>471,648</b>
Philanthropic Organisations	223,000	285,297
<b>Total Grants Income</b>	<b>1,120,130</b>	<b>756,945</b>
<b>Other Earned Income</b>		
Performance Income	723,124	800,730
Resources Income	50,762	30,348
Sponsorship and Fundraising	179,312	190,590
Business Related Income	30,902	45,808
<b>Total Other Earned Income</b>	<b>984,100</b>	<b>1,067,476</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2,104,230</b>	<b>1,824,421</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Administration	993,829	936,499
Marketing and Promotion	43,126	33,353
Production Costs	1,066,236	952,243
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>2,103,191</b>	<b>1,922,095</b>
<b>Surplus (deficit)</b>	<b>1,039</b>	<b>(97,674)</b>

The company's 2025 financial result of \$1,039 reflects a sustained return to surplus after several years of strategic investment by the Board in key creative programs to deliver enhanced impact. Polyglot's financial performance was supported by the commencement of new multi-year funding, and strong performance against earned income targets.

## Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2025

Assets	2025	2024
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,034,770	1,184,931
Other Current Assets	131,946	199,238
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>1,166,716</b>	<b>1,384,169</b>
<b>Non-current Assets</b>		
Property, Plant and Equipment	34,932	46,948
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>34,932</b>	<b>46,948</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,201,648</b>	<b>1,431,117</b>
Liabilities	2025	2024
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Trade and Other Payables	80,902	66,815
Provisions	110,600	123,109
Other Current Liabilities	512,649	634,871
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>704,151</b>	<b>824,795</b>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>		
Provisions	7,988	13,953
Other Liabilities	-	103,901
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>	<b>7,988</b>	<b>117,854</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>712,139</b>	<b>942,649</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>489,509</b>	<b>488,468</b>
Equity	2025	2024
Retained Earnings	464,045	365,330
Reserves - Future Fund	25,464	123,138
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>489,509</b>	<b>488,468</b>

## Let's get social

Instagram @polyglottheatre  
Facebook /POlyglOtTheatre  
YouTube /PolyglotTheatre  
LinkedIn /polyglot-theatre



## Talk to us

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## Find us

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