

LEGS ON THE WALL

Cover image: Jana Castillo and Joshua Thomson
in LOVE/ERS: Shane Rozario Photography



ANNUAL
REPORT | 2023

Image: Johnas Liu in the Red Box Caritta Sari Photography
Graphic Design: Cabinet of Wonder



— Creating meaning in a rapidly changing world through transformative

PHYSICAL THEATRE

SIMONE WHETTON

In 2023 Legs On The Wall made further progress in revitalising the company's artistry and operations to meet a "post-pandemic" world. Highlights included a return to Sydney Harbour for our work *LOVERS* as part of Sydney World Pride, the Sydney Festival season of *HOLDING ACHILLES* in Carriageworks' Bay 17, and premiering our new work for children and families – *BEETLE* – which flew to Townsville, Edinburgh, then home to the heart of Sydney for the NSW Premiere at PHIVE, Parramatta.

It's no great surprise that Legs are continuing to thrive as a proudly Sydney-based cultural export. We're brash and daring in our outlook and make the most of the natural assets of our city, and revel in developing and showcasing our work in our established stomping ground of the Inner West. We also relish the opportunity to broaden our horizons, around regional New South Wales and throughout the wider world.

Legs On The Wall make our boldness count; sharing stories which say something larger than the everyday through the boundary breaking language of physicality. More than ever, we are focussed on embodying the values-led theme of caring for the environment reflected in our repertoire, by pursuing a role of leadership in sustainable arts practices.

Legs' Board and Management Team approach the company's fortieth anniversary in 2024 with well-placed confidence in our unique role within Australia's cultural sector, and invite artists, audiences and supporters old and new to join us in a year of celebrations. We'll continue to look to a future every bit as vibrant as the rich legacy we're called to reflect on at this time; a legacy which the works and activities reflected in this report have contributed to significantly.



Simone Whetton
Chair - Legs On The Wall

JOSHUA THOMSON

As Legs' Artistic Director I am always honoured to have different artists and leaders driving individual projects, expanding the "Legs fam" as well as ensuring the company reflects the diverse voices and perspectives of our place and time. 2023 saw Vicki Van Hout lead two stages of development of First Women, as well as playing an important role in developing the tree character for BEETLE, and leading workshop intensives as our Associate Artist. Legs continue in our association with Vicki, and proudly play our part in facilitating the development of emerging First Nations artists in our work with Vicki, and through our partnership with NAISDA. We also pride ourselves in being a creative hub for various emerging and mid-career artists as they strive to become the creative leaders and voices of the future.

Another success story from 2023 saw Legs develop a new work for children and families through to national and international presentations within the space of one year. BEETLE is a celebration of the power that we all hold to make change, and a continuation of my body of work around environmental issues. One of my most loved childhood memories goes back to each December, when a very special moment would be shared with my family. It never mattered who saw it first but, when we did, we would bring everyone together to observe this incredible seasonal event: the first Christmas Beetle. A little scout, arriving before the hordes that would come in the following weeks. I remember it stood as a symbol of Christmas, summer, water, heat, fun, family and friends. Unfortunately, we're seeing them less and less as the years pass. BEETLE is a nostalgic story that I wanted to share with generations to come, made more urgent by the fear of this experience disappearing. The show keeps a shared childhood memory alive and reminds us all that even the smallest changes need to be acknowledged, and can make a big difference. I'm very proud of the whole team that have taken this concept and made it such a powerful work for families to enjoy and learn from, and would like here to especially acknowledge Kate Walder's contribution, working with me as co-Director.

LOVERS, a commission by Sydney World Pride (supported by Create NSW and the City of Sydney), saw Legs On The Wall reclaim and return to what we do best: outdoor spectacle, public art on a grand scale, responding to architecture and site with current social conversations. We returned to the AMP Tower precinct but this time worked from the new multi-award-winning skyscraper, Quay Quarter Tower, and celebrated pride and solidarity with the thousands nearby, as they marched to the Domain. LOVERS saw our team of artists come together once again, supported by the whole company, but this time it was a celebration of who we really are, not acting or pretending to be someone else, celebrating our diversity, and shared points of difference. We were all proud to be there for these reasons, as well as returning Legs On The Wall to site-specific work, capturing public attention, and hopefully reminding new audiences of the power of creative expression, and just what the arts can be and where they can be.

So many artists and creative workers come together to make Legs the wonderful company it is, and this report goes further in telling our shared story of 2023.



Joshua Thomson
Artistic Director - Legs On The Wall

LEADERS IN OUR ARTFORM

Strengthen our place as national leaders in artful aerial performance, always exhibiting excellence and depth in our discipline.

Continue to produce relevant, artist-led works of depth, with an intrepid determination to make public art on the edge of possibility.

Act as champions for our practice, reflecting 40 years of specialised experience handed down from practitioner to practitioner, backed by training and qualified expertise.

Further our reach through strategic collaborations, building on a relentless dedication to generating performance opportunities which disrupt everyday expectations.

EMBODYING OUR VALUES

Maintain a deep focus on story, statement-making, and connection: making our boldness count.

Produce and partner on First Nations-led works conceived, directed, and performed by First Nations artists, and reflect First Nations expertise, artistry and knowledge in our projects, company operations and leadership.

Ensure Legs' works, programs, staff, and board comprise diverse perspectives and abilities, and that works drawing on specific cultural perspectives are led by appropriate and authoritative cultural and artistic leaders.

Act as leaders in sustainable arts practice, pursuing carbon neutral certification and other operational adjustments to extend upon our existing achievements.

PLATFORM FOR CREATIVITY

Cherish the bravery of our artists through a dedication to safe practice, backed by rigorous testing and qualified staff and consultants.

Continue to be a destination for interdisciplinary theatre practice and career-long professional development by providing meaningful training and mentorship opportunities

Foster long-term pathways for artists aligned to our discipline by developing future practitioners and leaders with finely honed skills and expertise.

Broaden partnerships, audience development, and entrepreneurial opportunities, building capacity and space for sustained creativity beyond project delivery.

VISI ON

REVIEW

OPERATIONS

FO

In 2023, Legs On The Wall continued on a path of revitalisation and growth demonstrated by a series of outstanding signature achievements. Highlights include returning to perform by Sydney Harbour – and to presenting work internationally – for the second consecutive year; thoroughly reviving Legs’ vibrant training, residency, and mentorship programs; and bringing to life a hearty new work for children and families.

The artistic and operational strengths of the company were complemented by, and contributed to a strong financial result, achieved through dedicated attention to project management and bringing new opportunities to fruition, as well as through the ongoing support of the NSW government, support from commissioning partners, local, state, and federal cultural project grants, and diversified revenue strategies.

The addition of BEETLE to Legs’ repertoire reflects what is now a unifying thematic and operational preoccupation for the company: speaking to environmental and related social concerns through Legs’ artistry, and embodying this value by aspiring to a position of leadership in sustainable arts practice. Legs already operates on a combination of solar and carbon neutral power, and up-cycles set and costume materials. The company is currently pursuing carbon neutral certification and considering additional measures in support of a lively, and liveable future.

Through artist development and youth engagement programs, Legs On The Wall plays a critical role in opening doors for the next generations of physical performance practitioners. Legs’ focus on environmental themes and practices also sees the company energised about shaping public perceptions and standards in contemporary art-making with an exciting and sustainable future in mind. As the company enters its fortieth anniversary year and reflects on its diverse and complementary strengths, Legs On The Wall honours its founding members and torchbearers over four decades, by constantly striving to carry their legacy forward.

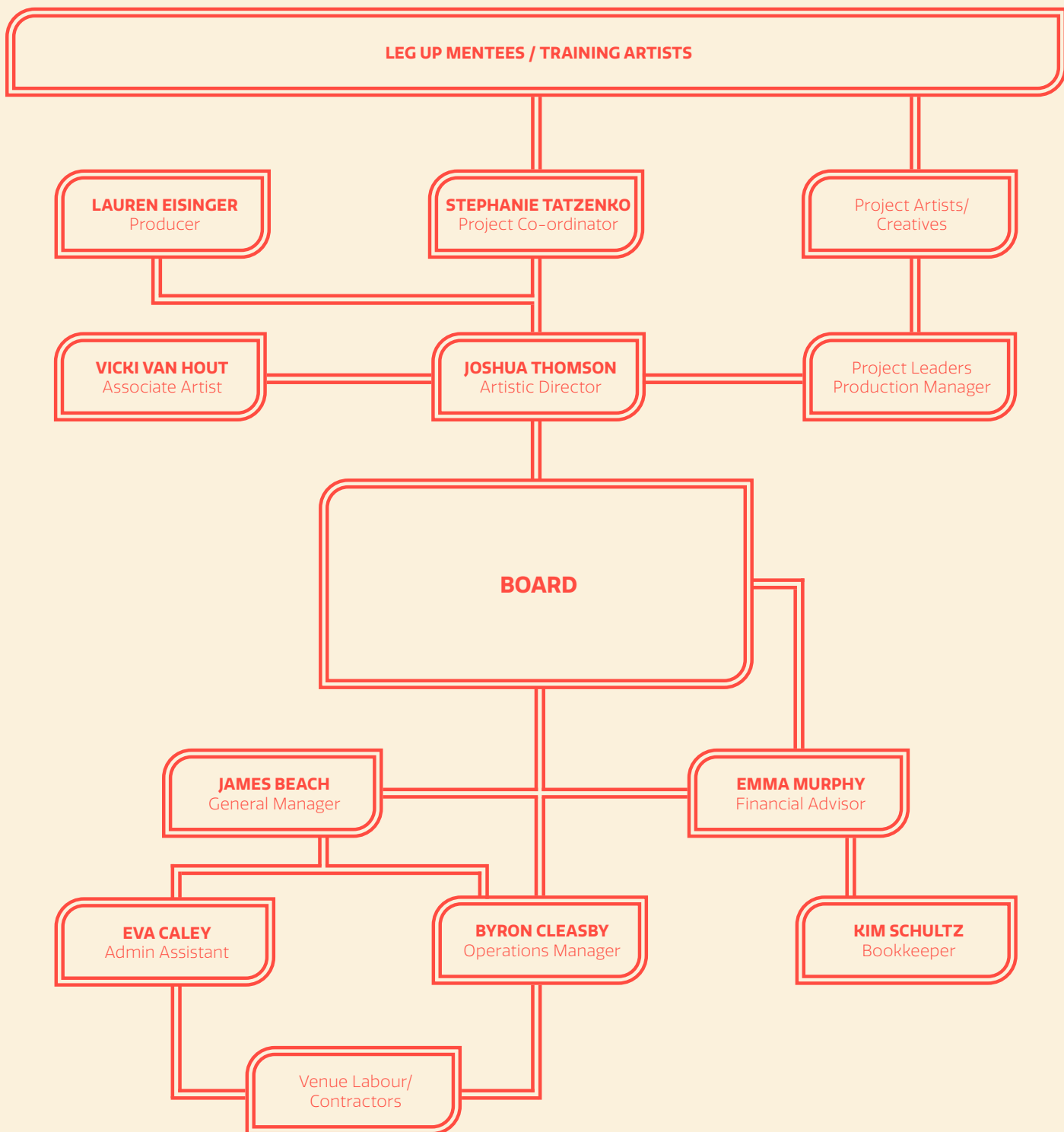
Image: Christy Tran in BEETLE; Carifia Sari Photography



CLICK HERE

or use the QR code for full review of operating results and accompanying financial statements.

STRUCTURE



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SIMONE WHETTON - CHAIR
ABC Radio broadcaster, arts reviewer, partner of legal firm Colin Biggers & Paisley

Dr CHERYL STOCK PhD AM - DEPUTY CHAIR
A career spanning four decades as a dancer, choreographer, director, educator, researcher and advocate

NARELLE BEATTIE - TREASURER
Director of Corporate Services and Governance, Taronga Zoo, extensive financial management experience

LEISA BACON - SECRETARY
Director of Audiences, ABC; extensive marketing and communications experience.

YOLANDE BROWN
Dancer/Choreographer/
Knowledge Ground website
co-ordinator with Bangarra
Dance Theatre (1999-2020), and
current creative lead for AIME

MALCOLM MOIR
Director MAPN Consulting with
significant experience in arts
management

JAKE SHAVIKIN
Head of Development -
Griffin Theatre Company, with
experience in Philanthropy,
Ticketing and CRM

HOLD

ING

19-22 JANUARY 2023 Bay 17, Carriageworks, Sydney Festival

Legs' first work to fill Carriageworks' Bay 17, created with co-producing and artistic partners Dead Puppet Society (QLD), **HOLDING ACHILLES** garnered enthusiastic audience responses from over 4,000 attendees in a completely sold out season as part of the 2023 Sydney Festival.

This component of the world premiere (accompanying the 2022 Brisbane Festival season) was the culmination of several years of cross-border planning, development, and rehearsal - overcoming the immense challenges of 2020-21 - to create a new work on an epic scale, which resonated particularly with young and LGBTIQ+ identifying audiences. **Digital Audience: 1,800+**

Image: Ellen Bailey, Karl Richmond and Stephen Madsen in **HOLDING ACHILLES**. Robert Catto, Photographer

ACHILLES



CLICK HERE

or use the QR code for cast, crew and production details.

HOLDING ACHILLES has been assisted by the Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative, managed by the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, in association with the Confederation of Australian International Arts Festivals Inc., commissioned by Brisbane Festival, Sydney Festival and Glass Half Full Productions together with Bristol Old Vic and Northampton Royal and Derngate in the UK.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

LOVE

RS

5TH MARCH 2023 Quay Quarter Tower, Sydney World Pride

LOVERS, commissioned by Sydney World Pride, saw Legs at their quintessential best, celebrating pride through a series of aerial performances suspended 13 stories high from the award-winning Quay Quarter Tower (the 21st Century counterpart to the adjacent AMP Tower, where Legs made history in the late 1990s with Homeland).

Five pairs of partnering aerialists, in up-cycled parachute silk costumes making rainbow patterns, captivated the 49,111 participants of the nearby Sydney World Pride March as they walked from the Harbour Bridge to the Domain.

This work projected to the world an irreverent exuberance and a commitment to equity, justice, and free expression shared by Legs and Sydney's LGBTIQA+ communities, furthered by Legs' recent entry in the 2024 Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade.

Image: Jana Castillo and Joshua Thomson in LOVERS:
Shane Rozario Photography

CAST

Tynga Williams (aka Diva D-Lish)
& Jana Castillo, Björn Åslund
& Tabitha Dombroski,
Catherine Wait (aka Missy)
& J Twist
Karl Richmond
& Todd Sutherland
Jana Castillo
& Joshua Thomson

PRODUCTION

Costumes by:
Francisco Alcazar
Music by:
Jessica Dunn
Directed by:
Joshua Thomson
Head Rigger:
Byron Cleasby
Rehearsal Counterweight:
Johnas Liu
Event Partner:
Rise Pacific

LOVERS was supported and commissioned by Sydney World Pride, supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and proudly supported by the City of Sydney.

BEET

LE

29 JUNE - 1 JULY 2023 Townsville Civic Theatre, North Australian Festival of Arts

4 - 26 AUGUST 2023 House of Oz, Edinburgh Festival Fringe

22 SEPTEMBER - 1 OCTOBER PHIVE, Parramatta, Spot On Children's Festival

An instant Australian classic, **BEETLE** tells the story of a child who finds a new friend in her backyard; together they embark on an adventure to search for the now elusive Christmas Beetle. The magic of the bush habitat is brought to life through Legs's trademark physical storytelling, and animation created from original artworks by beloved children's author and illustrator Freya Blackwood.

BEETLE exemplifies the best of multidisciplinary performance, in a style that is not only accessible but familiar, reminding audiences of all ages and from all walks of life that there's an important place in the world for everyone.

To date BEETLE has been encountered by over 1,800 enthusiastic audience members and garnered stellar reviews:

"A striking show which takes young viewers on an immersive journey into nature by fusing puppetry, physical theatre, circus, video projection, and set and costume design with seamless imagination." ★★★★★ - The Scotsman

Development and engagement activities related to BEETLE also featured as part of EDGE Greenway from 13-20th of May 2023.

Youth workshops in physical theatre accompanied seasons in Townsville and Parramatta.

Joshua Thomson participated in a forum on sustainable arts practice hosted by House of Oz on Saturday 19th August.

Image: Lloyd Alison-Young in BEETLE:
Luke McLeod, Photographer



CLICK HERE

or use the QR code for cast, crew and production details.

Beetle was commissioned by the North Australian Festival of Arts (NAFA) and the Art House - Wyong, and supported by Inner West Council.

WORK



FIRST WOMEN

Expanding on early development in 2022, Legs engaged in further development of **FIRST WOMEN** led by Associate Artist Vicki Van Hout, on Wiradjuri Country, hosted by Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre in June of 2023.

This development, centred in Regional NSW, offered company members the opportunity to engage with local elder Leanna Carr-Smith, and the Legs team a chance to strengthen connections with Bathurst-based artists and arts workers.

Findings from this development were brought back to the Red Box for further refinement and the work was pitched at APAX in Cairns.

Led by Vicki Van Hout.

DEVELOPMENT

Contributing Artists:
Tamara Bouman, Amy Flannery, Jacinta Janik, Aroha Pehi, Tynga Williams

Artists contributing to 2021 development:
Audrey Goth-Towney, Tara Robertson, Cassidy Waters

Production Management:
Catherine McNamara, Emily Moffat

First Women is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

First Women is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory.

ARTIST & DEVELOPMENT & SECTOR

That the Leg Up program establishes meaningful career pathways was demonstrated powerfully with former mentee Olivia Hadley joining the touring company of BEETLE, and Linda Corazza stepping from Leg Up to a further mentorship opportunity with Samuel Tétreault of 7 Fingers, Montreal (supported by the Ian Potter Cultural Trust).

LEG UP MENTEES 2023

Phaedra Brown
Linda Corazza
Sabrina Muszynski
Jemima Smith

LEG ROOM RESIDENCIES

Clambake*
- Natasha Sturgis
Dialogues with my Butt*
- Josh Freidman
All Bodies, Just One Body
- Gina Limpus
Hanging by a Thread
- Robyn Simpson and collaborators

**subsequently performed at March Dance*

TRAINING

Legs' education partnership with NAISDA continues under a model of dedicated training intensives, hosted in the Red Box and on campus in Kariong, NSW.

Open Training sessions proceeded from March throughout the year and were furthered by a dedicated series of training sessions in specific performance and creation skills in September / October.

Training intensives were also conducted with Catapult Dance and Poetry in Action, and Joshua Thomson led a week of workshops for high school students in Maitland as part of DramaWorks Newcastle.

COLLABORATION

Legs' Artistic Director Joshua Thomson provided expertise in aerial performance working with Bangarra Dance Theatre, towards the production Yuldea, further strengthening the bond between the two companies.

RED BOX VENUE ACTIVITIES

Legs also hosted development and rehearsals for Opera Australia, Branch Nebula, Darlinghurst Theatre Company, The Club House Productions, Insite Arts International, Percussion Australia, Prue Lang and others in the Red Box.

Image: Jana Castillo in the Red Box:
Carlita Sari Photography

LEGS ON THE WALL

Contact Details

info@legsonthewall.com.au

+61 2 9560 9479

91 Canal Road, Lilyfield
NSW 2040 Australia



[@legsonthewall](https://www.instagram.com/legsonthewall)



Legs On The Wall is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

Legs On The Wall acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we work on - the Wangal and the Gadigal of the Eora Nation - and the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and tour.