

LEGS ON THE WALL

Cover image by: Prudence Upton
Jenni Lange in *THAW*, Sydney Opera House
Sydney Festival 2022

ANNUAL
REPORT
2022

INTRO



Simone Whetton
Chair

My passion for Legs On The Wall began when I stood at Circular Quay among a crowd of Sydney-siders holding our breath. From the same shoreline, now to multiple generations, Legs have proven ourselves national leaders in aerial physical theatre. So, it's with great enthusiasm that I continue in my role as Chair, leading a committed and accomplished Board of Directors, with a depth of professional experience in the arts and other fields of endeavour.

Like many arts companies we have faced and overcome some enormous challenges lately, and it's a source of great pride for us that our company has burst back onto the scene - having built capacity steadily before and through the pandemic - creating jaw-dropping performances that say something important. "There's just no other company like Legs". That's what I tell people if they don't tell me first. And it's completely true.



Joshua Thomson
Artistic Director

My vision for Legs' future is all about championing our practice, telling a diverse range of compelling stories that reach people in their heart and guts, and turning more heads as we do it. Amplifying the need to protect our fragile environment is also a core theme for us now. I'm hugely excited by opportunities to expand our artistic leadership and pursue new collaborations to achieve what we aspire to.

Legs has always been about making art within a community of like-minded, highly-skilled risk takers, and shepherding and rebuilding that community remains important work for us. Legs On The Wall's role in the cultural ecosystem is a unique one, and what we do has impact far beyond our own work. We're ready to take that work to the next level (and since we scale buildings and cranes that really is saying something).



Vicki Van Hout
Associate Artist

I'm honoured to hold the position of Associate Artist with Legs, having worked with the company in a number of capacities. I've never done anything as fearless and liberating as performing in *THAW*. I also feel an obligation to community and it's about reciprocity. It's not very often that you get these really meaningful opportunities to engage with people, to push the art form forward into new places. Opportunities for career-long artist development are too rare and it's exciting to be at the forefront of a program which sees the benefit of giving back in this way.

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS



2022 for Legs On The Wall was a striking year of re-emergence, premiering two formidable new works out of lockdown, achieving three additional presentations, and with most company activity fully restored. Three new works commenced development, and these projects are demonstrating Legs' aptitude for proceeding nimbly from development to presentation, with several performance seasons subsequently confirmed for 2023.

Legs' considerable artistic successes throughout the year were matched by a strong financial result, significant live and digital audience responses, and an ongoing commitment to artist development and sector engagement (with some training and mentorship programs temporarily affected by COVID safety measures required to safeguard project activity).

Legs' strategic approach to planning for a bold period of renewal, and seeing through as many existing projects after lockdowns as remained viable, laid the foundation for a year of extraordinary accomplishment, and has brought the company to new heights; setting the course for further success and striking new opportunities.

Legs' gratefully acknowledges that a share of the successes of 2022 rests on the efforts made by departing permanent staff members Cecily Hardy and David Jackson, and of departing Board members Kate Champion and Janice Lee, as well as the immediate contributions made by those joining the team in 2022 – Lauren Eisinger, Byron Cleasby and Stephanie Tatzenko, Yolande Brown joining the Board of Directors and Vicki Van Hout accepting the role of Associate Artist. In this sense the year marked considerable renewal for the company as well as its output, continuing under the leadership of Joshua Thomson as Artistic Director, Simone Whetton as Chair, and with James Beach taking on additional responsibilities as Manager.

[CLICK HERE](#)

For full review of operating results and accompanying financial statements.

Background image by: Jacqui Manning.
Ellen Bailey, John Batchelor, Lauren Jackson and Christopher Tomkinson
in *Holding Achilles*.

VISION



OUR MISSION

Making meaning in a rapidly changing world through the art of transformative physical theatre.

"Legs On The Wall ... physical performance ... with an Aussie cultural identity and a fearless bravado ..."

Renee Dallow, CityHub

LEGS' VISION

LEADERS IN OUR ARTFORM

Strengthen our place as national leaders in artful aerial performance.

Continue to produce relevant, artist-led works of depth and beauty.

Act as champions for our practice through strategic collaborations.

Become a national destination for interdisciplinary theatre practice and career-long professional development.

EMBODYING OUR VALUES

Produce and partner on First Nations-led works conceived, directed and performed by First Nations artists.

Incorporate First Nations expertise, artistry and leadership in all projects and operations.

Ensure Legs' works, programs, staff and board comprise diverse perspectives.

Act as leaders in sustainable arts practice.

A STABLE PLATFORM FOR CREATIVITY

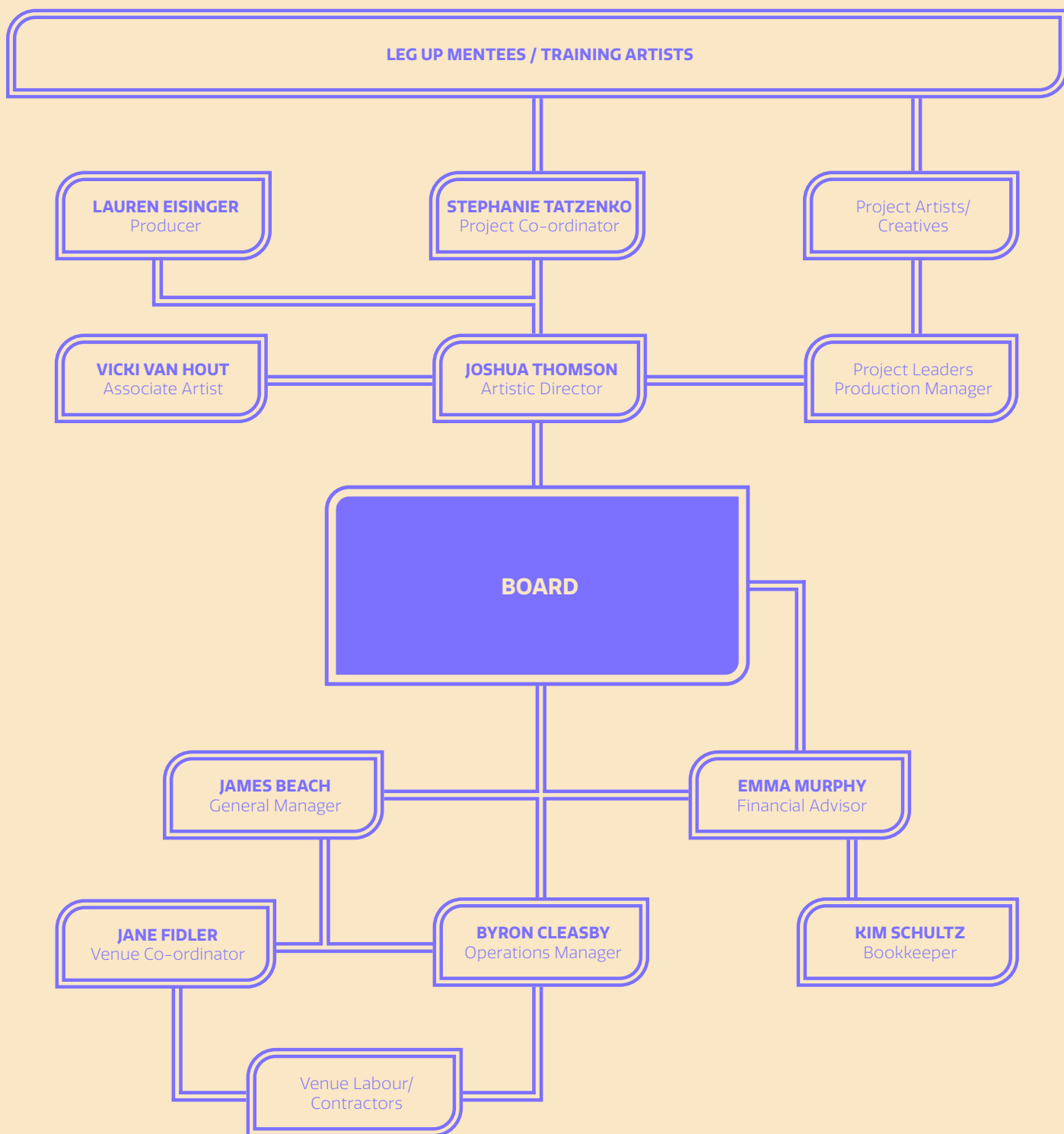
Build capacity and space for sustained creativity beyond project delivery.

Foster long-term pathways for artists aligned to our discipline.

Broaden partnerships, audience development and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Background image by Eden Muere.
Isabel Estrella in *THAW*, Cataract Gorge,
MONA FOMA

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

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

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

THAW

Image by Prudence Upton. Isabel Estrella
in THAW - Sydney Festival, January 2022,
Sydney Opera House

High above, suspended by a crane, a figure -
isolated on a melting "iceberg" - struggles for
balance. We are confronted and inspired by
her determination to adapt and survive.
As sunset approaches what will be left?

There's no time to waste.

*"It's actually reflective of the real world,
what's happening now. We have
glaciers melting"*

Audience member, THAW
Interviewed by Nine News Sydney

THAW proved that Legs have the capacity to deliver on a breathtaking scale, yet in a project so nimble we were able to deliver performances in two different states on consecutive weekends. Created by Joshua Thomson, with an original score inspired by real glacial movements by Alaska's Matthew Burtner, THAW is our artful call to act on climate together, with vigour and hope.

LIVE AUDIENCE TO DATE: 16, 000 +
THAW CAM DIGITAL BROADCAST: 10, 000+

The premiere season of THAW was the subject of 8 TV, 2 Radio, 15 Print, 375 Online earned media items (59 national + 55 international + 286 inter-state) with a combined circulation of over 34 million, kickstarting a year which saw Legs' social media reach increase by 130%.

WORLD PREMIERE

SYDNEY FESTIVAL
14-16 JANUARY 2022
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

MONA FOMA
21-23 JANUARY 2022
CATARACT GORGE

NELSON ARTS FESTIVAL
24 OCTOBER 2022

This world premiere of THAW was assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, 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 and by Sydney Festival.

HOLDING ACHILLES

Image by Robert Catto. Montaigne,
Karl Richmond and Stephen Madsen
in *Holding Achilles*.

Our collaboration with Queensland's Dead Puppet Society examined the legendary hero's relationship with his lesser-known lover Patroclus, reclaiming the queer aspects of *The Iliad*. To breathe new life into this story, Legs' aerial performance practice - choreographed by Joshua Thomson - fused with David Morton's script and Dead Puppet Society's compelling style of visual theatre, with ARIA winner Montaigne performing the original score co-composed with Tony Buchen and Chris Bear.

- 30% Of the Brisbane audience were first time ticket buyers, with 18-25 year olds the leading demographic.
- Combined world premiere audience: 11,390
- 2023 digital audience TBC.

WORLD PREMIERE SEASON

BRISBANE FESTIVAL
29 AUG - 10 SEP 2022
QPAC

SYDNEY FESTIVAL
19-22 JANUARY 2023
CARRIAGEWORKS

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, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Sydney Festival and Glass Half Full Productions together with Bristol Old Vic and Northampton Royal and Deragate 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.

SINGULAR PRESENTATIONS

TRESTLE

was performed at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre on 4 June for the opening night of *Liveble Art: Stories of Done Art and Design* - an event which had been postponed owing to the 2021 lockdown. As a unique addition, Jana Castillo wore a costume painted for the occasion by Ken Done. Performing in *Trestle* were Anton, Vicki Van Hout, Jana Castillo, Joshua Thomson, Romain Hassanin, Olivia Hadley, Sophia Van Gent and Will Hansen.

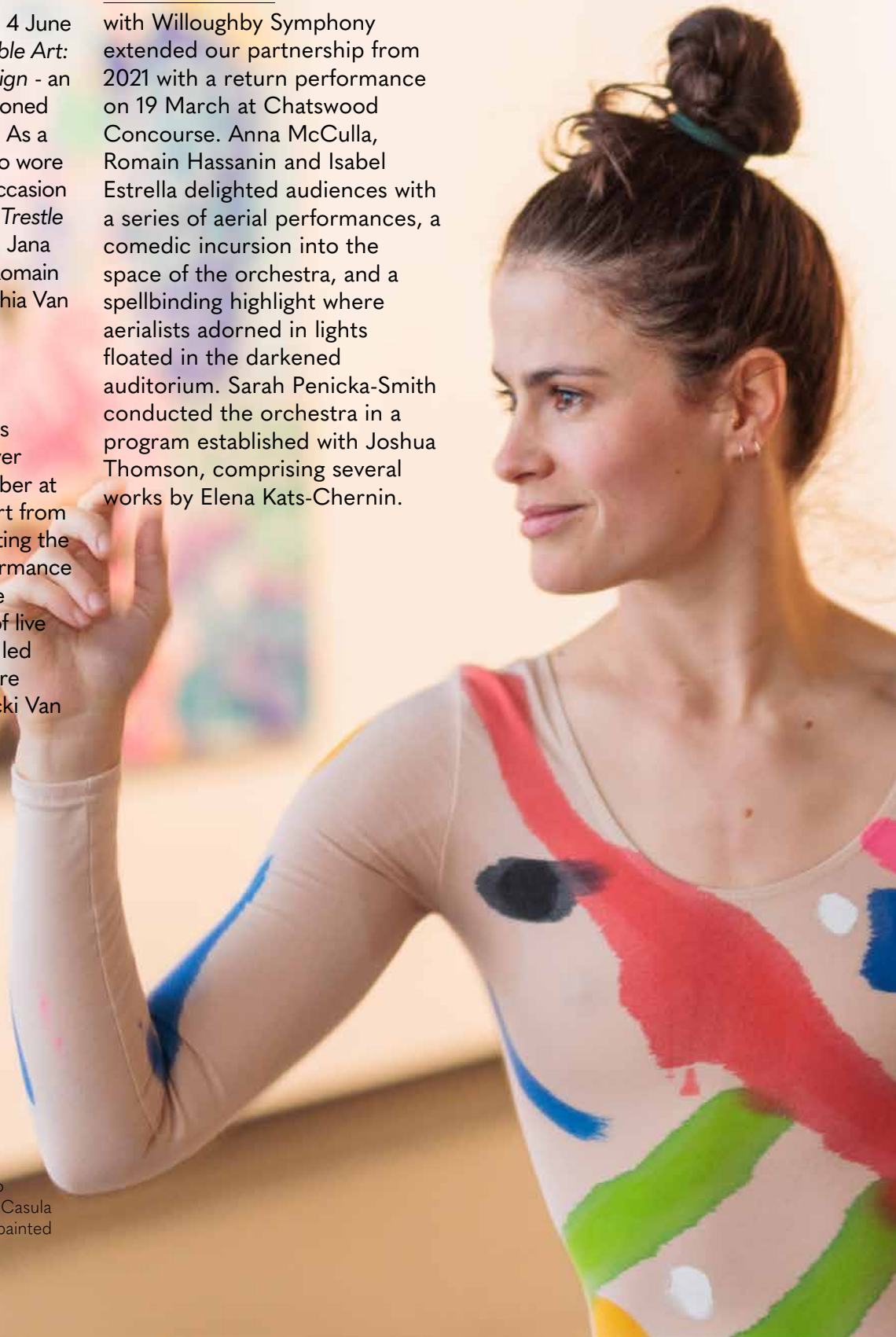
TIPPING POINT

for the Festival of Dangerous Ideas was a series of five foyer activations on 15-16 September at Carriageworks, drawn in part from rehearsed material, celebrating the risk of daring physical performance in public space, and also the inherent performative risk of live improvisation. Jana Castillo led the ensemble including Claire Granata, Sophia Ndaba, Vicki Van Hout and Isabel Estrella.

NEXT CHAPTERS II: ABOVE BELOW

with Willoughby Symphony extended our partnership from 2021 with a return performance on 19 March at Chatswood Concourse. Anna McCulla, Romain Hassanin and Isabel Estrella delighted audiences with a series of aerial performances, a comedic incursion into the space of the orchestra, and a spellbinding highlight where aerialists adorned in lights floated in the darkened auditorium. Sarah Penicka-Smith conducted the orchestra in a program established with Joshua Thomson, comprising several works by Elena Kats-Chernin.

Image by Ben Williams. Jana Castillo following performing in *TRESTLE* at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, costume painted by Ken Done.



WORK IN DEVELOPMENT

Image: Shane Rozario Christy Tran in
BEETLE in development, Red Box, 2022
Artwork by: Freya Blackwood for *BEETLE*

BEETLE

A new and original work for children and families which will centre around a child, the memories of a tree, and a search for the now elusive Christmas Beetle. Driven by Legs' iconic physicality, Beetle will also feature text, projection and animation. Legs are working with renowned children's author and illustrator, Freya Blackwood, whose illustrations will become animated features in the work. Like *THAW* and *Man With The Iron Neck*, Beetle will embody social issues, with the desire to inspire action in its young audience. The work will be structured around a large central gum tree and explores the effects of habitat loss and a changing climate. Set and costumes will be created substantially from repurposed and recycled materials.



FIRST WOMEN

Led by award-winning Wiradjuri choreographer/ director Vicki Van Hout, *First Women* uses song, spoken word, physical theatre, dance, and visual arts in a celebration of the multi-faceted dimensions First Nations women operate under. Vicki likens the power exuded by the female dancer as subtle, as that of a collective hum - all pervading.

Development work in 2023 will be undertaken at the Bathurst Memorial Arts Centre on Wiradjuri Country, drawing on the expertise of local makers and cultural knowledge bearers.

LOVERS

Pre-production commenced in late 2022 towards a unique commission for Sydney World Pride 2023, in which five couples performed from the side of Quay Quarter Tower, creating mid-air rainbow flag patterns as the World Pride March proceeded on the Cahill Expressway.



Beetle is commissioned by the North Australian Festival of Arts (NAFA) and The Art House - Wyong and supported by Inner West Council. *First Women* is supported by the Australian Government through Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and by the NSW Government through Create NSW. *LOVERS* was commissioned by Sydney World Pride and supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and the City of Sydney.

TRAINING



Image: Carlita Sari
Johnas Liu in rehearsal in the Red Box 2022.

As leaders in aerial performance and physical theatre, Legs are proud to be at the forefront of training and development, through our friendly drop-in classes and more rigorous sessions and programs. In 2022 these programs remained impacted, with ongoing restrictions for positive COVID-19 tests limiting our capacity for open rehearsals and warm up sessions. In 2023 all programs have returned while we still strive to find the right balance.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR ONGOING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

NAISDA EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

Legs has provided training to the next generation of First Nations practitioners over several years, pivoting to digital delivery during lockdowns, now evolving into a model of intensive workshop delivery at key intervals.

LEG UP

Our continued commitment to fostering and developing independent artists prioritising recent graduates or practitioners in the early stages of their career. Leg Up mentees have gone on to play major roles in the company and in Legs productions.

INDUSTRY TRAINING

Our pride and joy, led by Joshua Thomson and a growing network of trainers, these FREE regular classes provide opportunities to maintain fitness, share and develop skills, in a welcoming environment which serves as a social and casual networking foothold for emerging artists.

CHANGING FACES

2022 saw a number of personnel changes and renewal for Legs. The company and board are grateful for the substantial contributions made by departing staff and board members, and the immediate contributions made by those new to the team.

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DEPARTING



Cecily Hardy
Executive Producer

Cecily joined Legs in 2016 as Producer and quickly became a vital member of the Legs Team, stepping up into higher duties within her first year, and delivering productions including *Highly Sprung*, *Man With the Iron Neck* and *THAW*. Cecily is now Senior Producer and Head of Public Programs for The Ethics Centre and Festival of Dangerous Ideas



David Jackson
Technical Director

David joined Legs as Operations Manager in 2018 and played a key role in making projects such as *THAW* a possibility. David has continued to work with Legs as an occasional freelance consultant on projects including *THAW* for Nelson Arts Festival and *Holding Achilles*.

BOARD

Janice Lee
Board Member

Janice served as a member of the Legs Board for over ten years, lending expertise in policy, regulation and economics. She holds the role of Partner, Infrastructure at PwC Australia

Kate Champion
Board Member

Kate Champion's association with Legs extends to having directed productions such as *Under the Influence*, and playing a role as artistic advisor and as Board Member more recently. Kate is now Artistic Director of Black Swan State Theatre Company.

CHANGING FACES

JOINING



Vicki Van Hout
Associate Artist

Capping her sensational performances in *THAW*, *Trestle* and *Tipping Point*, and also in recognition of Vicki's status as a renowned cultural leader, Vicki Van Hout was invited to become Legs' Associate Artist in 2022. Vicki is now directing and choreographing a new work for Legs titled *First Women*.



Byron Cleasby
Operations Manager

Byron first joined the Legs team as a support rigger on our *PHOENIX* renewal project after the lockdown period of 2020, before taking on the Operations role in 2022. He has been instrumental in delivering projects such as *Holding Achilles*, *BEETLE* and *LOVERS*.



Lauren Eisinger
Producer

Lauren Eisinger joined the team as Legs Producer in 2022, playing a key role on projects such as *Holding Achilles* and *LOVERS*, while maintaining Lauren Eisinger Productions. We're pleased to be continuing with Lauren representing Legs and establishing pivotal international opportunities.



Stephanie Tatzenko
Project Coordinator

Having previously worked as Finance and Administration Manager for Critical Path, Stephanie joined Legs in a part time capacity in 2022, and stepped into the full-time Project Co-ordinator role in 2023, quickly taking on projects such as *BEETLE* and *First Women*.



Jane Fidler
Venue Coordinator

Having managed venues for Melbourne Comedy Festival and Sydney Film Festival and acted as Company Manager for Broadway Entertainment Group, Jane joined the Legs team as Venue Coordinator in 2022.

BOARD

Yolande Brown – New Board Member

Dancer/Choreographer/ Knowledge Ground website co-ordinator with Bangarra Dance Theatre (1999-2020), and current creative lead for AIME, Yolande joined the Legs Board in June of 2022.

LEGS ON THE WALL

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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.