

year in review 2020



Acknowledgement of Country We acknowledge that we live, work and create on the lands of the Kulin Nation, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We extend that respect to all First Nations people and their long and rich histories of storytelling, art and culture on this land. Always was, always will be Aboriginal Land.

Union House Theatre

At Union House Theatre (UHT) we work to build communities of people who, through a shared passion for exploring creativity, come together to find a community and make art happen.

UHT is the creative hub for extracurricular student theatre and performance at UMSU. We provide an environment where diverse and autonomous student theatre can flourish, supporting an ecology of high-impact, student-led creativity. UHT facilitates and supports theatre in all its forms by providing artistic leadership, creative and technical advice, mentoring, education and networking/industry opportunities that are responsive to the students' needs.



Cover Image: UHT's between here and when i tell you by Zoe Scoglio
Image: Movement Jam by Reis Low for UHT's between here and when i tell you

“I’ve loved every single interaction, workshop and production I’ve been lucky enough to be a part of with UHT”

“There have been opportunities to meet students I wouldn’t get to meet otherwise, learn skills outside my course, get to meet amazing teachers and mentors, ... see how creative organisations run and what people in the creative world are doing and excited about.”

“It’s literally the best time I’ve had all year”

2020 UHT Program participant feedback

Artistic Director's Report

Artists constantly respond and adapt. It's what we do to keep art relevant, ideas fresh and push boundaries.

This desire to navigate new terrain is even the reason some of us are artists in the first place - to reflect, comment, make sense of the world or be part of a change. Great periods of art have come out of the most difficult and challenging times in history - and whilst we're still to truly understand the impact of COVID on theatre and young artists, we can be certain that we've been changed this year at least. Here at Union House Theatre, we've transferred our entire program online and developed new modes of connecting, communicating and being creative together.

Virtual intensives and workshops, digital art making projects, solo practice, technical videos and artist development initiatives have been the staple of activities with students in 2020. Moving online was challenging for people who love being in theatres and rehearsal rooms together. But silver linings now mean that this temporary transition has allowed for access to theatre in new ways. Maybe people who couldn't be part of our programs before felt a new ease and freedom to participate; and we've been able to keep connected with our students who needed to move out of Melbourne - wherever their homes may be.

We're longing to be in rehearsal rooms again - connecting with people face to face and getting to know a whole new generation of artists and audience. We're grateful for what we've learned during this year - demonstrating that a pandemic can't keep our community from being creative.

In my role as Artistic Director at Union House Theatre where I work with young and emerging artists, I cannot ignore how the pandemic will affect them. But also, I believe that the young people in our community hold answers. I'm continually inspired by the strength and willingness of the members of the UHT community. This year is no different - thanks to everyone who was part of UHT in 2020 - whether you participated in one of our programs for the first time or are a seasoned regular - we look forward to a bright future together.

Xanthe Beesley
Artistic Director/Theatre Coordinator, Union House Theatre



Image: Xanthe Beesley by Darren Gill

Student Impact

2020 hasn't afforded any idle time for students in our thriving and energetic community that is UHT. Together, we've found ways to keep playing and connecting. And for more than just a few of our students this connection has been the lifeline throughout the year. Some have become artists; some have met new friends - many now feel like they belong. No mean feat in the digital world.




 [Click here to watch 'UHT in 2020' Video](#)

Image: Still from 'UHT in 2020'

“Working with UHT has always been a joy for me. The people in the Union House Theatre community are generous and caring, qualities which have never felt so needed.”

Freya McGrath
The Dirty Laundry Collective

Student Theatre Groups

The Student Theatre Groups have transformed the way they work too - developing Zoom plays, workshops and bringing online sketch shows, films, virtual residencies and developments to their members and audience. Emerging artists playing in fledging forms and thriving.

- Fake Newspaper Theatre
- Flare Dance Ensemble
- Floor Work
- Four Letter Word Theatre
- Intercollegiate Activities Council (ICAC)
- International House Theatre Group
- Med Moves
- Medleys the Med Revue
- Melb Uni Chinese Theatre Group (MUCTG)
- Melb Uni Law Revue
- Melb Uni (MU) Modern Theatre Company
- Melb Uni Shakespeare Company (MUSC)
- Mudcrabs – Melb Uni Comedy Revue Board
- Newman College Theatre Association
- Ormond College Drama Club
- Queen's College Music and Drama Society
- St Hilda's College Theatre Group
- St Mary's College Drama Society
- Trinity College Dramatic Society
- Trinity College Music Theatre Society
- University College Theatre Company
- Uni Melb Music Theatre Association (UMMTA)

“Writing and filming silly sketches made me feel connected to my community during lockdown. Theatre brought me so much joy during these difficult times.”

Emma Bampton
Mudcrabs

“It's been a hectic year, but we couldn't be happier with how things turned out and are incredibly grateful for all the people who supported us along the way.”

Katie Treasure
Four Letter Word Theatre

Union House Theatre 2020 at a Glance



690
Student Participants



34
Guest Artists



32
Workshops



27
Student Mentorships



8
Virtual Performances



22
'How To' Videos



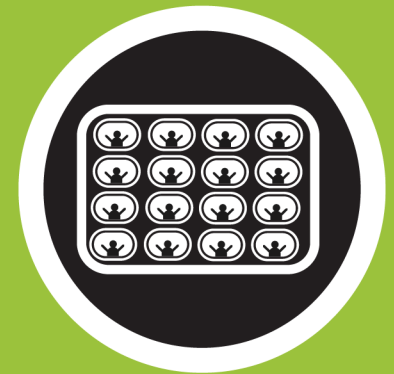
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Student Theatre Groups



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Dialogue Reviews



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Award Winners



1M
Zooms

Guest Artists and Industry Mentors

Ashlee Clapp

Connor Ross

Dan Koop

David Atwood

Declan Ferber Gillick

Emma Hall

Erin Milne

Freya McGrath

Jane Morely

Janette Hoe

Jacob Shears

Jedd Schaeche

Jeremy Rice

Kate Sulan

Lara Thoms

Lz Dunn

Mari Lourey

Maude Davey

Natalie O'Donnell

Olivia Satchell

Petra Kalive

Prue Clarke

Rachel Lee

Rawcus Ensemble

Rockie Stone

Roshelle Fong

Samah Sabawi

Samantha Riegl

Sodi Murphy-Shrives

Sonya Saures

Suzie Jarmin (aka Hardgrave)

Tom Backhaus

Zoe Scoglio

Arts Wellbeing Collective

“My mentor has been able to provide me with support and encouragement for my artistic ideas and career aspirations which has eased a lot of my uncertainty about being a young independent artist.”

“The experience of the mentorship program has given me more useful industry knowledge and advice than even my university classes, which is what I really want right now”

“...the mentor program was an encouraging experience that gave me direction for what I should be doing during this crazy and unconventional time”

“The knowledge I now have feels akin to having a rock to stand on amidst a raging sea - somewhere to stand, somewhere to start. It was a fantastic program!”

“I gained a lot of insight into the industry, was pushed outside my comfort zone and was so grateful for the warmth and generosity of everyone I talked to.”

Student Participants



Events and Intensives

UHT hosted a couple of live events before the pandemic:

- Tech Olympics @ Summerfest
 - Arty Party
 - 24 Hr Play Project
 - Oedipus Schmoedipus* - UMSU, Asia Topa and University of Melbourne partnership
- *Unfortunately, this presentation was cancelled due to COVID.

The remainder of our workshops, intensives and projects were held online:

Projects

- Mentorship Program
- 'How To' technical videos
- between here and when i tell you
- Movement Jam
- The Dirty Laundry Dinner
- Love and Loathing on the Internet

'You Can Ask That' Q&A Sessions

- Stage & Scenic Carpentry
- Lighting
- Audio & QLab
- Projection & QLab
- Behind the Curtain
- Musical Theatre
- UHT Fundamentals
- Access & Inclusion
- Digital Performance Making

Intensives

- Beyond Realism: Acting Project
- Directing Lab
- Page to Stage - Design Realisation Lab

Workshops

- Acting Fundamentals
- De-stress Dance
- Shakespeare
- Theatre Winter Warmup
- Happy Healthy Art Making
- Conceptualising Projects: from Digital to Analogue
- Devising Theatre with Rawcus
- Foley (Sound Effects)
- Video Editing Basics

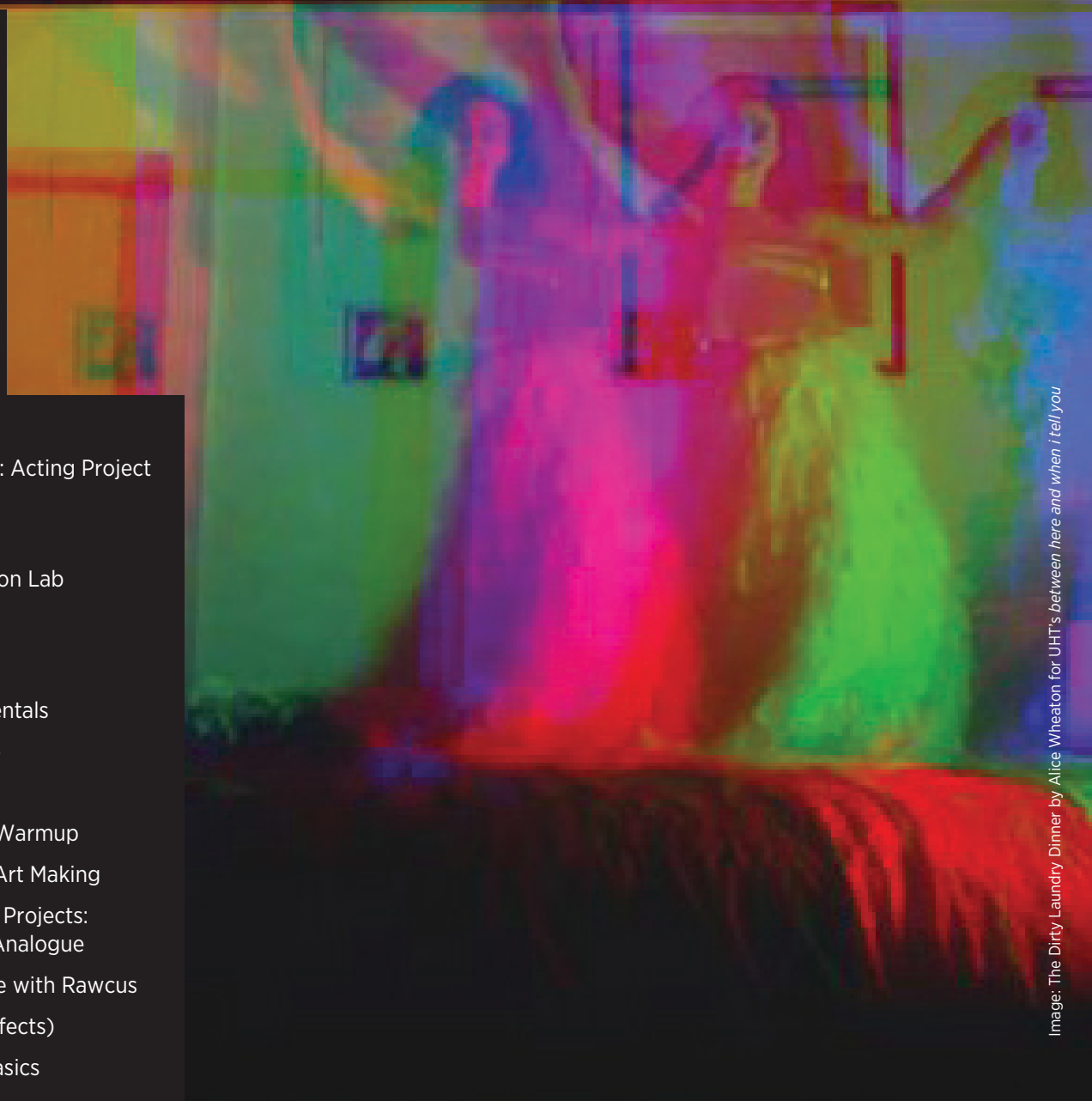


Image: The Dirty Laundry Dinner by Alice Wheaton for UHT's *between here and when i tell you*

between here and when i tell you

Presented by Union House Theatre and the Dirty Laundry Collective

What started as a research-led exploration by Union House Theatre (to investigate creative practice during a time of lockdown) became a multi-dimensional community of makers, thinkers and performers creating something significant together. Through investment in practice and one another, the *between here and when i tell you* project involved workshops, mentoring, conversations, peer-learning opportunities and of course, the digital art outcomes which you see on this web-stage: dirtylaundrycollective.com.au

I have always been invested in the notion of 'the collective' as a way to share skills and support art making practices beyond mainstream or traditional bricks and mortar models. In April, with these bricks and mortar buildings closed, I brought together a group of emerging artists with collaborator Zoe Scoglio. In a digital space we asked: how can young artists develop individual practice at this time, and build a collective of makers which offers a framework of support and skills sharing?

The *between here and when i tell you project* has been an opportunity to ask critical young voices what art-making structures they need. What continues to surface is the desire for time, for reflection, for championing alternative structures to make work and support one another as creatives and community.

Xanthe Beesley
between here and when i tell you project facilitator
and UHT Artistic Director



UHT's *between here and when i tell you* by Zoe Scoglio




The Dirty Laundry Collective

Let's launch a new collective!

The DLC is a group of young people from the Union House Theatre community interested in continuing to create work during a year when the usual channels of collaboration, community and creativity weren't available.

UHT has nurtured the group by offering an invitation to get started and support along the way. With this support from UHT and a broader group of professional artists, they grew to stand as their own entity; a matrix of connectivity, inspiring independent emerging arts practice.

They supported one another to keep engaged throughout most of 2020 and (we hope) beyond.

 [Watch the behind the scenes mini doco by collaborating artist Zoe Scoglio](#)

“ I have ... connected with an incredible collective of artists that I might not have had the pleasure to work with if it wasn't for the online space and our online project. I wouldn't trade that for anything”

Anny Biagioni
Student

Production Report

2020 - No opened venues, no testing 1-2-3, no lighting chases and clean dressing rooms?! - the year of social distancing, lockdowns and no IRL student performances...time for a Production evolution!

The UHT Production team has had one heck of a year. We have had to think outside the (bio) box but luckily we are a creative bunch. We have transported the production team into the COVIDsafe world and embraced (with some kicking and screaming!) online and digital performance making. We had to start thinking towards some old school theatre trickery and fattened the curve of expediential upskilling by holding production meetings and technical sessions via Zoom, becoming video directors, editors and content creators, scouting 5km radius locations, designing theories for lighting and Foley sound effects for online performances, creating caption wizardry, hosting live online Q&A sessions and building webstages all for our wonderful student theatre community.

The UHT Production team has spent 3,520 hours on Zoom, created 22 'How To' technical videos hosted nine 'You Can Ask That?!' technical Q&A sessions, mentored 12 emerging technical, design and management students, captioned 26 videos, saved 72 (3.6 km) rolls of gaffa tape and facilitated one salubrious Zoom dinner party launch event!

While we look forward to seeing our venues overflowing with the excitement, creativity and nervous anticipation of students again, we will remember 2020 for quite some time.

Khat, Clynton and Allen
UHT Production Team



Image: UHT's Tech Olympics at SummerFest by Xanthe Beesley. Taken pre-COVID in February 2020.

Writer in Residence Program

UHT has a long history of supporting young and emerging playwrights.

With an impressive alumni list of writers, we take our role seriously. We know that the opportunity to write and develop new voices in writing is critical – and we try to provide a program where it's safe to fail, to soar and where you can test and try things out with a like-minded group of people and a supportive artist to mentor you along the way.

This year we partnered with our wonderful neighbours – La Mama Theatre. La Mama provides critical pathways for our UHT students, and we were thrilled to solidify this relationship further in 2020. Together, we doubled up on the number of writers involved, created another network for emerging playwrights and seeded future development opportunities. The program was virtually presented and included workshops, readings and one-on-one development sessions with guest playwrights.

The four professional playwright-mentors were Mari Lourey, Declan Ferber Gillick, Samah Sabawi and Olivia Satchell.

“... our work together is well underway and that all four are...firebrand writers’. There’s a real comradery developing in the group, which is such a joy to facilitate.”

Liv Satchell, Writer-in Residence

“Having the opportunity to work with you has been very insightful and I have thoroughly enjoyed these sessions. I have learnt a lot and also felt very motivated and enthusiastic about writing ...”

Thirangie Jayatilake, Writer in Residence participant



Watch Chenturan Aran talk about his experience





Company in Residence - RAWCUS

In 2020 UHT was fortunate to work with the much-loved Melbourne ensemble RAWCUS, along with Artistic Director Kate Sulan. This gave UHT students the chance to develop their skills around theatre making, and to continue the significant work and conversations to date around access and inclusion. The company hosted online workshops, one-on-one virtual mentorships and collaboration around prioritising access and inclusion in theatre.

From the company:

“**Being the company in residence at UHT in the strange and complex year that is 2020 has been a highlight for RAWCUS. We have delivered workshops, talks and mentorships and found a way to engage in a meaningful exchange with students. At the core of the company’s practice is collaboration and inclusion. During this time we have had to be curious and, together with UHT students, explore ways to find connection, meaning and creativity through the virtual medium. It has been a joy to share our practice with students and hear what they are thinking about and experimenting with during this time.**”

Kate Sulan
Artistic Director, Rawcus

UHT 2020 Awards

We love the Union House Theatre end of year award celebrations – they are a time to acknowledge the hard work everyone contributes to making our community so great.

Sadly, in 2020 there wasn't a live ceremony, but the good news was that we were still able to go ahead with an award program, albeit a little differently than before.

Proudly supported by the University of Melbourne Theatre Board, this year all awards were by self or peer nomination. Winners were announced on our social media after semester concluded via a video presentation.

 **Watch** the UHT Awards Announcement Video

Award Winners:

Emerging Artist Award

- **Prachi Singhal**

Community Engagement Award

- **Medleys – The Med Revue**
- **Mudcrabs – Melbourne Uni Comedy Revue Board**

Access and Inclusion Award

- **Ada Coxall**

Experimentation in Digital Performance Award

- **Christopher Troupis**

Ensemble Award

- **The Melbourne Uni Law Revue**

Skills Development Award

- **Reis Low**

Production and Technical Award

- **Duncan Brown**

New Writing Award

- **Chenturan Aran**

Student Theatre Group Award

- **Four Letter Word Theatre**

Creative Arts Creative Award for Creating Art (CACACA)

- **AJ McFadden**

Hannah Barry Memorial Award

- **Michael Hart & Antoinette Tracey for Shadow Piece Theatre**

Theatre Board Confinement Creativity Award

- **Irregular Scheduled Programming for Gaze Interrupted (Phebe Shields, Sorcha Delahunty, Thalia Livingstone)**



UHT Staff:

Xanthe Beesley – Artistic Director/Theatre Coordinator

Erin Adams – Administration and Development Officer

Khat Kerr – Production and Venue Manager

Clynton Jones – Head Technician

Allen Laverty – Stage Carpenter/Mechanist

Thank you

*to everyone in our community
for your support in 2020.*