

A spectacular social event celebrating
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
and Intersex elders

Program



Melbourne Town Hall
Saturday 7 October 2017



We acknowledge the traditional
custodians of the land on which
we meet, those of the Kulin Nations.
We pay respect to Elders past, present
and future. We are on Aboriginal land.
Always was. Always will be.

We also acknowledge our
LGBTI elders; pioneers who have
led the way and shaped our
community, as well as elders who have
struggled to live their true sexual,
gendered or cultural identity.

Welcome



Tristan Meecham
Artistic Director
The Coming Back Out Ball

I am beyond thrilled to welcome you to The Coming Back Out Ball, a spectacular social event celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex elders.

The Coming Back Out Ball is a gift to those that have come before, who have survived historical discrimination and adversity, who have fought for equal rights, and who have inspired change by living authentically.

The Coming Back Out Ball also acknowledges LGBTI+ elders who have had to closet their sexual, gendered or cultural identity because they did not or do not feel safe.

We see you.
We honour you.
We are here for you.

Have the night of your life!



Martin Foley MP
Minister for Equality
Minister for Housing,
Disability and Ageing

I am pleased to welcome everyone to the inaugural Coming Back Out Ball, and extremely proud that the Andrews Labor Government has supported such a special event.

We know that LGBTI elders face isolation and discrimination in society, which is why the Coming Back Out Ball is such an important part of the Victorian Seniors Festival program. I congratulate All The Queens Men, who have done a fantastic job working in partnership with the community in creating this important event.

Tonight is about recognising the enormous contribution that LGBTI elders have – and continue to – make to the Victorian community. More importantly, tonight is about celebrating, dancing and sharing your stories with one another.

In Victoria, equality is not negotiable, and we should all be proud of who we are. I hope you all have the night of your lives, make new friends and kick up your heels.



Robert Doyle AC
Lord Mayor
City of Melbourne

Welcome to Melbourne Town Hall for the Coming Back Out Ball!

With all the showbiz bells and whistles, heartfelt story telling, dinner and dancing, tonight is a celebration of sexual diversity at every age.

The City of Melbourne cares about the health and wellbeing of everyone in our community. We want to celebrate and recognise the lives of all senior Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community members.

That is why we are proud to support this vibrant and inclusive LGBTI community event, along with 25 other events as part of the 2017 Victorian Seniors Festival.

Events like tonight are a public celebration and declaration to LGBTI elders of their worth and value, acknowledging their experience and rich lives.

Congratulations to All The Queens Men for their hard work and commitment to organising this premier event which I hope will become a firm fixture on Melbourne's events calendar.

Thank you all for Coming Back Out tonight. I wish you all a wonderful evening.



Jan Cochrane-Harry
Chair of Trustees
Margaret Lawrence
Bequest

The trustees of the Margaret Lawrence Bequest are delighted to support and welcome this important and innovative program which recognises that the lives and loves of elder LGBTI Australians are as valuable as those in the wider Australian community.

Margaret Lawrence passed away in 2004 having established her Trust in 2001. As her friend and trustee I have no doubt that she would be thrilled that her gift continues to support critical social, educational and artistic endeavours.

At this pivotal point in Australian socio-political history we are proud to support the Coming Back Out Ball.

Have a wonderful night.

A black and white portrait of an older man, David Morrison, wearing a leather cap and jacket. He is looking slightly to the left with a thoughtful expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“I came out after my wife had died;
the thought of being gay
was totally suppressed.”

– David Morrison



The Coming Back Out Ball is a
spectacular social event celebrating
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and
Intersex (LGBTI) elders.

Created and produced by All The Queens Men,
this spectacular evening will feature headline performances
by Robyn Archer, Carlotta, Deborah Cheetham, Toni Lulich,
Gerry Connolly, Lois Weaver and an orchestra conducted
by Dr. Kathleen McGuire.

The Coming Back Out Ball is inspired by research revealing that
some LGBTI elders conceal their sexual orientation or gender
identity when accessing aged care services because they do not
feel safe. Our LGBTI elders lived through a period of history
when just being LGBTI could result in imprisonment, enforced
medical 'cures', loss of employment and rejection by family
and friends. For this generation, the first to fight for equality,
impending old age may mean going back into the closet,
or the risk of being deprived companionship or quality care when
they need it most.

With so much change over their lifetime, there is now hope for
the older LGBTI community; the Victorian Government has
expunged gay convictions and apologised to older gay men for
the treatment they received; aged care service providers are
embracing strategies to become more LGBTI inclusive; and
Victoria will soon create Australia's first LGBTI Pride Centre.

The Coming Back Out Ball augments research and social
services, as a public celebration and declaration to
LGBTI elders of their worth and value, acknowledging their rich
lived experiences.

The long-term vision is that *The Coming Back Out Ball* becomes an
adored event on Melbourne's social calendar; understood for its
inclusivity and cultural significance.

comingbackoutball.com

The Coming Back Out Ball Commemorative Essay

By Melanie Joosten



I See Your True Colours – Welcome to the Party

You only have to look at the Sydney Mardi Gras to know that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community is no stranger to a celebration. By sequin or feather boa count alone, it's fair to say members of the LGBTI community are masters of both the art of the costume and the art of the party. This is nothing new. In the 1950s when Melbourne's streets were deserted after 6pm and the city had a reputation for dull conservatism rather than cultural capital, those in the know could scratch the surface and find silver pockets of bohemian sensibility courtesy of the gay community. Homosexuality was illegal at the time but despite society's prejudice the underground 'camp' scene thrived, shining brightly at private home parties where cross-dressing and elaborate costumes were *de rigueur*.



Val Eastwood in her Swanston Street Coffee Lounge, early 1950.

Val's Coffee Lounge, first above the Tivoli Theatre and later in Swanston St, held a concert every Sunday night. Val Eastwood, the much-loved proprietor, was always strikingly turned out in tailored suits or evening wear, and patrons turned up nightly in their most elegant attire. At a time of tight liquor licencing laws that restricted social options, Val's was hugely popular, attracting theatre audiences and patrons from the gay community who were relieved at having a place where they could dress up, hear live music and – most importantly – be themselves.

Left: LGBTI Elders Dance Club
by All The Queens Men.
Photo by Bryony Jackson.



Poster for the 30th Annual Queen's Birthday Arts Ball, Manhattan, 1991.

I Could Have Danced All Night – Arts Balls of the 1960s

Moving into the 1960s one of the few places where camp and mainstream cultures met was at the spectacular gala arts balls, held at dance halls such as the Palais de Danse in Melbourne and the Trocadero in Sydney. Originally created in homage to the carnivalesque balls of 1920s Paris, the Artists' Balls were organised by art students wanting an outlet for their creative talents. While the balls raised money for charity and scholarships they were primarily a place where those of a bohemian bent could let themselves fly free. Fancy dress was compulsory, with prizes for the best dressed, and competition was fierce. Considering these were the only public places where the fabulous extravagance of camp culture could burst into the sedate of the mainstream without reprisal, it's no surprise that drag queens were often the strikingly magnificent belles of the balls with elaborate hand-sewn dresses, big-big hair and dramatic make-up.

Hints of these outrageous costumes have been documented in a series of interviews and photographs donated to the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, where people from the LGBTI community reminisce about the Arts Balls. "It was one of the very few places where you could go and be open," Felice is recorded as saying.¹ One man described how he "used to dress up and have a good time, just be surrounded by glamour, probably as close you could get to a Hollywood film set in Melbourne, really."² He described some of the drag queens as "glamorous, wicked old things [with] barbed senses of humour... I loved it." One of the most well-known drag queens was Lottie (Robert Lott), who had a wardrobe of magnificent outfits which she modelled in a series of photographs that chart the fashions and the times.



Zita, Lottie and unidentified, Arts Ball, c1960s.

The ball costumes were delightfully ostentatious and often involved groups of people. One man recalls a prize-winning effort as part of the Boilers who went in 1962 as Burmese dancers, with drawings sprayed on their fronts by an artist and glass wind chimes fixed to the top of their heads, jingling merrily away: "The noise of us coming in, we were green-faced, everything was green ... it was a wonderful night."³ Another recalls the creation of the mythical Camelot, appearing as King Arthur accompanied by dozens of courtiers and trumpeters announcing their arrival.

Many people have memories of Freddie Asmussen's starring roles in over-the-top tableaux. One year he played Louis XIV as the Sun King surrounded by an entourage and another he "came in last, at eleven o'clock at night he'd arrive, and he was Cleopatra, and they had this beautiful big gold leaf stretcher type thing and he was, you know, in all his glory sitting on it ... and they dropped him!"⁴ Another oft-told story is of drag queens having to arrive standing upright in furniture trucks as they were the only vehicles large enough to accommodate such extravagant gowns and headdresses: "And doors would open in front of St Kilda Town Hall, and someone who could not sit down, because the outfit was so big, would come out undulating in the thing, and then remain standing, promenading all evening with the outfit. They really were spectacular."⁵

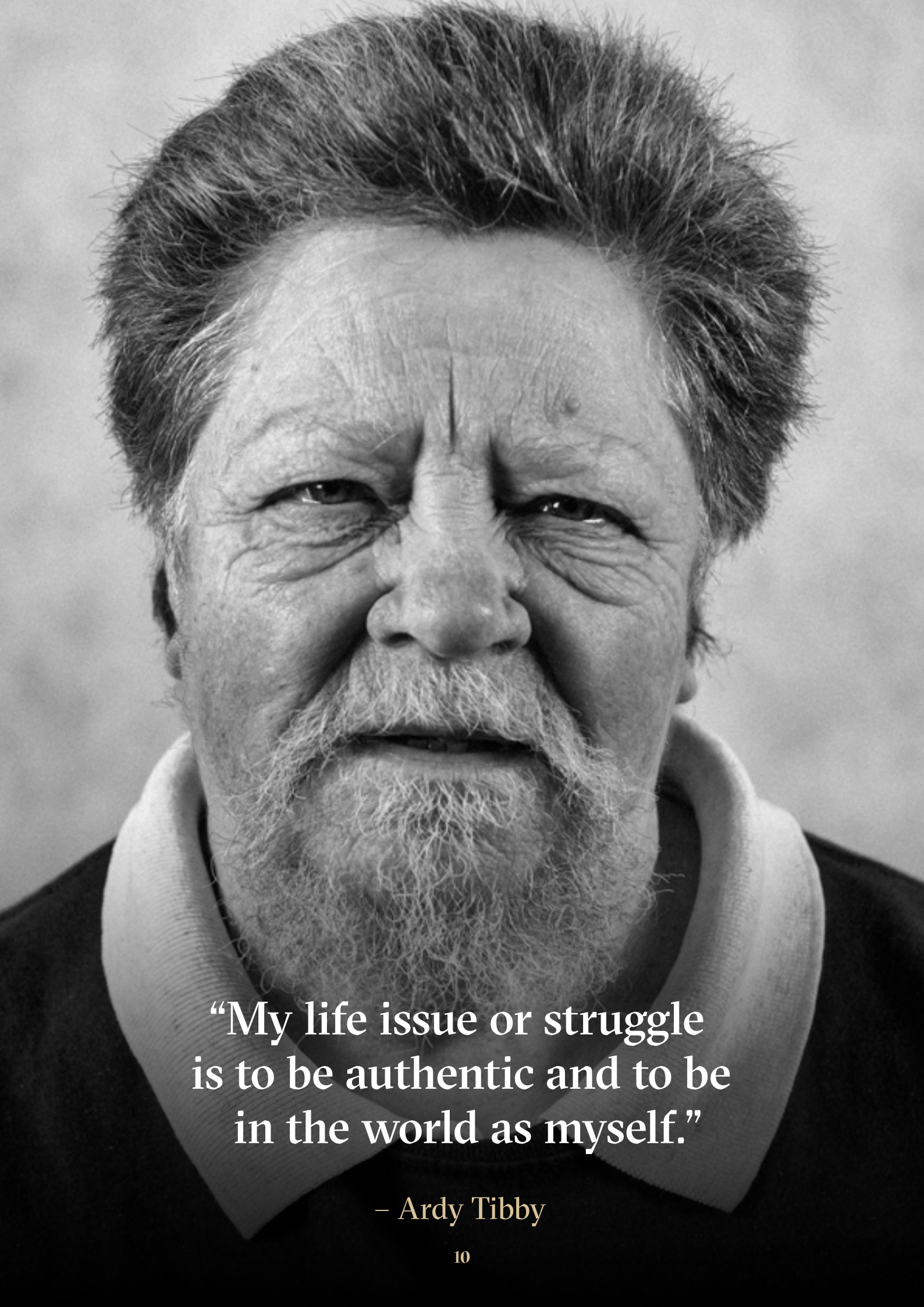


Boilers Burmese Dancers Arts Ball, Melbourne, 1962.

A black and white photograph of an elderly woman with short, light-colored hair. She is wearing a dark shirt with a white floral and leaf pattern. Her hands are resting on a surface in front of her, and she is wearing a watch on her left wrist. The background is dark and out of focus.

“I still want to have a ‘special’ friend
like everyone does.
I would sacrifice a lot for that.”

– Judith Slade



“My life issue or struggle
is to be authentic and to be
in the world as myself.”

– Ardy Tibby



Poster of Women's dance, 1973, Fitzroy Ecumenical Centre.



Brenda and Yvette at the Tiffany Ball, 1968.

Sisters are Doin' It For Themselves – Women's Balls and Women's Liberation

A strongly political lesbian movement also occurred in Melbourne from the 1970s. Groups regularly met socially and as part of political action, bringing lesbianism to the centre of the women's movements and not letting sexual identity, as both political practice and sexual preference, be marginalised. The Radicalesbians organised the first lesbian conference in 1973, alongside a women-only dance, which became an annual event.

Ardy Tibby articulates the leading role lesbians played in women's liberation, drawing attention to sexism, domestic violence and the rights of children: 'Lesbians created their own organisations and balls and activities and really succeeded in achieving a great deal for women and for children, for lesbians and for people generally. Because when people are freed up to be creative and politically active and conscious, everyone benefits.' For a long time it was the women's balls that raised money to support the women's liberation movement: "We raised funds at those women's balls to support women's and lesbian political activity. And we met each other and we danced and we had sex and we had a hell of a good time. So that tradition of having the political and the personal together in everything we did."

I Want to Break Free – Defiance and the Mardi Gras

The Coming Back Out Ball doffs its hat to these balls of the past and the members of the LGBTI community who made them such unforgettable affairs. But as well as maintaining and excelling at a tradition of theatricality and showmanship, it must be remembered that one of the necessitating drivers of the flamboyance and rebelliousness of camp culture is defiance.

Today known as a vibrant and welcoming celebration, in 1978 Mardi Gras began as an out and proud protest to a society that discriminated against and demeaned the LGBTI community. Part of international Gay Solidarity Celebrations the first parade was met with violent police opposition and resulted in dozens of arrests. There were ongoing protests over the heavy-handed police response, and as a result the laws of public assemblies were changed so that people no longer required a permit to protest. This outcome changed the landscape of civic participation for *all* of society, not just the gay community.



Mardi Gras, Day of International Gay Solidarity, 24 June 1978.



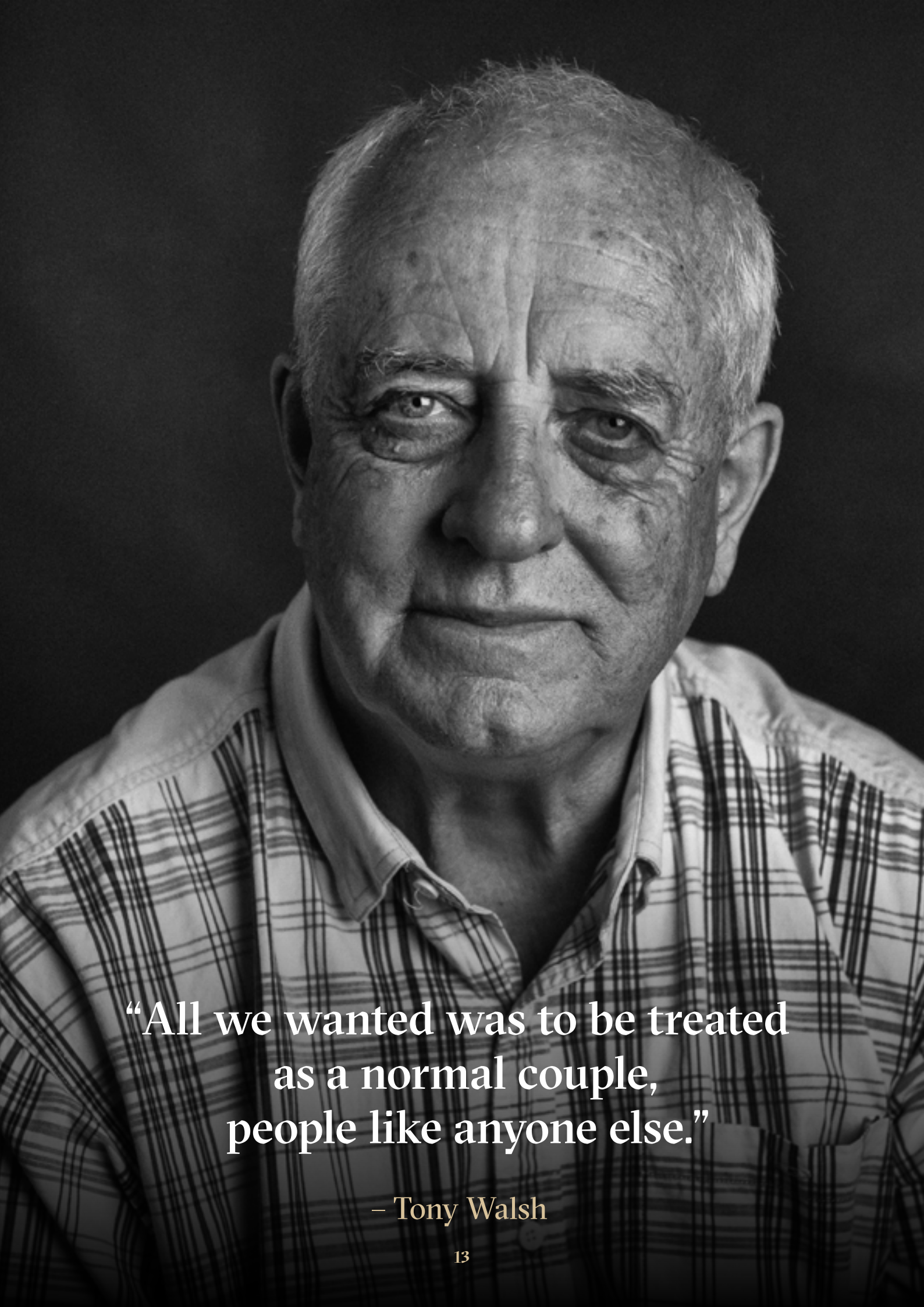
Sleaze Ball, 1984, Photo by William Yang.

Each year the Mardi Gras puts on the biggest party in the nation and draws the involvement of prominent politicians, members of the defence and police forces and other public institutions. Like the current same-sex marriage debate, it is a reminder of how often the LGBTI community has been at the forefront of progress in society, continually inviting the more reluctant and conservative elements of the community to take part. As such, it should not be forgotten that it is the efforts of those who are now elders in the LGBTI community who have paved the way for wider acceptance of diverse gender and sexual identity today.

Elders of the LGBTI community have lived their lives in defiance. The hate talk and homophobia that has been rearing its head as the Australian parliament fails to enact the majority of the electorate's wishes regarding the legalisation of same-sex marriage, is the same hate talk and homophobia some people have lived with for their entire lives. Growing up in a time when homosexuality was illegal, a time when diversity of gender and sexual identity had been pathologised, stigmatised and criminalised, those who are today in their 70s, 80s and 90s faced opposition to their identity and relationships at every turn.

The Sydney gay community from the 1970s onwards has been superbly documented by the artist William Yang, who has exhibited his photography all over Australia. He has also created shows and documentaries around his work by projecting the images onto a wall or large screen, while describing the candid moments he has captured through performative monologue. William came out soon after moving to Sydney from Far North Queensland and not long after the Stonewall riots: "It was the times. As I like to say, I never consciously came out, I was swept out." As a body of work, William's oeuvre explores his Chinese heritage and experience of migrating to Australia, while also encapsulating the experiences of his generation, particularly the immense loss and grief caused by the AIDS virus.

With homosexuality considered by some health professionals as a mental disorder until the 1980s and criminalised in some states until the late 1990s, life for many LGBTI people has not been easy. For each person with supportive friends and families there are scores more who have been estranged from those once closest to them. Additionally, the everyday life tasks of working, looking after your health, holidaying, buying property and having a family have often been made more difficult by outright and unapologetic discrimination as well as more subtle but just as damaging judgement.

A black and white portrait of an elderly man with short, light-colored hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a plaid shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

“All we wanted was to be treated
as a normal couple,
people like anyone else.”

– Tony Walsh

Over the Rainbow – Getting Older

These challenges have not disappeared or been tempered as people age, though many older LGBTI people have built up reserves of resilience and strength that have allowed them to deal with prejudice. For many people, moving into older age is a time of liberation and reflection. There can be health difficulties, of course, and frustration with bodies that no longer quite behave as they once did. In particular, for those with less financial security or support older age might not mean a time of retirement and relaxation but a continuing effort to keep the wolves from the door.

Above and beyond these trials that the wider society faces in ageing, LGBTI elders have additional challenges. With much aged care provided by faith-based or conservative organisations, many people exercise self-protection by hiding their gender identity or sexuality as they age. It is difficult enough for anyone to concede that they may need to ask for help and invite paid carers into their private home; it is made more difficult by the worry that these carers may judge their lifestyle. This worry means many people hide this part of their identity, essentially going back in the closet as they age. The same decision might be reached when accessing aged care, with LGBTI elders concerned about what reception they may get from staff and fellow residents.

Tony Walsh knows more than most how difficult navigating the aged care system can be when trying to support the person you love. When his long-term partner Paul was diagnosed with dementia (eventually found to be Lewy Body dementia), it slowly turned their life together upside down. Tony described looking for care for Paul to move into and sometimes being refused: “There were a number of places that thought they couldn’t handle his behaviour – he was aggressive at times, but not violent,” said Tony. “But I have a feeling that they refused because it was a Tony and Paul involved – and not Tony and Paula. It wasn’t overt but you knew – I’ve seen it all my life.” After more than 22 years together, Tony also had to adapt to living on his own again, while still caring for Paul: “It’s a big change to your relationship when one of you becomes unwell and the other becomes a carer. It sort of happens slowly, you don’t notice it when it’s happening, you just get on with it.”

Thankfully, aged care and health services are improving. Many aged care providers have taken part in LGBTI-inclusive training and it is now a necessary component of any aged care service that receives federal funding (including faith-based organisations). Transgender Victoria offers LGBTI-inclusive training to aged care service providers. “There’s a real mix in responses from service providers when offered the training,” says Brenda Appleton, president of Transgender Victoria. “Some are in denial, they’ll say, ‘We don’t have that sort of person here.’ Others will say, ‘We don’t need special training, we treat everyone the same.’ If I’ve got the chance I’ll stamp my foot and say we’re not all the same and we don’t want to be treated all the same.” In the training Brenda makes an effort to talk specifically about the trans experience as people are often less familiar with intersex and trans aspects than they are with gay and lesbian ones.

“We call it the forgotten bit,” said Brenda, noting how for many people growing up in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s transitioning was not an option, so many people have only made the change in their later life.



Brenda Appleton and Toni Paynter, 2016. Image by Bryony Jackson.

The 3rd National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Conference is testimony to how far many aged care service providers have come. Amongst talks from an impressive line-up of keynote speakers including Emeritus Professors Gillian Triggs and Dennis Altman AM, there were also presentations that considered how to rethink LGBTI-inclusivity in end of life and palliative care; sexuality, intimacy and dementia; and the work of the Matrix Guild of Victoria and what older lesbians are doing for themselves. There were also sessions that discussed how to future-proof the gains that have been made in the area of LGBTI ageing, and recognition that there is still much to be done.

Nancy Peck was excited about taking part in an intergenerational panel as part of the conference. “It will be people of all ages; it will be 18 to 80. I want it to be educational because a lot of people who are older don’t know all the conversations that are going on – it’s taken me years to get up to date, and that was because I was interested.” When Nancy became an LGBTI representative on a local council Active Ageing committee, she realised there was a lot of reading to be done on gender diversity. “Then I thought, well, what would I identify as? I’ve always been out so that hasn’t really been an issue, I’ve lived through gay liberation, women’s liberation, camp, queer, you know? The whole thing.” Nancy declared herself gender non-binary because it is a way of avoiding a reductive way of thinking. “It’s about not being either/or. It’s actually very timely, with the same-sex marriage vote and everyone falling into ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ arguments. What we actually need is proper, involved discussion.”

A black and white portrait of an older woman with short, curly, light-colored hair. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. She is wearing a dark, patterned garment. The background is a solid, dark grey.

“There is very little for older trans people moving into the aged care environment. Trans people have different needs and issues.”

– Toni Paytner







I Will Survive – HIV and AIDS

One group that must not be forgotten, and who formed one of the focal points of the conference, is those with HIV. Lizzi Craig was a nurse who worked as a nurse for the Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) at the time when HIV and AIDS hit the country, one of few community nursing services willing to reach out to people who became ill. “Some nurses didn’t want to work with people with HIV for many, many reasons,” recalled Lizzi. “Fear of catching it, feeling it was against their religion ... So often it was about talking to people and not even mentioning their HIV but just hearing stories about being gay and what had gone on for them. And then you heard their stories about losing one or two partners, and the sadness around that. I saw a lot of young men die in those years, with no family around them. They were difficult times.”



Public meeting on AIDS, Melbourne, 1983. Photo James Spence.

Lizzi later worked for the Victorian Aids Council and while she has seen the epidemic recede during the course of her career, she notes how it is still an ongoing concern for people of all generations. “We still have people dying of AIDS, believe you me, they still do,” she said. “Even though you’ll hear that doesn’t happen – it does.” She holds a particular affection for the men who have lived with HIV for more than thirty years. “I look at the older men, the ones who are still around and I look up to them. They’ve lost so many friends, their lovers, their families, their jobs. And all their super when they thought they were going to die, and here they are still surviving and happy. I asked them about how they did it and they all identified family, friends, pets and their caregivers, as people who built their strength and built their resilience.”

People with HIV from the LGBTI community face extra challenges as they age, including medical problems caused by the chronic nature of the illness and the antiviral drugs they were prescribed in the early years of treatment, as well as facing the prejudice of health and aged care staff who lack education on HIV now that the enormity of the crisis has waned.



International AIDS Candlelight Vigil, Swanston Street, Melbourne, 1996.

While Lizzi sees the Coming Back Out Ball as an ideal time to draw attention to these issues, she believes it also serves a more important purpose: “With this Ball I believe that we’re giving back to our seniors, to the people who have been our forefathers. People who stood up for our rights, the possibility of gay marriage and all of that, we would not have half of those rights if it wasn’t for people living with HIV who fought stigma and discrimination. They were a very powerful lobby in those days and they got on with it. So I think this Ball will give them an opportunity to be thanked, and to show them the respect they deserve, and hopefully it will keep building on their resilience.”

We Are Family – First Nations

While the LGBTI community has drawn together to support one another in gaining recognition and rights, some LGBTI people remain marginalised even within the community. People of diverse gender identity and sexuality who are also members of other marginalised groups such as First Nations people, face additional discrimination and challenges. Artist Peter Waples-Crowe, who creates work that explores how it is to be Aboriginal and gay, describes it as a sometimes difficult landscape: “I often say we have to fight for our rights as Aboriginal people, and we have to fight for our rights as gay people. And where those intersect is a difficult space to navigate sometimes. To me it’s hard to separate them, you’re often fighting on a few fronts. Aboriginal people are really disadvantaged and Aboriginal rights are really important. And then there’s gay rights within the Aboriginal community as well.” Commenting on the diverse cultures, with over 500 mobs and groups comprising Australia’s First Nations people, Peter notes that some Aboriginal people see gayness as a “white thing that came with the white man.” It’s therefore important for the wider LGBTI community – and the straight community – to recognise these pressures and become allies.



Lesbians and Gays for Reconciliation - Queers stick with Wik, 1998.

Organisations such as Black Rainbow, which was formed to assist and empower Indigenous LGBTI people, are trying to change some of this and in 2017, for the first time, Aboriginal elders and community members played a lead role in Melbourne's Pride March. However, it's clear that more work needs to be done to ensure people of distinct ethnicity and cultural backgrounds can fully participate in and be central leaders of the LGBTI movement, and not be relegated to the sidelines.



Outblack, Pride March 2002. Photograph by Angela Bailey.



Make Your Own Kind of Music – The Coming Back Out Ball

The Coming Back Out Ball was conceived as a spectacular social event celebrating LGBTI elders. Its purpose is to recognise some of the difficulties faced by older LGBTI people – challenges that might make somebody conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity when they access aged care services as they do not feel safe. However, it is also a celebration of the resilience of LGBTI elders and an acknowledgement of the work they have done to improve the situation for the generations of LGBTI community that have followed in their wake.



Ro Allen, the Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality, recently conducted a roadshow travelling around Victoria to connect with the LGBTI community and was thrilled by the number of older community members she met. “It was a real treat, to hear their stories,” she said.

“It’s important the services see LGBTI elders,” Ro says. “And not misgender them, not assume they are widows or widowers from heterosexual relationships. Each person should be seen, heard and be able to get the services they need.” One of the things Ro particularly noticed was how many LGBTI elders are deeply involved in the community through volunteering – a contribution many people underplay as they prefer to see they’re just getting on with what needs to be done.



“There’s so much work they did for gay liberation,” says Ro. “Long before it was LGBTI it was just gay, and the work they did really did pave the way for everything we’re doing now.” Every couple of months she meets with a council of LGBTI elders to ask for their advice on how she can best serve the community. “I believe it’s up to us, the next generation, to finish what they started. And to keep them safe – to help them with aged care and end of life planning because they worried about the next generation and didn’t think that much about themselves. So we have to do that now.”



Robert Doyle, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, sees the Coming Back Out Ball as a joyful celebration: “Community leaders have an obligation to protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of everyone in our community. I am proud to help celebrate and recognise the lives of senior LGBTI community members and thank them for their contributions to our great city.” He notes that, “Throughout their lives, many older members of the LGBTI community experienced discrimination and stigma on the basis of their gender and sexual identity. While there have been some positive changes, senior members of the community continue to face challenges being out and proud in later life.”

Tristan Meecham, who dreamed up the very idea of the Coming Back Out Ball, is hoping that it honours and celebrates LGBTI elders. “These are people who came out of the closet when homosexuality was still illegal,” he says. “Or maybe they couldn’t come out at all until recently. The reason I’ve thought about scale and spectacle is that by creating an event of significance hopefully it becomes a statement that is felt through people’s bodies in terms of worth. And I don’t think that’s happened for LGBTI elders before.” His comments support those of lesbian elder Ardy Tibby: “Here I am, I’m a person. I’m a woman, I’m a lesbian, I’m old, I’m round, I’m fat. And everywhere I go, everywhere I am, whether I’m in my living room or on a tram or at the ball, I bring my whole self. I bring my brain, I bring my genitals. I bring my experience, I bring my fears, I bring my hopes. Everyone of us brings their whole self to everything. And I’m bringing my whole self to this ball. And I’m doing it joyfully and personally and politically.”



As Peter Waples-Crowe points out, Australia's First Nations people have long respected their elders: "In Aboriginal culture, you should always consult your elders, you should listen to your elders. Elders are respected because of their generosity and what they do for the community." He sees the Coming Back Out Ball as an opportunity for the wider gay, straight and diverse communities to take on this way of thinking by placing older people at the head of the community and acknowledging the things they have achieved.

When host Robyn Archer commands the microphone, and when the Coming Back Out Ball guests are enchanted by performances from Carlotta, Toni Lalich, Gerry Connolly, Deborah Cheetham and Lois Weaver as Tammy WhyNot, it will be a reminder that despite any difficulties or challenges that must be faced, in the end life is for living – for fun, for laughter, and for dancing. And that events like this are for coming out, not for staying in.

Endnotes

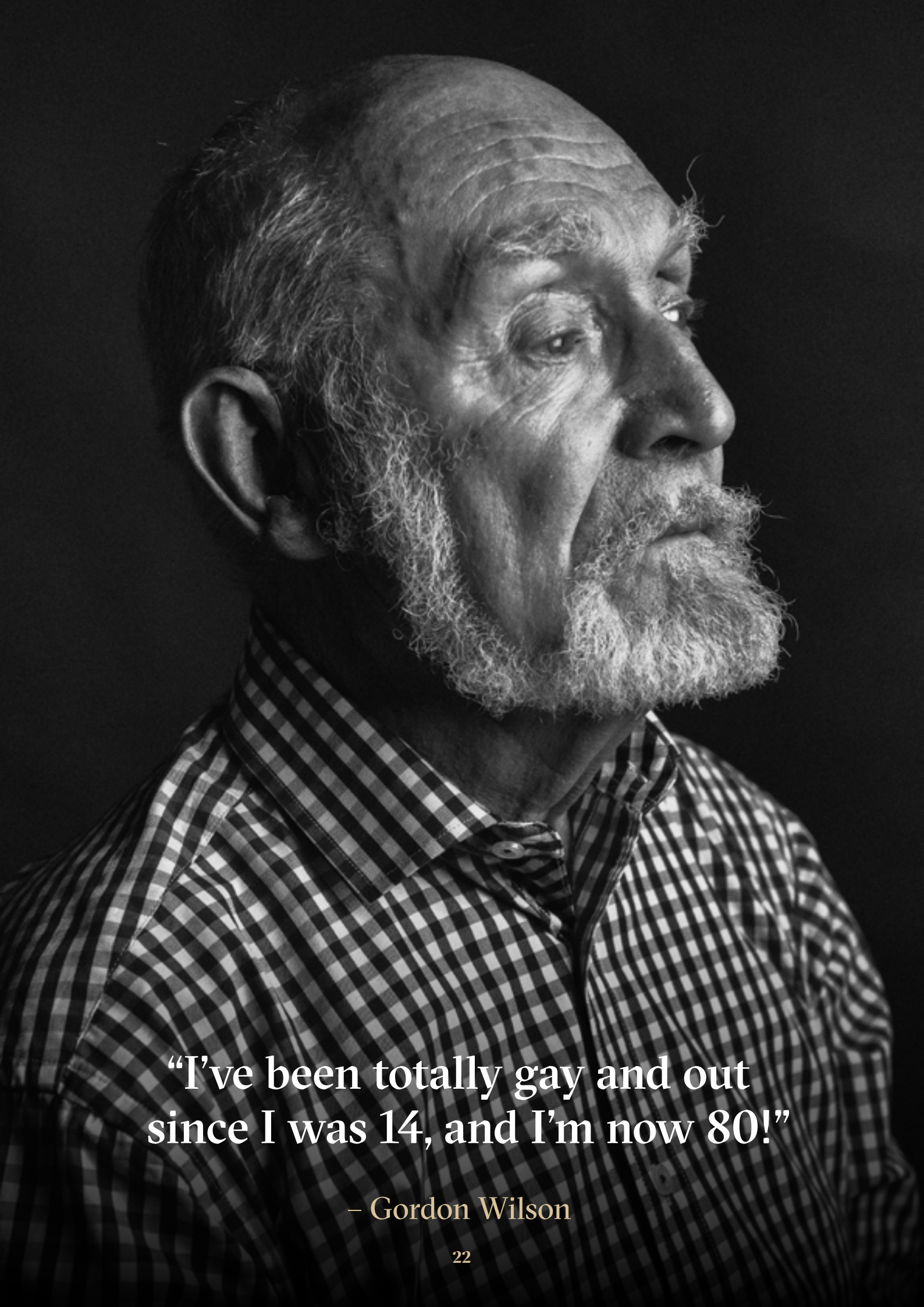
- 1 Felice interviewed by Lucy Chesser, 1993
- 2 NL interviewed by Gary Jaynes, 2016
- 3 CB interviewed by Graham Carbery and Gary Jaynes, 2013
- 4 JA interviewed by Gary Jaynes and Graham Carbery, 2008
- 5 NL interviewed by Gary Jaynes, 2016

Images

Archival photos provided by Australia Lesbian and Gay Archives.

LGBTI Elders Dance Club images by Bryony Jackson.

LGBTI Elders images by Gregory Lorenzutti.



“I’ve been totally gay and out
since I was 14, and I’m now 80!”

– Gordon Wilson

Creative Team



James Andrews

Dancer

James is an Australian dancer and dance maker working in the realms of experimental contemporary dance as well as the underground queer club landscape. Recent credits include DISCORDIA (Arts Centre Melbourne), YUMMY, DARK MOFO and regular club appearances as JANDRUZE at Honcho Disko, Barba and AnotherTechnoParty.



Robyn Archer

MC / Performer

Robyn Archer AO FAHA is a singer, writer, artistic director and public advocate for the arts. Currently, Robyn is Strategic Advisor, Gold Coast Arts and Culture; Chair of the Arts Centre Gold Coast, Chair of the National Institute of Dramatic Art's Master of Fine Arts in Cultural Leadership, and ongoing mentor for the European Festivals' Association international Academy/Atelier for young festival artistic directors. Robyn was named Cabaret Icon at the 2016 Adelaide Cabaret Festival and won the Helpmann Award as Australia's Best Cabaret Performer 2013. Robyn has recorded twelve albums and is an Officer of the Order of

Australia, Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France) and Officer of the Crown (Belgium) and holds honorary doctorates from Flinders University, Griffith University, the Universities of Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide. She is also an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy for the Humanities.



Andy Black and Blake Adams
DJs

Andy & Blake have been DJing at clubs, festivals and in people's lounge rooms for more than two decades. These two have made people move at Toff, Rooftop, Bella Union, Outpost, Golden Plains, Sugar Mountain, AFL Pride Round, Tilda... and feel excited to do the same for you at the Melbourne Town Hall!



Carlotta
Performer

Carlotta is an Australian cabaret performer and television celebrity. She began her career as an original member of the long-running Les Girls cabaret show, which started in 1963 in the purpose built Les Girls building in the heart of Sydney's Kings Cross. Les Girls continued in Sydney until 1993 and then went on-the-road, touring Australia,

inspiring the film "Priscilla Queen of the Desert". Carlotta had a few short breaks from Les Girls for international tours, but overall by the time she left the show in 1992 she had spent 26 years performing with the troupe. From 1997, Carlotta has been a regular panellist on the discussion program "Beauty and the Beast". Carlotta is currently touring Australia with her show "Carlotta – Queen of the Cross" and regularly features as a guest panellist on Channel Ten's Studio 10 morning show.



Deborah Cheetham
Performer

Deborah Cheetham, Yorta Yorta woman, soprano, composer and educator has been a leader in the Australian arts landscape for more than 25 years. In 2014, Deborah was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO), for distinguished service to the performing arts as an opera singer, composer and artistic director, to the development of Indigenous artists, and to innovation in performance. In 2017 Ms Cheetham was invited to perform an excerpt from her latest work Eumeralla, a War Requiem for Peace in the ancient language of the Gunditjmara people, at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco for the opening of the Venice Biennale, before

embarking on a recital tour including performances in London, Paris, Rome and Singapore. Like her multi-award winning opera Pecan Summer, Eumeralla is set to advance the progress towards a meaningful reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal Australians.



Gerry Connolly
Performer

Gerry Connolly is an accomplished Australian comedian, actor, impressionist and musician, known for his satirical caricatures of public figures. Corporately and in one-off national events, Gerry Connolly is in demand as an after-dinner speaker and entertainer. Over many years, he has enlivened audiences with his musical charms and venting his observations through concise and sometimes ridiculous performances, often as his most demanded character, Her Majesty The Queen. For half the reign of the present Queen, Gerry has represented Her Majesty in the Southern Hemisphere, and occasionally travels to her other realms when time allows. This turn began life at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in revue and along with his rendition of former premier, Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen quickly became the basis of his one-man shows.



Keith Deverell
Video Designer

Keith's video installations have been installed in both the Melbourne Laneways Commission, 2009, and the Melbourne International Arts Festival, 2010. In 2011 Keith's work *The Hawker's Song*, made in collaboration with Sue McCauley and two Cambodian artists Srey Bandol and Meas Sekorn, was acquired by the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and was included in the SAM and Centre Pompidou exhibition, *Video, An Art, A History*, Videos from the Centre Pompidou and SAM collections.



Jarred Dewey
Performer

Jarred Dewey trained as a teenager at Cirkidz, a youth circus based in his home town of Adelaide. In 2007 he moved to Melbourne to study contortion and swinging trapeze at the National Institute of Circus Arts. Jarred graduated NICA in 2010, and since 2011 he has worked extensively with Brisbane based contemporary circus company CIRCA as a full-time ensemble acrobat. During his five years with CIRCA he has toured and performed in eight different productions (including *OPUS*, *Wunderkammer*, and *CLOSER*) in more than 30 countries world wide. He has since worked with the

sparkling La Soiree for an eight week season at Leicester Square and the iconic Australian circus company Circus Oz.



Forde + Nicol
Designers

Forde + Nicol is a design and digital development studio based in Melbourne, Australia lead by Dominic Forde and Jonathan Nicol. At the heart of the studios process is a commitment to simple, smart and engaging design solutions. Forde + Nicol work closely with their clients to craft enduring design outcomes. The studios work has been recognised by AGDA, Tokyo Type Directors Club, Create awards and featured in numerous industry publications and books.



Luke George
Dancer

Raised in Tasmania and based in Melbourne, Luke George creates new performance work locally and internationally/culturally, through experimental creative processes with collaborating artists. George uses daring and at times unorthodox methods to explore new intimacies and connections between audience and performers. His works have been presented extensively throughout Australia, and internationally.



Russell Goldsmith
Production Manager /
Sound Designer

Russell Goldsmith is a multiple award winning Sound Designer, Composer, Producer and Audio System Designer. He has a diverse body of work in Theatre, Film, Television, Commercial and Radio Production, Live Music and Installation Art. In March 2009, Neil Armfield's production of "Exit the King" opened on Broadway at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. In May 2009, Russell was nominated for a Tony Award for his Sound Design for the Broadway production of "Exit the King". He has had the honour of working with some of Australia's premier theatre directors including Neil Armfield, Gale Edwards, Sam Strong, Michael Kantor, Clare Watson, Marion Potts, Jenny Kemp, Aidan Fennessey, Robyn Nevin, Gary Young, Barry Kosky and Aubrey Mellor.



Benjamin Hancock
Dancer

Benjamin is a Melbourne dancer and choreographer. He has featured in works by Lucy Guerin, Lee Serle, Sue Healey, Prue Lang, Antony Hamilton, Martin del Amo, Narelle Benjamin, Gideon Obarzanek/Chunky Move. Benjamin recently received a 2016 Green Room Award for Outstanding Male Dancer for *The Dark Chorus* Lucy Guerin Inc.



Gregory Lorenzutti
Photographer

Gregory Lorenzutti is a Brazilian-Australian artist based in Melbourne working between the spaces of photography and dance. As a photographer, Gregory finds and frames movement with the keen eye and kinetic sensibility of a dancer. He has worked for major dance companies and independent performers in Brazil and Australia, documenting and developing exclusive image concepts. He also travels the globe creating unique personal photographic essays, meeting people and telling their stories. His essays have been exhibited extensively in galleries and published in books and media in Brazil, Italy, USA, Canada, France, Germany, Algeria, Argentina and Australia.



Bryony Jackson
Photographer

Bryony Jackson is a photographer who has worked across documentary, landscape and portraiture for over a decade, with many fruitful digressions in between. In recent years she has been stealthily haunting the wings of Australia's most enigmatic art, social and performance events, where she produces stills that are anything but still. Relishing unconventional settings, complex lighting and unexpected moments, her eye is honed to distilling



the velocity and quietude of performance across all disciplines. She also photographs the occasional cute baby and corporate head shot.



Toni Lalic
Performer

Toni Lalic is one of Australia's most experienced accompanists, working with singers and instrumentalists in Melbourne for the past 25 years. She has performed in premiere venues in Europe, the UK and throughout Australia. Toni is also a founding director of Australia's national Indigenous opera company Short Black Opera with her partner, Yorta Yorta soprano and composer Deborah Cheetham AO. Toni has been vocal coach and company manager for Short Black Opera since 2011 and has been instrumental in the company's five seasons of Deborah's opera 'Pecan Summer', most notably at the Sydney Opera House in 2016.



Dr. Kathleen McGuire
Conductor

With a career spanning more than 30 years, Melbourne-born Kathleen has worked as a conductor, composer and educator leading orchestras and choirs, opera, musical theatre and ballet productions in such venues as Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. An

advocate for social justice, since 1990 she has conducted for myriad LGBTI arts organisations and events, including more than a decade leading the award-winning 200-voice San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus. She was Grand Marshal of the San Francisco Pride Parade in 2006 and two San Francisco mayors named "Kathleen McGuire Day" in her honour in 2010 and 2013. As Cultural Ambassador she will lead the massed choir and orchestra at Gay Games 10 in Paris in August 2018.



Sally McPhee
Stage Manager

Sally has been an arts producer and coordinator for over 15 years; recently including Art Centre Melbourne's Betty Amsden Participation Program. Her passion for community participation, social heritage and welcoming, accessible public spaces led her to back to study and she graduated from RMIT's Urban and Regional Planning (Hon) program in 2016.



Melbourne Gay and Lesbian Chorus
Performers

Since its inception in 1990, the Melbourne Gay and Lesbian Chorus has committed itself to supporting the LGBTI community of Melbourne. As such, the Chorus has performed at the Stonewall

commemorative service each year for the Metropolitan Community Church, World AIDS Day ceremonies and services for the People Living With AIDS, and the fundraising Australia Day Picnic for LGBTI radio station, JOY Melbourne, to name a few. Over 25 years, our members have challenged stereotypes, stood as proud role models for those struggling with their sexuality or identity, and come from all backgrounds, ages and levels of ability.



Tristan Meecham
Artistic Director

Tristan Meecham is the Artistic Director of All The Queens Men. His performance events have been seen around the world. Credits include Fun Run (Bleach Festival, Arts Centre Melbourne, ANTI Contemporary Arts Festival; Finland, Ansan Street Arts Festival; South Korea, Sydney Festival; Opening Event, Darwin Festival, Next Wave Festival) in which Tristan runs a marathon on a treadmill live on stage supported by hundreds of performers from the wider community, Game Show (Festival of Live Art; Arts House, World Theatre Festival: Brisbane Powerhouse) in which 50 contestants compete for the chance to take home the hosts very own possessions; and The Coming Back Out Ball, a spectacular social event celebrating LGBTI+ elders. Tristan was Artistic Director of Give it up for Margaret: A month

of philanthropic inspiration, a festival that inspired innovative arts philanthropy. He is the recipient of the VCA George Fairfax Memorial Award, British Council's Realise Your Dream Award and the inaugural Richard Pratt Scholarship.



Cameron Menzies
Event Director

Cameron Menzies creatively directs across Opera, Music Theatre, Theatre and Health Arts. He has been engaged by Opera Australia, Short Black Opera Company, Victorian Opera, Malthouse Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Australian National Academy of Music, Deutsche Oper Berlin, DivaOpera UK, Australian International Opera Company, Festival de Musique de Sully & Du Loire France, Sgt. Pepper @ 50 Festival Liverpool UK, 20th International AIDS Conference, Melbourne International Arts Festival and Perth International Arts Festival. He has held Artistic Director, Creative Director and Event Director positions in Australia and the UK. He was the Chief Opera Director at the Opera Studio from 2010 – 2014 and Stagecraft Lecturer at VCA. Cameron is the new Artistic Director for The Classics: Opera for City of Stonnington and has been commissioned by Enlighten Festival 2018, to create and direct their closing spectacular.



**Miss Ellaneous
and Marzi Panne**
Performers

Miss Ellaneous and Marzi Panne are the hilarious Top End duo responsible for the fabulous event and party company PARTY PASSPORT! With a portfolio of over 15 pop up parties and events held over three states in Australia and internationally these girls know how to party! This year PARTY PASSPORT took away a commendation award for the NT Mardi Gras float celebrating the Tiwi Islander Sista Gals during the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.



Anna Pidgeon
Stage Manager

With a focus on stage and production management, Anna is passionate about facilitating work that challenges and inspires people and considers herself lucky to have been able to do this with companies of all sizes, including Circus Oz, ThisSideUp, Die Roten Punkte, Arena Theatre, Dislocate and The Listies.



POW Circus
Performers

Founded in 1995, Performing Older Women's Circus (POW) is run as a collective of women, currently aged between 46 and 68 years, who train in circus skills. POW members participated in small performances such as the 2016 White Night: Circus Circus cabaret, and Midsumma's Park Lounge II at Werribee. In the words of a young audience member watching performers on trapeze, "I didn't know grandmas could do that!"



Bec Reid
Producer / Chorographer /
Performer

Bec is a performer, producer, director, choreographer and engagement specialist. Bec encourages people to see their world in new ways through highly physical, participatory, practical, collaborative and celebratory actions. For 16 years, Bec has passionately worked in the space where professional artists and communities of interest meet; collaborating with communities and artists nationally and internationally. Together with Tristan Meecham, Bec leads All The Queens Men, is a founding member of Everybody Now! with Kate McDonald and Ian Pidd and regularly collaborates with acclaimed artists Madeline Flynn and Tim Humphrey. In 2017-18,

Bec is a Fellowship recipient from the Australia Council for the Arts. Her true loves are Staffordshire Bull Terriers and dancing.



Nick Roux
VJ

Nick Roux is an artist working in sound and video. As a composer and/or system designer he has worked with Luke George, Chunky Move, Aphids, Nicola Gunn, Sisters Grimm, Speak Percussion, Antony Hamilton Projects, Lucy Guerin Inc., Ashley Dyer, Torque Show, Dance North, Tanja Beer, Tamara Saulwick, TasDance, Gabrielle Nankivell, J.R. Brennan and Arts House. Together with real-time motion graphics developer Frieder Weiss, Nick designed and programmed the large scale real-time video graphics system for 'KING KONG' the musical. Nick has also created video works for Global Creatures, Chunky Move, Take That, Draculas, Mercedes Benz, NYID, Yellow Wheel and Next Wave Festival.



James Shannon
Dancer

James is a Melbourne-based dance artist who has toured and performed for Chunky Move, Lucy Guerin, Opera Australia, The Production Company, tasdance, All the Queens Men, and Cadi McCarthy company. He is currently working

in Education teaching VCE dance, taking dance workshops and leading professional development seminars for Victorian teachers and students.



Rockie Stone
POW Guest Choreographer

Rockie Stone is a physical performer and multi award winning contemporary theatre maker with a drive to create art with circus bodies. As much at home hand-standing on fellow acrobats or balancing on a tower of chairs as she is hanging on ropes and trapezes, she has performed all over the world with renowned companies such as Circa, Circus Oz, and Finucane & Smith and directed for Slipstream Circus and Westside Circus. Co-founder with Vincent van Berkel of award winning Company Here and Now, the pair have toured their work globally. She has attracted multiple awards and nominations including "Best Circus and Physical Theatre" in both Adelaide Fringe and Perth Fringe World (Fright or Flight – 3 is a Crowd Ensemble); Total Theatre Award nominations – UK (Fright or Flight – 2013; Perhaps Hope – 2016); and nominations for two Greenroom Awards (2015).



Sue Thomson
Documentary Film Maker

Sue wrote and directed the popular documentary/drama Boys and Balls starring Roy & HG for ABC1. She directed The Fifth Set, ABC1 and The Last Great Amateurs, starring Magda Szubanski for ABC1. Sue spent 3 years on her feature length documentary, Tempest at the Drop-in a film about a group of people with mental health issues who perform Shakespeare's play The Tempest – Tempest at the Drop-in, narrated by Eric Bana, screened as part of the MENTAL AS initiative on ABC1 in 2014 and again in '15,'16 and 2017. In 2014 Sue directed and produced Talking Turkey, a 1hr documentary starring Brian Nankervis and Colin Lane. In 2016, Sue was the Executive Producer on television specials called the Comedy Roadshow for SBS 2.



Lois Weaver
Performer

Lois Weaver is an artist, activist and part time professor of Contemporary Performance at Queen Mary, University of London. She was co-founder of Spiderwoman Theater, WOW and Artistic Director of Gay Sweatshop in London. She has been a writer, director and performer with Peggy Shaw and Split Britches since 1980. Recent work includes: Miss America (2008); Lost Lounge (2009) and RUFF

(2012). Her experiments in performance as a means of public engagement include the Long Table and the FeMUSEm. Her facilitating persona, Tammy WhyNot collaborated with senior centres in NYC on 'What Tammy Needs To Know About Getting Old and Having Sex' which premiered at La MaMa ETC, NYC in 2014. Lois was named a Senior Fellow by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics in 2014. She is a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow and a Wellcome Trust Engaging Science Fellow for 2016-18.



James Welsby
Dancer

James is a performer and choreographer with a decade of professional experience in contemporary dance and cabaret. He has toured the world as a performer in GLORY BOX and BRIEFS. James is the founder and artistic director of cult-hit drag cabaret YUMMY, which has presented numerous sold-out productions in Melbourne and overseas.



Andrew Westle
Maitre d

Andrew Westle's work defies boundaries and includes research, performance, evaluation, writing, theatre making, public health and stage management. He works across disciplines, including sexuality, social justice and

health research with a specific focus on LGBTIQ health. Andrew always questions the status quo and aims to create spaces for challenging conversations where ideas inspire dialogue, action and engagement. As a writer, he was awarded a fellowship at Writers Victoria in 2016 and was a writer in resident for the 2016 Next Wave Festival. He produces a podcast 'Delving into Dance' with an audience of over 10, 000 people.

The Coming Back Out Ball Orchestra

Ben Castle (Concert Master), Edwina Jensen (Violin #1), Rose Kavanagh (Violin #1), Tara Murhpy (Violin #2), Elyane De Fontenay (Violin #2), Tom Higham (Viola #1), Molly Collier (Viola #2), Jarred Mathie (Cello #1), Anna Porkorny (Cello #2), Alexander Araiswale (Double Bass), Sophie Western (Flute), David Reicht (Oboe), Justin Beere (Clarinet), Lyndon Watts (Bassoon), Rachel Shaw (Horn), Fletcher Cox (Trumpet), Ming Li (Trombone), Justin Jacobs (Piano), Kathryn Thomas (Percussion), Kathleen Halloran (Guitar)

Thank you

Phillip Adams, Ro Allen, Brenda Appleton, Kristy Aryes, Lou Austin, Dr. Marnie Badham, Kirsty Baird, Dr. Catherine Barrett, Caroline Bayer, Paul Brophy, Michelle Brooker, Jill Bowen, Sheryl Bryce, Daniel Bryen, Lenine Bourke, Kent Burgess, Liz Craig, Karen Cochrane, Jan Cochrane-Harry, Pauline

Crameri, Brian Day, Matt Dixon, Maddy Dowling, Drew Downing, Alison Duncan, Tanja Farmer, Deb Fryers, Nanette Fox, Sally Goldner, Robyn Good, John Hall, Bonnie Halsall, Nick Henderson, Cas Hunter, Andrew Jacobs, Jen Jennings, Shona Johnson, Ann Lafferty, JR Latham, Benjamin Law, Olivia Manzart, Fiona Macleod, Peter Mensfeld, Heather Morgan, David Morrison, Erin Milne, Roger Monk, Jacinta Moylan, Logan Mucha, Jess Murphy, Terrence Murphy, Rory O'Neill, Katie Page, Toni Paynter, Chris Reidy, Mark Trevorrow, Jason Triolo, Clive Scott, Judith Slade, Ben Starick, Annie Stephens, Sherene Stewart, Brad Spolding, Magda Szubanski, Ardy Tibby, Noel Tovey, Brendan Valmont, Jenny Villa, Sam Wallman, Tony Walsh, Peter Waples-Crowe, Victoria Whitelaw, Gordon Wilson, Jennifer Wolcott and William Yang.

Our event volunteers:

Ada, Ailsa, Alice, Alissa, Alyson, Amy, Anna, Andrew, Angela, Angela, Annette, Ben, Bertrand, Brian, Cameron, Chanelle, Charlotte, Deheny, Dimitiri, Emily, Fee, Fernando, Gabriel, Holle, Jacinta, Jai, Joshua, Karolina, Kate, Lorette, Lucy, Maddy, Mara, Marme, Nicholas, Nik, Nina, Olivia, Patti, Paul, Robert, Reema, Renea, Sam, Samantha, Samantha, Sherene, Steve and Susan.

Correct at the time of printing

THE COMING BACK OUT BALL



All The Queens Men create spectacular theatrical and participatory community arts experiences.

Established by Tristan Meecham and Bec Reid, they connect communities, artists and audiences together in events that transcend the everyday.

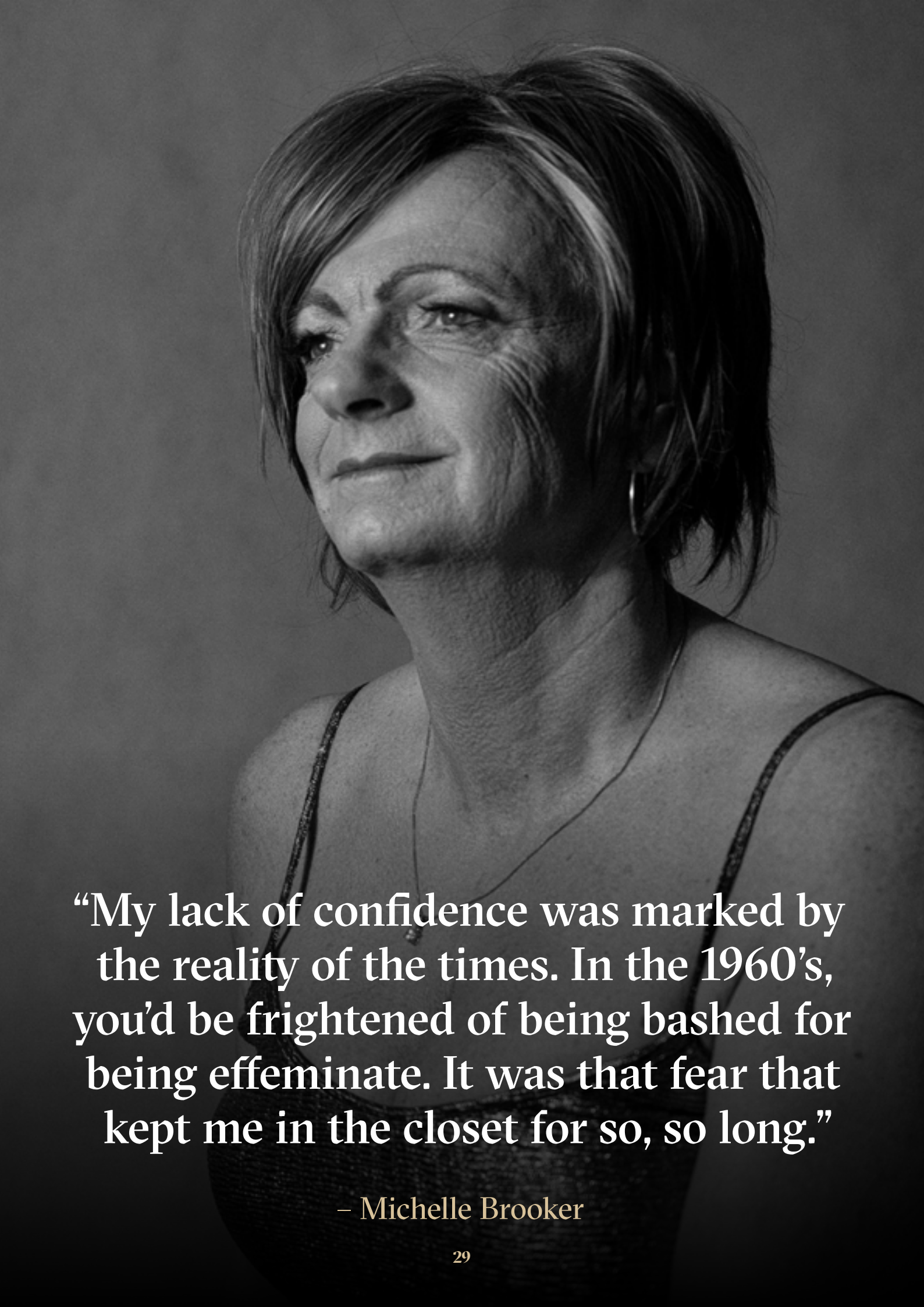
All The Queens Men champion social equality by providing creative opportunities for diverse members of society. They are passionate about the transformative power of participative performance. As such, they engage people from different backgrounds in the making and performing of their inclusive works, celebrating these 'everyday experts' in exciting and technically proficient art contexts.

All The Queens Men mission is aligned to that of pioneering UK company Duckie who state –

... we believe that art and performance can be used as tools to bring about community solidarity, to make ordinary people happy and even for personal development and recovery for the most vulnerable amongst us. We use popular forms of entertainment, volunteer participation and the poetics of partying to make our shows accessible to communities that are marginalised from society.


All The Queens Men have presented large-scale arts projects around the world including Ansan Arts Festival (South Korea), ANTI Contemporary Arts Festival (Finland), Arts Centre Melbourne, Arts House (Melbourne), Bleach Festival (Gold Coast), Brisbane Powerhouse, City of Melbourne, City of Yarra, Darwin Festival, Festival of Live Art (Melbourne), Next Wave Festival (Melbourne), The Substation (Melbourne) Sydney Festival, Vitalstatsix (Adelaide) amongst many others.

allthequeensmen.net



“My lack of confidence was marked by the reality of the times. In the 1960’s, you’d be frightened of being bashed for being effeminate. It was that fear that kept me in the closet for so, so long.”

– Michelle Brooker

A black and white portrait of an elderly woman with short, light-colored hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a patterned top. The background is dark and out of focus.

“There’s so much work to be done and we can’t forget our elderly just because we’re young. We wouldn’t even be looking at marriage equality if it wasn’t for the incredible journey that our elderly have set down before us.”

– Lizzi Craig



Partners

Presenting Partner



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comingbackoutball.com