

# VULCANA



## ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Chairs Report: BENA BROWN

2020. The year the world changed with the COVID pandemic. The year Vulcana Circus tapped into our resilience, flexibility, persistence, and grit to firstly survive, and then flourish.

After moving to our new precinct in Morningside at the end of 2019, 2020 saw significant challenges for the arts sector, and for Vulcana Circus. During COVID lockdown, Vulcana was able to maintain employment for 11 employees which allowed (alongside a generous \$30,000 donation) major building works in our ceiling, installation of aerial rigging points, a purpose-built floating wooden floor in the Blue Studio, and complete redevelopment of our website. It felt like we bunkered down, we leant on each other, and we got through. Vulcana also responded to the challenges of closing our physical doors by offering online circus classes and engaging with our community through digital innovations including the Vulcana At Home Circus Photo Challenge. Creative digital work was developed through Collective Capture and Community Capture, and a new venture, Cinemata Circus, was born.

Performance pieces, under the creative genius of Celia White, responded to COVID restrictions by delivering circus in alternative formats – delivered to driveways, or offered outside in the safety of the audience's own cars. In 2020, Vulcana also saw a surge in students participating in Vulcademy and Vulcana Youth workshops and classes, despite COVID lockdown for 3 months. This has seen our financial position improve in 2020.

2020 was a sink or swim year, and proudly Vulcana found its flippers and goggles and is swimming strong into 2021. Tireless work from Celia White and Angela Pieta throughout 2020 must be acknowledged. They go above and beyond and we are indebted to their passion and perseverance. We hope to move into a financial position where we can support more office administration to Celia and Ange. A huge and heartfelt thanks to the Vulcana Circus Board – Sally Walker, Brooke Sinclair, Shona McKenzie, Nadia Jade, and welcoming Ash Jones who volunteer hours of their time each month to support Vulcana Circus.

2020 Treasurer's Report: BROOKE SINCLAIR

2020 was the year that nobody was expecting. Whilst Vulcana had moved into a new venue and people were excited to start using the space COVID did put a stop to this temporarily.

Many of the opportunities given to nonprofit business through COVID were taken up including funding grants, Jobkeeper and payment plans for pay as you go installments. The introduction of Jobkeeper allowed Vulcana to support staff whilst not fully operating and in return many staff assisted Vulcana through this quiet period.

At the year ended 2020 Vulcana was in a profit position of \$149,545 this is the first profitable year in four years. It has helped the organisation pay down some significant debts and enabled some major building works including rigging, flooring and a new hot water system. As the organisation progresses and COVID restrictions are lifted the board are able to better budget for costs in the new premises and develop opportunities for increased revenue diversification.

Thank you to all the supporters whether it be financial or with their valuable time that have assisted Vulcana reach this position in 2020.

## Artistic Director Report: CELIA WHITE

While COVID made for a challenging year for the arts, it also gave us an opportunity to try new ways of delivering classes, connecting with audiences and making work.

During the business closedown period we delivered a series of online workshops, which allowed us to connect with circus students from not just our local area but also interstate. When we reopened, we worked with other circus schools within QLD and used government guidelines to develop a shared strategy for reopening safely to manage students within our space, including delivering more frequent programs with smaller class sizes, changed cleaning and hygiene protocols, changed equipment management and tracking of students and guests in the space.

In our performance program we delivered several digital initiatives, as well as social media engagement projects such as our **Vulcana At Home Circus Photo Challenge**, which had a reach of over 10,000 and over 214,000 impressions.

Like many not-for-profit organisations, Vulcana has endured significant challenges over the past year. Despite these challenges, and true to the resilient nature of Vulcana, we have flourished in developing new work, opportunities and creative vision in the circus sector. The following key achievements and highlights point to our capacity to overcome adversity and remain flexible to rebuild and recreate ourselves:

### **Vulcana Studios – our purpose-built training and performance space**

At the very end of 2019, after 20 years at Brisbane Powerhouse, Vulcana were successful tender recipients of a community facilities lease at the Colmslie Reserve in Morningside. From the beginning of January 2020 we unpacked our boxes and started to settle into our new Vulcana home and welcome our community to a larger location ensuring our circus organisation and training centre had room to grow.

Through Jobkeeper Vulcana supported 11 employees that provided an ensemble of trainers and performers to draw on for projects, workshops and building works. Over the course of 2020 we have worked to continuously improve the space, ensuring it has the capacity to deliver the circus programs required for our organization. This includes renovations to the ceiling space, installation of rigging infrastructure to allow aerial capacity, building floating wooden training floors, and reconfiguring storage and office space.

Moving to an area without an entrenched arts landscape has presented a unique opportunity for Vulcana. Over 2020 we have activated our site through performances, events, and workshops, reaping the rewards of a growing community of local emerging artists, participants and audiences. Despite the COVID restrictions, Vulcana has seen a significant increase of new students, highlighting the fascination and appetite for artistic opportunities at our new locality.

### **Performance**

In 2020 we used the changed nature of performance delivery to springboard into new and exciting territory. Using a combination of digital and socially distanced performance solutions, we found ways to make





and dispatch circus to audiences locally and further abroad in a time where traditional performance models were not possible.

**Collective Capture & Community Capture:** brought the Vulcana community together during isolation to create connected individual performances, which reflected their experiences during lockdown. **Collective Capture** took video submissions from professional artists within our community that were edited together to tell a story about how we survive in isolation. A version of this was presented as part of WOW (Women of the World) Festival on The WOW Foundation's event: [#wowglobal24](#) that was viewed by 11,000 people on livestream during the event, and more than 30,000 directly following the event.

**Community Capture** invited emerging circus artists to submit videos for a second iteration of the project, which was presented at our **Cinemata Circus** event, a socially distanced movie night that showed footage of an iconic historical Brisbane circus show 'The Dark', as well as through our socials and mailing lists.

**Circus Delivery:** delivered live circus experiences to individual households, in their driveway, pathway or front yard, respecting social distancing requirements, which created an opportunity for the visceral experience of circus in the flesh for very small audiences. Several teams of performers delivered circus to households and workplaces across Brisbane, as part of Anywhere Festival 2020, the first live arts most audiences had witnessed since the first significant lockdown in south East Queensland.





**Rear Vision:** was a drive-in circus performance that was a response to our collective experience of dislocation, isolation, and craving for connection using circus, poetry and sound. It was the final event of the year made possible through a successful Open Air grant from Arts Qld's COVID response for the arts in Qld. Audiences were invited to experience a unique show format with a freestanding 8metre high outdoor cube rig, in a large open car park, viewing the performance from their cars and receiving sound through a mobile phone app. This sold out season was a huge success and employed artists across multiple disciplines. Presented 17th -20th December 2020

**Residencies for Artists:** Vulcana provides opportunities to support circus artists with mentorship, resources, venue, and audiences. Vulcana supported Alex Mizzen and Anna Murray to explore Anna's new physicality after a serious injury. Suzon Fuks and Nasim Khoshravi worked on their creative development, **Open Book**. Lauren Watson and Celia White continued to develop **Nerve** with a digital showing as part of Undercover Festival 2020 and towards presentation at Access Arts' Undercover Festival 2021. Vulcana supported and hosted the development and presentation of **Outhouse** by Phoebe Manning, Sarah Whitehead, with director Bridget Boyle and dramaturg Andrew Cory.

### **Vulcademy & Vulcana Youth**

In 2020 we had 1096 enrolments despite COVID enforced closure for 3 months that represents a 23% increase in 2020. Within these programs we were able to offer a wide variety of circus skills and artistic development opportunities, providing skills development support for emerging circus artists, and recreation and fitness activities for women, trans and non-binary adults, and children and youth of all genders.

### **Employment and Training: Staff/Artists**

Over the 2020 period we employed 28 circus trainers in our Vulcademy and Vulcana Youth programs, providing regular income for artists. We provided 4 internships, 3 to youth trainers (under 25) and one adult trainer, which upskilled them over 12 months to enable them to move into paid work opportunities in regular circus classes and outreach community circus work.

