

## OVERVIEW

*At any given moment, 85% of our members will be out of work [Zoe Angus, Director of Equity Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) email to GL 26/07/18]*

The Performing Arts industry is so highly competitive that most reputable theatrical agents will not look to represent an actor unless one of the top four conservatoire training institutions in the country has trained them. These are: the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the University of Melbourne, Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA).

WAAPA was established and for many years offered an Advanced Diploma in Acting. On advice from graduate and industry, WAAPA recognised that in order for our Acting graduates to be competitive in Australia and overseas, WAAPA needed change this qualification to a Bachelor of Arts (Acting), thus bringing it in line with NIDA, QUT and the VCA who already offered degree courses in Acting. It also ensured that students could go onto other higher education courses if desired, and qualify for a Green Card if they wished to work in America.

The current Performing Arts industry in Australia is rapidly and dramatically changing. Actors need to be able to create work in a challenging funding environment. Many theatre companies that previously provided employment for graduates have closed down. In response to the contraction in funded theatre companies, a theatre arts sector emerged with the astonishing rise of the self-funded arts collectives that seek project-by-project funding for example, The Last Great Hunt (WA).

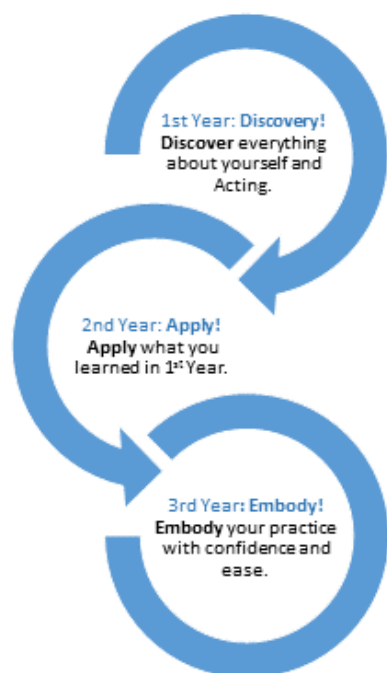
A surge in digital technology has heralded a rapid growth in various screen delivery platforms providing enormous employment opportunities for the self-motivated performer. It is much easier for performers to begin careers by creating their own screen work, like web series, or entering short film festivals like Tropfest with the simplest of hand held technologies and software programs. The advent of cable television networks like HBO, Netflix, Stan, Foxtel, and ease of sending self-tests to international entertainment organisations opened up a lucrative international employment market for actors. High profile trailblazers like Hugh Jackman, Frances O'Connor, Dacre Montgomery, Angus McLaren, Shalom Brune-Franklin, all alumni of WAAPA, are beacons for graduates who want to pursue a successful career overseas.

The combination of all these factors demanded that we graduate students with more than just acting skills: our graduates are exceptional people who are self-determined, autonomous strategists with business and technological skills as well as elite performers at the top of their game. These qualities mean our graduates attract A-list agents, gain employment in the current climate and become artists capable of contributing to a vibrant artistic community.

*I am so thankful to the graduation showcase WAAPA offers at the end of third year. It is an amazing opportunity that puts you in front of industry professionals from around the world. It set me off on an incredible start in the industry, and for that I am eternally grateful. Since graduating from WAAPA in 2016, I have had the pleasure of starring in shows both in Australia and the UK including 'Our Girl', 'The State', 'Barracuda', 'Doctor Doctor' and 'Thor: Ragnarok'. [Shalom Brune-Franklin, 2016 Graduate and Winner of 2016 Chris Edmond Scholarship]*

*Brian Walsh, Foxtel's Executive Director of Television attended the Sydney Showcase. He was impressed by my performance on film and months later offered me two leading roles; one in Foxtel's period drama, 'A Place to Call Home' as well as a leading role in Foxtel's upcoming miniseries, 'Fighting Season'. This has been my break and generated momentum for me in the industry. [George Pullar, 2016 Graduate]*

**To ensure student success we took a whole-of-course approach to scaffold the student training experience based on authentic industry aligned processes.**



Our three-year full-time program is an intensive conservatoire-training course. Graduates are thoroughly prepared for a career in a wide variety of media, including theatre, television, film and radio both in Australia and internationally. Our aim is for the actor to be technically adept and have an informed, rigorous outlook that will open the mind and ignite the imagination.

We provide a studio-based learning environment where students are encouraged to develop holistically as an actor. Our philosophy and practice is centred on the development of the *self-determined artist* possessing a passion for theatre and a desire to contribute meaningfully to the evolution of the art form and to the greater community. Students develop their skill, craft, artistry and humanity, through the nurturing of the whole instrument – voice, body, mind, and imagination.

The transformation of the program from diploma to degree was completed in late 2014. The next thing was to attract the right team of gifted industry professionals who also had deep experience in teaching.

Associate Professor **Andrew Lewis** actor, theatre director, film and television director and academic continues his invaluable contribution to the program, especially in relation to the collaboration with the Western Australian Screen Academy, (WASA) and the interface with the professional industry. **Glenda Linscott**, (VIC) an actress with 35 years' experience and 27 years actor-training experience was appointed as the Course Co-ordinator of the new degree course and Head of Acting. **Samantha Chester** (NSW) with 25 years' experience as a movement director and was Associate Director of The Actor's Centre in Sydney was appointed as Head of Movement. **Donald Woodburn** (WA) former Head of Voice at AFDA, Cape Town, South Africa and Lecturer in Voice at WAAPA was promoted to Head of Voice. **Luzita Fereday**, (WA) a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) London, and professional actress for 25 years, was appointed Lecturer in Accent and Dialect.

Our team is unique because we have a shared belief and teaching philosophy. Our absolute focus and desire is to see our gifted students reach their potential. We encourage their independence and sustain high expectations of them. We support the development of actors who have a deep understanding of themselves, of what an actor does and why this role is of value to society.

*'Atlas' has really made me question my role as an actor in the context of the world. Through this piece, which is in so many ways a microcosm of the world we live in, I question my objective and purpose in the context of humanity. How am I moving through the world, what do I affect and what can I influence?* [Self- Reflection Extract from Julia Kok, A2 student on Atlas, Director Sam Chester]. See Appendix 1

We began a process of significant transformation within the program, in alignment with Edith Cowan University's values to equip our students with the skills necessary to respond to the needs of the current industry environment. To develop the program, we drew on our rational enquiry into current industry trends, our own personal industry experience, a deep appreciation of our competitors, and the current academic research into best practice for Actor Training. (e.g. Moore, 2013; Taylor, 2016; Beddie, 2016; van den Eynde, Fisher, Sonn, 2014).

## CRITERION 1: DISTINCTIVENESS, COHERENCE AND CLARITY OF PURPOSE

### Distinctiveness

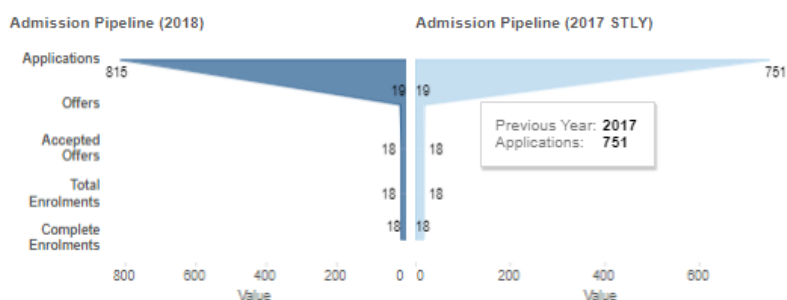
Each of the four drama schools in Australia position themselves slightly differently in the market place. WAAPA's Acting Program is the only one absolutely devoted to training the all-round professional actor through immersive and continuous practice.

*Without doubt acting graduates from WAAPA are amongst the very best of acting graduates each year. This is not only because of the excellence of their craft, which is undoubted. But it is also that, of all the drama*

*schools, year after year, WAAPA graduates are the most ready to enter the acting workforce. Not only amongst our colleague theatrical agents but casting directors, directors, producers and Network executives, the graduates of WAAPA are the always the subject great anticipation.* [Simon Whipp, Theatrical Agent, Shannahan Management Pty Ltd] Appendix 2

The program provides students with an authentic experience from start to finish. Potential students must audition for the course; they work with visiting artists from all over the world; and they work collaboratively with students from various disciplines to perform in a multitude of productions for a variety of audiences.

**The general audition** Each year the Acting Program attracts over 800 applicants vying for 18 places. Students must audition and are offered a place in the course based on talent. Acting staff travel all around Australia to hold auditions and accept video auditions from international applicants.



**Visiting artists** A hallmark of the program is the outstanding quality of the local, national and international guest directors, artists and organisations we have been able to attract to work with our students in simulated industry conditions.

Figure 1: Admissions Pipeline 2017 – 2018 BA Acting

*I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at WAAPA directing 'A Tale of Two Cities' and have been made most welcome by students and staff alike. The third year actors have been a real pleasure to work with. They are thoughtful, skillful, collaborative, hard-working, adventurous and, most importantly, full of fun!* [Professor Hugh Hodgart, Royal Conservatoire Scotland, Director of Drama, Dance, Production and Film.]

Lizzie Schebasta, Director Sport for Jove, (NSW) directed a 2<sup>nd</sup> Year production of 'A Dream Play' in 2017. While here, she conducted Shakespeare Masterclasses with 3<sup>rd</sup> Year actors. In 2017, she offered three WAAPA graduates roles, including the lead, in her production of 'Measure for Measure'.

Students form real relationships with the visiting artists who often directly employ them upon graduation or influence employment.

Since 2016 we have employed **nine local guest directors and creative artists, seven national directors, eight international directors, and invited eleven**

**International Master trainers** These directors and teachers have carried word of the good training and talent they have witnessed thereby boosting WAAPA's reputation and global standing.

Guiseppe Rotondella, 2016 Graduate, worked with Perth based director Lawrie Cullen-Tait on 3<sup>rd</sup> year production of 'All My Sons' by Arthur Miller. The following year she cast him in the Black Swan State Theatre Company's production of 'Switzerland' in 2017.

Not only has Giuseppe Rotondella's acting talent landed him his second role at Black Swan Theatre Company within a year of graduating from WAAPA, but it has provided him with the opportunity to play a character based on another talented individual – author Patricia Highsmith's Mister Tom Ripley – in Switzerland. *Eastern Reporter Community News, August 1, 2017.*

**Productions** We do more Theatre Productions and Screen Projects than any other national Acting course. Our students learn and apply their skills in authentic, industry-simulated productions directed by industry professionals. By the time our students graduate, they will have performed in twelve plays, six short films in association with Western Australian Screen Academy (WASA), and prepared a Graduation Showcase profiling Film and Theatre work to perform to Industry stakeholders in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and this year Los Angeles.

*The Acting course at WAAPA provides one single advantage over other institutions in the country: the students do more public work. There is such a thing in theatre as 'show fitness'. It is not dissimilar to how a sportsman can find 'form' or be 'in touch'. [Chris Isaacs, 2018 WAAPA Writer in Residence] Appendix 3.*

**Synergy of arts practice** There are over 1,100 students at WAAPA, all studying a range of performing arts. Acting students train alongside students of Dance, Music Theatre, Production and Design, Contemporary Theatre (Bachelor of Performing Arts), Aboriginal Performance, Contemporary, Jazz and Classical Music and Opera. The cross fertilisation is healthy and inspiring.

*I adored working at WAAPA! I loved the faculty and the students. It reminded me of the Julliard School here in New York City. [Barney O'Hanlon, SITI Company New York]*

We are the only school in the country to have a close association with an Aboriginal Performance course. We take seriously the imperative need for our students to grow alongside our brothers and sisters from the First Nations.

**Screen acting** One of the most significant points of difference between the WAAPA Acting Program and the other major drama schools is the amount of screen acting the course offers.

*The screen curriculum is expertly delivered. As a result, industry personnel throughout Australia are quick to sign students in their third year, a practice recently undertaken by Hollywood agents and casting directors who have likewise begun recruiting graduating students and alumni. In fact WAAPA now holds a showcase in Los Angeles, thereby further distinguishing it as an international powerhouse. [Dr Peter Zazzali, Kansas University] Appendix 4.*

*In particular, the screen-training component has greatly improved in recent years. [Erin O'Connor, Head of Acting, RGM Artists Pty Ltd] Appendix 5.*

*One of the most useful skills that I've retained is the shorthand I now have when it comes to taking direction. Especially working on 'Home and Away', everything moves exceptionally fast, and it's important to assimilate information quickly to adjust your performance. Through the Acting for Camera classes and guest masterclasses, WAAPA gave me the tools to do this efficiently. [Lukas Radovic, 2016 Graduate].*

## Coherence and Clarity of Purpose

*Consistency, in my view, is never a question of good luck but rather good planning. And so it is with WAAPA. Credit must surely be due to those who have been responsible for leading WAAPA to where it is today. As a theatrical agency and indeed as part of the broader entertainment industry in this country we owe them a great deal. [Simon Whipp, Theatrical Agent, Shannahan Management Pty Ltd] Appendix 2*

We believe in a whole-of-course approach and the development of a rich and authentic training environment to provide a sequence of quality experiences, gradually increasing in difficulty to help students reach their potential by the end of their training. The program is a highly complex and integrated sequence of experiences and challenges into which we continually feed the three foundational strands of the actors' skills - Voice, Movement and Acting.

*As someone who has studied and directed for drama schools throughout the world, my experience at WAAPA was exceptional...I found WAAPA's actors highly disciplined in their approach to the craft and elite in their abilities. Under the tutelage of world-class teachers ... students excel well beyond their peers at other institutions. [Dr Peter Zazalli, Ph.D Associate Chair Associate Professor, Artistic Director Kansas Repertory Theatre 8. Appendix 4*



The first year is an adventure of **DISCOVERY**. Upon entry, each student participates in a rigorous series of low stakes post entry diagnostic exercises that include specific Acting, Voice and Movement tasks. Strengths are identified and specific habits and idiosyncrasies are noted, thus giving each student a clear starting point for their training. To facilitate the creation of a bespoke approach for each individual student all information is collated and recorded for future reference. In their first year of training, the foundational practice for primary skills in Voice,

Movement and Acting are laid down. Classes are 8:30am – 6:00pm daily with skills classes in the morning and creative projects and rehearsals in the afternoon.

Throughout the course, Acting Units are divided into two categories. The first category focuses on teaching the **skills of acting** and the second category is the application of those skills in a **creative project**. In first year, all creative projects are performed in-house to staff only. This is to protect the young artists from social or public scrutiny before they are ready.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> year is the engine room of the training. Students continue to develop skills to a higher level of proficiency and are required to **APPLY** them throughout the year. Students are encouraged to apply a deep understanding of the actors' craft, to grow through the mastery and performance of challenging theatrical forms, and accomplish personal growth through a series of tailor made challenges.

As the study progresses through second and third year, the creative units are the rehearsal and performance of productions directed by invited guest artists. Students work alongside Production and Design students to realise the production. Staff provide hands on support to the students throughout rehearsals and performances, spending many hours beyond their teaching schedule to attend dress rehearsals, previews and performances.

These productions are small in production scale, played to small general public audiences, and not reviewed. This gives students the freedom to be bold, take risks, fail gloriously and challenge themselves in a protected environment.

*The students are engaged, skilled, open and approach the work in a sophisticated way. The staff are supportive and the work they do with the students is clearly extremely high, judging from the work I saw across the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year. It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with the students. [Dr Bagryana Popov, Director Ajax in Afghanistan] Appendix 6*



We encourage 3rd Year students to regard themselves as confident and expressive young artists and **EMBODY** their process with confidence, grace and ease. Staff/student relationships shift to a more mentor/mentee dynamic. They are encouraged to think strategically, and plan for success in the Performing Arts upon graduation.

We provide Advanced Skills classes in Semester 1. All classes are tailored to encourage students to achieve excellence in accordance with professional industry standards. In Semester 2 the emphasis shifts into full-time rehearsal of the two remaining productions, the completion of the Screen Acting Unit and preparations for the National Showcase. Students collaborate with the WASA Masters of Directing students and make six short films, which are sponsored by Channel 9 and broadcast on the 9 Network later in the year.

Every year we program a 5-play season of popular and classic plays. Students are cast according to their strengths and they are expected to perform to a professional standard. They play in bigger theatres, productions are fully supported by Production and Design students, performed to paying audiences and reviewed by the local press and media. [Appendix 7](#)

As part of their Professional Preparation Unit, students are introduced to industry bodies including Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), MediaSuper, and the Australia Council. They meet with casting directors from television networks and theatre companies; learn about funding, scholarship opportunities; further training opportunities in Australia and overseas; and, create a 5-year business plan.

*WAAPA enjoys a high level of industry reputation. The graduates have gone on to play leading roles in film, television and on stage both in Australia and internationally. The training and the distinct WAAPA culture has set up the acting graduates for a successful and lengthy professional life. [Dr Peggy Shannon, MFA, PhD, School of Performance Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada.] Appendix 8*

*I was able to audition for projects even before I had representation. 'Breath' directed by Simon Baker was one of these. Other credits in the last two years include 'Love Child', 'Harrow', 'The Secret Daughter'*



and 'Shiloh'. I am about to start filming my second feature film [as] the lead character. I owe this all to the training I received at WAAPA. [Megan Smart, Graduate 2017]

**The Staff** *In my view, the features that distinguish the WAAPA Acting course are the high quality of the permanent teaching staff across theatre and screen acting, and in voice and movement classes. The unique way in which these skills are integrated into the curriculum and into production contexts offer excellent learning opportunities for the students.* [Dr Melanie Beddie PhD (Performance), La Trobe University].

The caring ethos of the staff is essential for creating coherence and clarity of purpose in the program. Their passion for the work and for the development of individual students; their willingness to invest in them; to provide world class training; to provide critical feedback almost on a daily basis; and, to support their mental, physical and emotional growth is remarkable. The student-teacher relationship is much closer than most other academic courses.

*[Our lecturer] is always clear concise and understanding, dedicated and thoughtful. She always take the time to address any concerns and questions I have and will give up her own personal time to help.* [UTEI Semester 1 2018, A2 student]

*[Our lecturer] is a clear and driven unstoppable force of creative thinking and doing. She is always concise and has our best interests at heart. She fosters our artistic minds to be the best they can be at all times and is passionately driving us forward. She ignites fires under us to keep us on our toes and never lets us provide a sub-par end product.* [UTEI Semester 1, 2018, A1 student]

*[Our lecturer's] classes are always challenging, interesting and indispensable. He is dedicated, incredibly knowledgeable and gives so much of his own time to help his students. He offers an approach to voice that would be sorely missing from WAAPA without him. He always makes me question EVERYTHING.* [UTEI, Semester 1, 2018, A2 student]

The staff are artists in their own right and hold themselves with the same rigour they expect of their students. They must deliver the three disciplines of Actor Training - Acting, Voice and Movement with excellence; be exceptional collaborators and communicators; work generously together to help students successfully plait the three disciplines into their own practice; collaborate with an extended group of sessional trainers so they feed into each unit in a coherent way. Finally, they must be able to support guest directors in each new production. This requires a high degree of professional sensitivity and collegiate support for our visiting artists on the part of staff.

## CRITERION 2: INFLUENCE ON STUDENT LEARNING AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The student experience, student success, and student wellbeing are critical components of the program, contributing to unprecedented retention.



Figure 2: BA Acting Retention 2013 – 2017

**The audition.** The student experience starts when they apply and audition. The stakes are very high and applicants are usually very nervous. Taylor,(2016) suggests that “*auditions require as much attention as all other aspects of the courses when it comes to ensuring the wellbeing of the participants*”. Therefore we radically changed our Audition process in order to alleviate the stress of the audition and to bring it more in line with ECU values of Respect, integrity and Personal Excellence. Auditions now replicate the safe but challenging environment provided at WAAPA where collective learning is valued.

**Community building.** When incoming students arrive, their confidence building starts immediately as the WAAPA community warmly welcomes them. Many students come from interstate or overseas, often

leaving home for the first time and become deeply involved in their training, and off campus student life. It is imperative that we create a healthy environment at WAAPA for our students that is comfortable, grounded and safe.

A Peer Mentor program was introduced in 2018 whereby a 3<sup>rd</sup> Year student is paired with an incoming 1<sup>st</sup> Year student to provide support to a new student making the transition into the course. This was so successful; it has been rolled out to other WAAPA courses. In Orientation Week, the entire student cohort welcome the incoming first years. Current students perform welcoming songs and dances and the week concludes with a Welcome BBQ.

There are many opportunities to work with students from other departments. In 1st Year students team up with Bachelor of Performing Arts students for Text and Historical Studies, and with Aboriginal Performance students for Voice and Movement classes. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Years collaborate with Production and Design students in all productions. Throughout the training, students enthusiastically support their fellows' productions by attending shows multiple times by choice.

Students also collaborate with the WASA students on the web series and short film productions. Many of these relationships forged whilst at WAAPA carry on after graduation and a number of graduates have continued to make films together.

**Student health and wellbeing.** Student's mental wellbeing and emotional safety is a priority. In 2015, The Artist's Way Program was introduced teach self-reflection practices, how to develop a relationship with your creative self, how to deal with personal blocks, and the inner critic.

Psychology for Actors with Dr Shona Erskine for all three-year levels was introduced in 2016 for students to learn strategies to deal with anxiety, perfectionism, to improve mental health and well-being and how to build resilience and confidence.

In 2017, as part of the International Master Trainers Program, we invited Sarah Victoria and Rik Stowmen from the Perdekamp Emotion Method (PEMS), Germany to the school. PEM is at the very forefront of new training methods for actors and adopted in drama schools all around the world. It is a tool to connect young actors to emotions beyond their personal experience to provide them with a method to access a wide range of emotional expression safely.

**Student learning.** People often wonder how you can assess what is essentially a creative act. Nevertheless, it is possible. Acting is a craft, and like all crafts, there is a step-by-step process to learn. We teach a foundational process or 'system' laid out by Konstantin Stanislavski, "*the father of contemporary acting practice*" (Merlin, 2007) to cultivate the "art of experiencing" which contrasts the "art of representation".

Students are required to take responsibility for their learning and engage in a rigorous, daily self-reflection practice. They submit several skills journals throughout the year, and a Rehearsal Log Book and Self-Reflection analysis at the end of each production. They must demonstrate how they are understanding and applying the system to advance their practice. At the end of each production, there is a Debrief with all staff and students. Students are vigorously encouraged to differentiate between what is their taste (subjective) and their judgement (objective). These intentional practices contribute to outstanding student progression in the Acting program.

**Monitoring student learning.** Students' skills and personal progress are monitored regularly throughout their training. They are evaluated at weekly staff meetings. The 1<sup>st</sup> Years have weekly private tutorials with Acting, Voice and Movement staff, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Years by appointment. At the end of each semester, students are provided with a dossier giving extensive written feedback from every full-time and sessional staff member. They also have a one-on-one interview with the full panel of full time staff. In consultation with the student their progress is evaluated, achievements and challenges acknowledged and goals for the next stage of development identified. This pattern of student support continues throughout the three years and has contributed to increased student satisfaction since 2015.

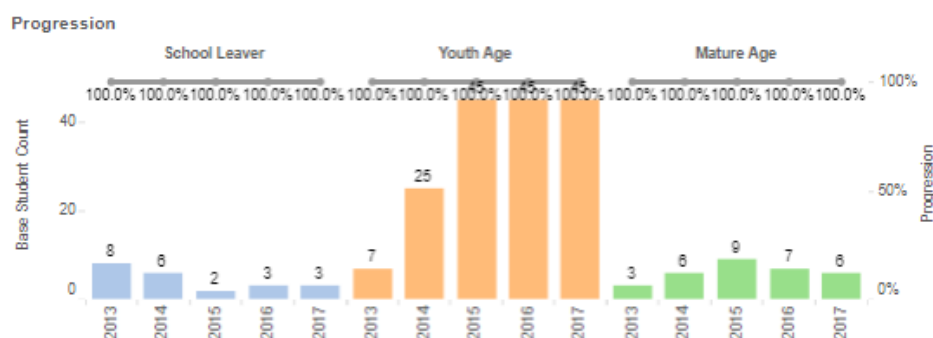


Figure 3: BA Acting Progression 2013 – 2017

### CRITERION 3: BREADTH OF IMPACT

#### Overall Satisfaction Unit

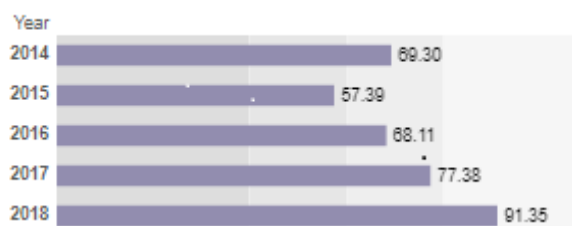


Figure 4: BA Acting Overall Satisfaction UETI 2014 – 2017

The Acting program has impact at the local, national and international levels. The outcomes of our efforts to spread the work of the program result in six distinct impacts: creative relationships; new Australian work; International Master Trainer program; community engagement; memorandums of understanding; and, employed students.

Strong **creative relationships** created between actors, directors and playwrights feed directly into the next generation of theatre creatives and the future arts community in Australia.

It supports the creation of **new Australian work** providing invaluable experience for the actor in training, who get to participate in the development of something written for them as opposed to interpreting a written text. In 2015, we commissioned award winning Australian playwright Reg Cribb (*Last Cab to Darwin*) to write a play about bullying, a contemporary issue with deep resonance for young people. The resulting play *Bullies* will be performed by current 2<sup>nd</sup> Year students this August.

In 2016, we teamed up with Playwriting Australia to co-commission four local playwrights Hellie Turner, Chris Isaacs, Finn O'Branigan and Gita Bezar to write four short plays performed by 2<sup>nd</sup> Year students in May 2017 under the umbrella title of *Petits Fours*. One of the plays *Alice Paws, or Bite the Hand* by Chris Isaacs was also presented at the Shanghai Asia Pacific Bureau Festival in April 2017.

*The health of the performing arts, particularly in this day of collaborative teams. Is dependent on strong artistic alliances. That these collaborations are cross generational are a vital means of transferring skills and knowledge along the line enable new and emerging artists to reap the benefit of the long learned expertise of their artistic elders. [Hellie Turner, playwright]*

In 2018, in collaboration with Fremantle Press we commissioned award winning local actor, writer and director Andrew Hale to adapt for the stage the Western Australian novel, *The Hope Fault* by Tracy Farr. The work will premiere in 2019. We also established a Writer in Residence with artists Reg Cribb in 2016 and Chris Isaacs in 2018.

The introduction of an **International Master Trainer Program** in 2016 has been a standout initiative. Such is the reputation of our program that we have been able to attract first class international artists at the top of their field in Movement, Voice, Film and Television and Acting. The impact on our students being able to train with these practitioners cannot be understated.

*Minderoo Survey Monkey Question: "The pedagogy and educational practice provided by the WAAPA Acting Department delivers a conservatoire training equal to the best drama training institutions in the world." STRONGLY AGREE – [Barney O'Hanlon, SITI Company, New York.]*



**Community Engagement.** Whilst the visiting artists are in Perth working with our students, we provide external workshops and Q&A's to local artists and arts organisations in association with arts companies, regional youth theatres, Year 11 and 12 drama students as well as emerging and established Aboriginal performers and theatre makers. The flow on effect of these workshops is that it enriches and grows the cultural capacity of the WA arts landscape through dialogue and essential upskilling of its artists.

**Memorandum of Understanding.** Collaborations with international visiting directors Hugh Hodgart from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow and Peggy Shannon, Chair of the School of Performance, Ryerson University, Toronto have resulted in the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding with WAAPA/ECU. This will provide many positive opportunities for all organisations including staff and student exchanges and the sharing of ideas and projects. Below are two examples of how these exchanges have already impacted on staff and students and strengthened the acting program.

Example 1. Teresa Moore, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Acting student, also a graduate of the WAAPA Aboriginal Theatre Certificate IV course, impressed Peggy Shannon so much that she invited her to travel back to Toronto with her to perform in her production of *Home*, a devised piece of theatre about the current refugee diaspora in the world. This was a life changing opportunity for Teresa.

Example 2. In early 2017, Head of Performance Andrew Lewis travelled to Scotland with 3<sup>rd</sup> Year students Frazer Lee and Natasha Vickery to participate in a short film co-production between WAAPA and the RCS. They filmed in Scotland for two weeks and then returned to Perth with students from the RCS to complete filming in Western Australia. Andrew also travelled to Toronto in December 2017 to direct a production for Ryerson students, and conduct masterclasses.

**Employed students** Perhaps the most important impact is seen in the employability of the students that we graduate. We successfully train artists for both national and international work. Their employability is directly in response the growing acting program and its relevance in the industry.

In the last three years, graduates have been employed in Australian television and movie dramas including *Barracuda*, *The Heights*, *Harrow*, *Very Small Business*, and *Tomorrow When the War Began* for the ABC; *Doctor Doctor* and *Love Child* for Channel 9, *A Place to Call Home* and *Fighting Season* for Foxtel and *Breath*. Graduates have worked for major Australian theatre companies in *Measure for Measure*, Sport for Jove (NSW) *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Malthouse Theatre (VIC)/Black Swan State Theatre Centre (WA); *Assassins*, *The Lighthouse Girl*, *Switzerland*, *Let the Right One In*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, Black Swan State Theatre Company. Graduates have had international success with Hollywood blockbusters *Thor: Ragnarock* and *Power Rangers*, the upcoming *Hotel Mumbai*; also television series *Stranger Things* on Netflix; *Our Girl*, BBC and *The State* for UK Channel 4.

#### **CRITERION 4: ADDRESSING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY**

In the last three years, we have rolled out a suite of activities to address Equity and Diversity that positively impact the *whole* student experience, including: auditioning all potential students; actively creating a diverse environment; engaging students with Aboriginal culture and content; growing gender equality; and ensuring a caring environment for students and staff.

**We audition everyone who applies.** Entry into the course is talent-based. We audition everyone who applies. We run audition masterclasses each year to help applicants improve their chances at audition.

**Multicultural.** We look for students who reflect the multi-cultural nature of Australian society. Currently in the program, we have students from diverse cultural backgrounds including, Vietnam, Korea, Ethiopia, Laos, South America, South Africa, Sweden, Singapore and second generation Irish, Greek, Italian and Lebanese people and two Aboriginal students, from Darwin and from Alice Springs.

**Aboriginal Performance.** We believe the shared knowledge and experience will translate into the stories our graduates will tell in the future. We provide many opportunities for the students to learn together and from each other. At the end of their certificate course, all Aboriginal students audition for the Acting Program and since 2015 five indigenous students have been accepted into the program.

*Monday morning warm-ups with [Lecturer] and the Aboriginal theatre performance student is a great way to start the day. I think its super beneficial as well, to be able to work and learn alongside and get to know the Aboriginal students. [UTEI, Semester 1 2018, A1 student]*

**Gender equality.** We have been vigorously pursuing gender equality in the arts for the last three years and have made significant shifts in the direction of gender equality by actively engaging women directors, seeking plays written by women and finding better roles for women.

The scarcity of material providing equal (and good) roles for women is one of the reasons we actively pursue commissioning new work. Manifesting an adaptation of the West Australian novel *The Hope Fault* by Tracy Farr with a brilliant female central character is the latest project.

**Sexual harassment policy.** Since February 2018 and in response to the #MeToo impact on the Performing Arts industry in particular, our department has been at the forefront of rolling out a series of discussions with all WAAPA Performing Arts staff and students. We have been active in the development a series of policies around appropriate behaviour in the classroom, rehearsal room, in theatres and film and television. The performing arts industry has called on all Drama Training Institutions to lead the change, so graduates entering the industry will be better informed and prepared to lead the change that we want to see.

*Having a conversation about sexual harassment in class has thoroughly informed and eased my mind on moving forward with my rights as an actor in the industry and throughout. I feel safe knowing that there are policy guidelines already written out to advise me when handling scenes involving sexual intimacy, and I'm currently using these guidelines in class! It makes me feel so proud to be a part of an institution at the forefront of this movement of change. [ A1 Student.]*

We are adapting our program in 2019 to include Intimacy Director Workshops, in the same way as we teach fight and dance choreography.

## References

---

1. Beddie, M (2016). *The Actor and the Embodied Word – Actor Training Pedagogy and Lineages in Australia* (Doctoral dissertation) La Trobe University
2. Merlin, B (2007). *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*, Nick Hern Books, London
3. Moor, A (2013). *Contemporary Actor Training in Australia* (Doctoral dissertation) Queensland University of Technology
4. Taylor, L (2016). *Actor Training and Emotions – Finding a Balance* (Doctoral dissertation) Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
5. Van Den Eynde, J., Fisher, A., Sonn, C.(2014) *Pride, Passion + Pitfalls - Working in the Australian Entertainment Industry* (Doctoral dissertation) Victorian University