

monkey baa

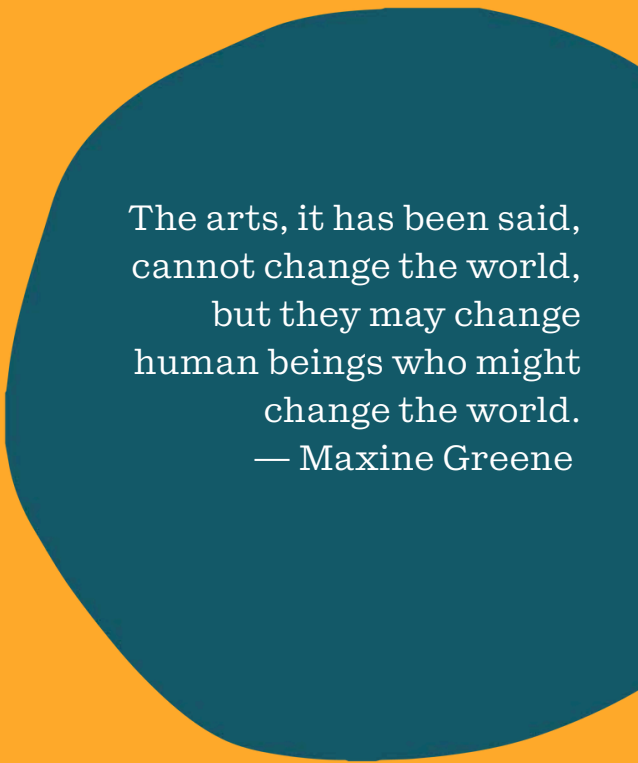


Annual Report
2024

Acknowledgement of Country

Monkey Baa respectfully acknowledges the custodians of this nation and honours their enduring cultural and spiritual connection to the lands, waters and seas. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, on whose lands we work, live and share stories.

Monkey Baa tours across many nations. Our offices are in Sydney and Brisbane. We respectfully acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and the Turrbal and Jagera people in Brisbane and its surrounds.



The arts, it has been said,
cannot change the world,
but they may change
human beings who might
change the world.
— Maxine Greene

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Hello!

Message from the Chair

2024 was a year of renewal for Monkey Baa. We embraced change, made difficult but necessary decisions, and worked hard to ensure the company's future remains strong. That work is now starting to bear fruit, positioning us to move forward with confidence.

I was honoured to join Monkey Baa as Chair in June 2024, taking over from Libbie Doherty, who stepped down after six years of dedicated service. I want to thank Libbie for her leadership and unwavering commitment to the company. I also extend my deepest gratitude to Kylie Blundell, who served for over nine years, and Sara Hamka, who contributed over six years of expertise and passion. Their dedication has helped shape Monkey Baa into the company it is today. This year, we also welcomed three new Board members, and we feel incredibly fortunate to have such a talented and committed group guiding the organisation.

We continued to present award-winning productions, developed exciting new works, and created a new strategy around social impact, ensuring that theatre remains accessible to young people who might not otherwise can experience it. We look forward to growing this work in 2025. We also took an important step towards securing our future with the exciting news that Monkey Baa was invited into Creative Australia's two-year operational funding program.

While 2025 will bring new challenges, we are now in a position to focus fully on what we do best—creating and touring theatre that inspires, empowers and connects young people. None of this would be possible without our incredible artists, staff, donors, and supporters, who believe in the power of theatre to change lives. Thank you for being part of this journey—I look forward to all that we will achieve together in the year ahead.



Professor Judith McLean
Chair of the Board

From the Executive Director

2024 was a year of big decisions and forward thinking. We refined our focus, ensuring we are in the strongest position to create and present theatre for young audiences for years to come. That meant not just producing and presenting great work, but also investing in the future—through social impact, fundraising and international engagement.

Theatre Unlimited allowed us to break down barriers so more young people could access our work. We piloted programs with Camp Quality and Girls & Boys Brigade, ensuring that young people facing challenges—from medical issues to financial hardship—could experience live theatre.

On the international front, I had the privilege of attending the Hong Kong Performing Arts Exchange, reconnecting with colleagues and exploring future touring opportunities in Hong Kong, Singapore, and beyond. After several years of focusing inward, it was exciting to look outward again, opening new possibilities for our work on the global stage.

There were challenges, of course, but we remained focused on what mattered—creating incredible theatre and making sure as many young people as possible could experience it. With new partnerships, growing support from our donors, and a strong team, we're in a great place as we step into 2025.



Kevin du Preez
Executive Director

From the Artistic Director

Storytelling is at the heart of everything we do. In 2024, we brought beloved stories to life for young audiences across the country, from our tours of *The Peasant Prince*, *Possum Magic*, and *Edward the Emu* to a special Melbourne season of *Josephine Wants to Dance*, which will tour nationally in 2025.

Alongside touring, we continued developing new work. *Where is the Green Sheep?* moved through script and creative development, with input from young people shaping the production. *Detention* had multiple creative developments and is now ready for pre-production. While *The Duck* and *the Darklings* was paused due to funding, we're committed to bringing it back in 2027.

We also deepened our connection with schools. With fewer excursions and no dedicated theatre space for an education season, we adapted by expanding our incursion programs. We worked closely with schools like Bankstown West Public School, ensuring students played a role in the creative process. Our National Teaching Artist Tours and teacher workshops provided hands-on theatre experiences that inspired both students and educators.

2024 was about storytelling, collaboration, and creativity. As we move into 2025, I'm excited about what's ahead—new productions, deeper engagement with communities, and fresh opportunities to share our work. Thank you to everyone who helped bring these stories to life.



Eva Di Cesare
Artistic Director

A snapshot of 2024

a year of focus, adaptation and
foundation-building



42
communities visited

139
Performances



1
New work created

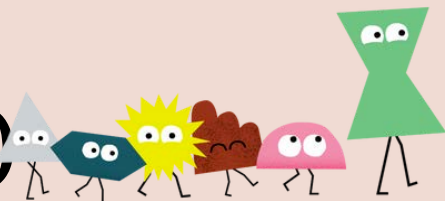


170 000
website visits

5
Productions presented



80
Artists and workers employed



7
Social impact
partners

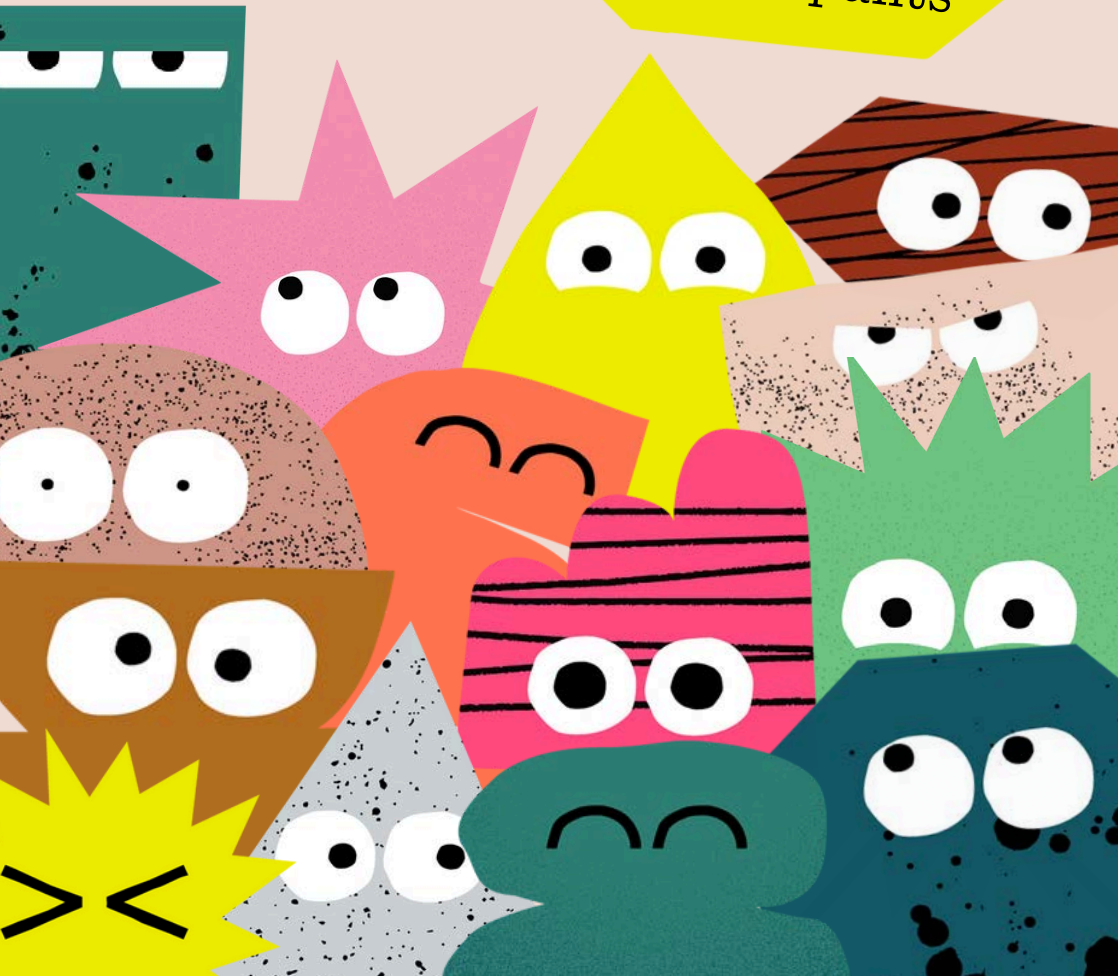


36,815

audience
members

3,757

student
participants



Company report

Present and tour theatre for young audiences

We continued to bring award-winning theatre to young audiences across Australia. Our national tours reached communities in both regional and metropolitan areas. In 2024, we toured *The Peasant Prince* and presented *Possum Magic* and *Edward the Emu*, bringing these beloved stories to audiences across the country.

We also staged *Josephine Wants to Dance* with a special season in Melbourne, setting the stage for its national tour in 2025. Through these productions, we continued to inspire young audiences and connect communities with live theatre.

Created and commissioned new Australian works

We developed bold and inclusive stories that connected with young audiences. Collaborating with both emerging and established artists, we continued to create theatre that speaks to the experiences of young people.

In 2024, we progressed two major new productions. *Where is the Green Sheep?* moved through script development and its first creative development, while *Detention* underwent several Creative Developments with a group of artists and is now ready for pre-production in 2025.

While *The Duck and the Darklings* was initially planned for further development, funding constraints led us to pause the project, with plans to revisit it in 2027.

Increase social impact and engagement

2024 was a significant year for us to explore and learn about social impact. We developed a Social Impact Strategy, which we will implement in 2025, strengthening our commitment to using theatre as a force for change.

Through Theatre Unlimited, we expanded access to theatre for young people facing disadvantage, including those in foster care, experiencing medical challenges or living in poverty.

We completed several pilot charity programs, partnering with organisations like Camp Quality and Girls & Boys Brigade to amplify our impact. With the support of experts, we developed a Theory of Change, providing a clear framework for growth. Heading into 2025, we have a detailed plan to implement our strategy, including employing dedicated staff and expanding our partnerships to reach even more young people.

Provide creative learning opportunities

2024 was the first year we operated without a dedicated theatre space for an education season, so we adapted by delivering incursion programs in schools. It was a challenging shift, with teacher shortages and fewer excursions limiting opportunities, but we are proud of the work we completed. Despite these challenges, we expanded our reach, particularly in regional locations, including NSW.

We continued to inspire young people through creative learning programs, linking theatre to the classroom. Our school workshops, incursions and resources helped students express themselves and build confidence.

Partnerships with schools like Bankstown West Public School ensured meaningful engagement, while our National Teaching Artist Tours deepened young people's experience of theatre through interactive workshops.

Develop artists and our industry

We remained committed to supporting the next generation of theatre makers. Through the Penny Cook Creative Associate Program, we provided artists with opportunities to expand their practice while contributing to our vision.

In 2024, our second Creative Associate, Felicity Nicol, developed a community project in Port Macquarie, working with local LGBTQIA+ young people on To My Future Self. This powerful project culminated in a presentation of the work in December.

We will continue to seek funding to expand this program, with plans to establish Monkey Baa Lab in late 2025 and move towards full implementation in 2026, pending funding.

Organisational update

2024 was a year of transformation for Monkey Baa. We officially moved out of ARA Darling Quarter Theatre, marking a significant step in our long-term strategy to focus solely on creating and touring theatre for young audiences. This shift allowed us to redirect our energy toward developing new work and expanding our national and international reach.

We also began implementing a three-year fundraising strategy, laying the groundwork to strengthen our financial sustainability. Transitioning away from venue management required adjustments across the organisation, and while it was a challenging financial year, we adapted by working efficiently and remaining committed to our vision.

Despite the difficulties, the team embraced the change with determination. By focusing on our core mission and future growth, we navigated the year successfully and are now positioned to build on these foundations in 2025.

Present and tour theatre for young people



- National and regional tours
- Metropolitan tours
- New work presentations
- International engagement

National and regional touring

Based on the book by Li Cunxin,
Illustrated by Anne Spudvilas.
Adapted for the stage by Eva Di Cesare,
Sandie Eldridge and Tim McGarry

“Very well done and
the kids loved the
typical family
interactions and
were totally
spell bound”
– Nerida Reid



The Peasant Prince

National and regional tour
May – September 2024

Cast

- Agnes Choi
- Alan Zhu
- Gerwin Widjaja
- Jonathan Lim
- Egan Sun-Bin
(Understudy)

Crew

- Joel Montgomery
- Kirsty
Mangelsdorf
- Kirsty Walker

DECJUBA
FOUNDATION





The children's version of Li Cunxin's iconic autobiography, *Mao's Last Dancer*, *The Peasant Prince* is an extraordinary production of a remarkable story – of a peasant boy turned dance giant. It will inspire and enthrall young audiences.

The *Peasant Prince* tells the remarkable true story of a 10-year-old peasant boy's journey from impoverished rural China to the international dance scene. This is a story of courage, resilience and unwavering hope.

Li is plucked from his village in rural China and sent to a ballet academy in the big city. He leaves everything and everyone he loves, including his family. Over years of gruelling training, this boy transforms from an impoverished peasant to a giant of the international dance scene. Li's courage, resilience and unwavering hope for a better life for himself and his family makes *The Peasant Prince* a story to ignite our own aspirations to be the best person we can be.

Touring locations

NSW

Sydney
Belrose
Parramatta
Penrith
Shoalhaven
Wagga Wagga
Orange
Griffith
Wyong
Taree

NT

Darwin

QLD

Cairns
Rockhampton
Mackay
Logan
Bundaberg

VIC

Mildura
Wangaratta
Bendigo
Warrnambool
Colac
Geelong
Frankston
Narre Warren
Bairnsdale
Shepperton

100%

of presenters rated the
show quality very good
or excellent

91 performances

30 communities

14,973 audience

Based on the book by Mem Fox and Julie Vivas. Adapted for the stage by Eva Di Cesare and Sandie Eldridge.

'It wasn't
just a show;
it made me feel
like a kid again'



Possum Magic

Metropolitan tour

January, April and July 2024

Cast (January)

- Ebony Tucker
- Josh Virgona
- Will Bartolo
- Sarah Woods
- Sarah Greenwood

Cast (July)

- Josh Virgona
- Sarah Woods
- Sarah Greenwood
- Teale Howie

Cast (April)

- Josh Virgona
- Will Bartolo
- Sarah Woods
- Sarah Greenwood

Crew

- Cally Bartley
- Kirsty Mangelsdorf
- Kirsty Walker
- Dana Ioppolo

ShowTex



Metropolitan touring

91%
of young audience
surveyed loved the show
(another 8% liked it a little!)



Mem Fox and Julie Vivas' beloved picture book 'Possum Magic' has enchanted children for over 40 years. Seen by over 250,000 young people across Australia, Monkey Baa's delightful adaptation returns to the stage.

Grandma Poss loves making magic. She makes wombats blue and kookaburras pink. She makes dingoes smile and emus shrink. But one day, when danger arrives, Grandma Poss uses her most magical spell to make Hush invisible. Possum Magic takes us on a fantastical journey to cities around Australia to find the food that makes Hush visible again.

Featuring spellbinding magic, puppetry and original music, Monkey Baa's award-winning team has turned the whimsical world of the book into an exciting live experience for audiences aged 3-8 and their families.

Touring locations

NSW

The Concourse, Chatswood
Coliseum Theatre, Western Sydney
ARA Darling Quarter Theatre, Sydney
The Civic Theatre, Newcastle

QLD

QUT Gardens Theatre, Brisbane

VIC

The Alexander, Clayton
Geelong Performing Arts Centre

46 performances
7 communities
12,517 audience

Metropolitan tour

Based on the books by Sheena Knowles and Rod Clement. Written for the stage and directed by Eva Di Cesare.

“Monkey Baa’s work makes kids think as well as feel.”
Jackie French
AM



Edward the Emu

Metropolitan tour
September – October 2024

Cast

- Mathew Lee
- Paul Grabovac
- Tina Jackson
- Eva Di Cesare
(understudy)

Crew

- Joel Montgomery
- Cally Bartley





Touring locations

NSW

The Sydney Opera House, Sydney

100%

of presenters rated the
show quality very good or
excellent

18 performances
6,316 audience

Edward is bored with his lot. Being the only emu at the zoo leaves him feeling glum and under the impression that the grass is greener in another animal's enclosure. Convinced that the other creatures are more popular, Edward breaks ranks in search of fun and finds Edwina along the way!

Meanwhile, the zookeepers are in hot pursuit to restore order to the zoo. Come on an adventure with the emus as they hilariously navigate their feathered existential crises, seeking to find their place in the world.

Featuring exceptional, world-class puppetry, an original score and inventive storytelling.

Metropolitan touring

Based on the book by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley. Adapted by Eva Di Cesare, Sandie Eldridge and Tim McGarry.



Josephine Wants to Dance

Metropolitan tour

October 2024

Cast

- Brodie Masini
- Hannah Gwatkin
- Lily Boulderstone
- Nina Carmen
- Callum Slater (Understudy)
- Georgia Unsworth (Understudy)

Crew

- Kirsty Mangelsdorf
- Martin Kinnane





A hilarious musical about the importance of believing in yourself and realising your dreams and... a dancing kangaroo! Based on the picture book by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley, this delightful musical is a must see!

Josephine is a kangaroo who loves to dance. Her little brother, Joey, tells her kangaroos don't dance, they hop - but Josephine continues to point her toes and leap through the air. When a ballet troupe comes to the sleepy town of Shaggy Gully, Josephine desperately wants to dance like the ballerinas in pink tutus and silk ballet shoes.

"The show was not only entertaining but had a beautiful message about perseverance and self-expression that really resonated with me as a mum raising a curious and determined little boy."

On the day of the first performance the Ballet Company is in trouble. The prima ballerina twists her ankle, and the understudy has a splinter in her toe. Who can dance the lead role? Josephine's talents are called upon to help save the day. Can she do it, and more importantly, does it matter that she's a kangaroo?

Touring locations

vic

The Arts Centre Melbourne

11 performances
3,009 audience

New work presentation



To My Future Self

New work
presentation
December 2024

Led by Monkey Baa's Creative Associate, Felicity Nicol, and supported by headspace Port Macquarie and NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

Young artists

- Astro, Bea, K, Pearl, Tom, Ranen, Isla and Zea

Creatives

- Felicity Nicol - Creative Lead/Director
- Sheanna Russon - Assistant Director
- Scott Parker - Podcast Producer
- Anna McGirr - Videographer
- Alexander Andrews - Workshop Facilitator



Communities
& Justice



headspace

New work presentation



“you guys have such an awesome community and it’s great how you guys treat everyone and just.. love us for being us”
– To My Future Self Participant

To My Future Self is a creative arts mentorship program for LGBTQIA+ youth in Port Macquarie and surrounds, led by Creative Associate Felicity Nicol.

Supported by headspace Port Macquarie and the NSW Government’s Youth Opportunities program, this six-month initiative provided young queer people with the opportunity to engage in theatre-making, develop advocacy and leadership skills and connect with artists. Through a series of workshops, participants explored their identities, voiced their experiences and collaborated to create a new work that celebrated the diversity and strength of their community.

The program culminated in a powerful performance at Port Macquarie Glasshouse in December, showcasing the voices and stories of the young artists involved.

Location

NSW

Port Macquarie

100%
of presenters rated the show quality very good or excellent

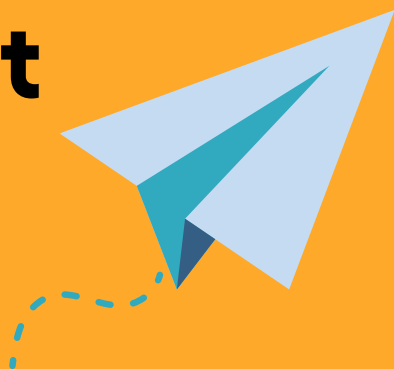
1 presentation
114 audience

International engagement

In 2024, Monkey Baa began exploring a return to international touring. With a strong history of touring to North America before COVID, we are now looking at new opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region.

In August 2024, our Executive Director attended the Hong Kong Performing Arts Exchange, connecting with partners in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore, as well as international colleagues from Canada, Africa, and Europe. This successful trip has sparked ongoing discussions around potential tours to Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan.

Thanks to the support of our donors and Creative Australia, Monkey Baa also led an international gathering of theatre for young audiences in Hong Kong, partnering with several Australian companies to strengthen global collaboration.



25 International
connections made



Create and commission new Australian work

- 27 artists engaged
- 6 creative development weeks
- 2 new works
- In 2024, we worked with over 27 artists to progress the development of the following new works.



Detention

Commissioned by Monkey Baa, co-written by Callan Purcell and Kobra Sayyadi, directed by Randa Sayed, and created in collaboration with the Hazara community - 'Detention' is an edge-of-your seat theatrical experience.

Based on the novel by Tristan Bancks, this production explores the refugee experience, centring on themes of displacement, belonging, and shared humanity. Developed in collaboration with Hazara artists and young people, Detention seeks to ignite conversations, using theatre as a catalyst for truth-telling and change.

Detention tells the compelling tale of two young people from disparate worlds finding each other amidst a figurative minefield: Sima, a Hazara refugee fleeing a detention centre when her visa has been rejected, and Dan, a marginalised boy raised in a caravan park in regional Australia. Their shared quest for a sense of home and safety binds them together.

In 2024, we completed several creative developments, including exploratory sessions focused on script development. Our visits to Holroyd High School enabled us to test these ideas with students. The script is now nearly finalised, and the show is prepared to enter pre-production in 2025.



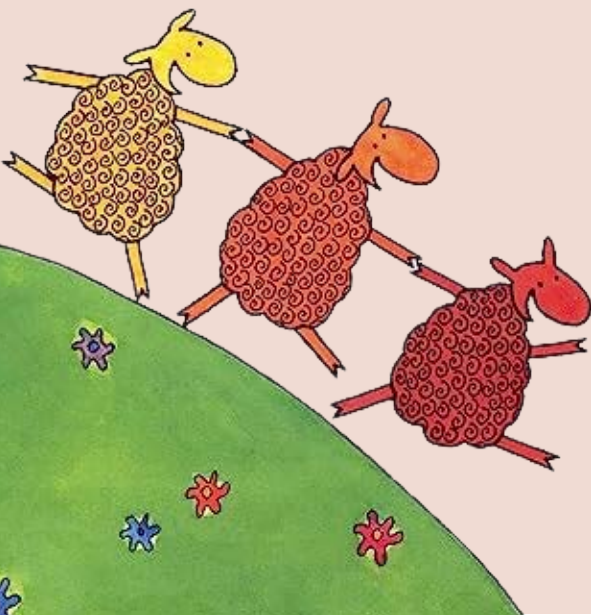
Where is the Green Sheep?

Where is the Green Sheep? is a co-production with Queensland Performing Arts Centre's Out of the Box Festival in association with Arts Centre Melbourne, Sydney Opera House and The Art House, Wyong. Written for the stage and directed by Eva Di Cesare.

Where is the Green Sheep? is an immersive visual theatre experience based on the beloved children's book by Mem Fox and Judy Horacek. We meet the Blue Sheep who loves his blue flowers and the Red Sheep who loves to cartwheel in the fields, the Bath Sheep who loves bubbles and the Bed Sheep who loves to bounce... But where IS that Green Sheep?

Blending puppetry and animation, this beautiful production invites young audiences to join our three farmers on their quest to find the elusive green sheep. Co-created with students from Bankstown West Public School, this delightful production integrates their voices as narrators, ensuring the work resonates deeply with young audiences.

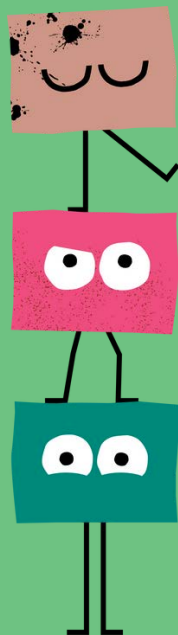
In 2024, Eva Di Cesare developed the script, including an artistic retreat dedicated to focusing on new work creation. The creative team was assembled, and the initial Creative Development was completed in December 2024.



Create new Australian work



Increase social impact and engagement



At Monkey Baa, we believe every young person deserves a front-row seat to creativity.

We know that theatre can have a profound impact on young people's lives.

Theatre can:

- Improve academic performance.
- Boost cognitive skills and creativity.
- Improve mental wellbeing.
- Model diversity and different perspectives.
- Develop deeper understanding of emotions.

Theatre can make young people feel and see how they belong.



Theatre Unlimited

In 2024, Monkey Baa developed a new Social Impact Strategy, including a Theory of Change, to expand access to live theatre and remove barriers for young people who might otherwise miss out.

Theatre Unlimited encompasses a range of programs aimed at breaking down barriers so more young people can experience live performing arts and their transformative benefits.

Our focus is on young people in regional and remote communities, those attending under-resourced schools, children managing medical challenges, or those in Out-of-Home care. With your support, we aim to reach 30,000 young people experiencing disadvantage every year.

Theatre Access Program

- Free tickets and transport

Partner for impact

- Camp Quality
- Girls and Boys Brigade

Youth engagement

- Youth advisory Council
- Work experience
- Co-creation program



Theatre Access Program

2024 was the pilot year for this exciting new program. We thank the Matana Foundation for Young People who supported us in getting the program off the ground.

Designed to do more than just offer free tickets; it's about making the entire theatre-going experience accessible. We focus on eliminating the hurdles that can make such experiences seem out of reach, particularly the cost of transportation, which is often a major obstacle.

We prioritise schools and community groups needing support, especially those with limited resources, in regional and remote areas, and schools with an ICSEA below 1000.

NSW

- Leppington Public School (70 students)
- Camp Quality (30 tickets to Edward the Emu at Sydney Opera House)
- Northern Sydney Pod School (Special Rehearsal viewing)

QLD

- Camp Quality (30 tickets to Possum Magic at QUT Gardens Theatre)
- Pop-up performance at Queensland Children's Hospital

VIC

- Camp Quality (60 tickets to Josephine Wants to Dance at Arts Centre Melbourne)

Leppington Public School's first theatre experience with Monkey Baa

In 2024, Monkey Baa worked closely with Leppington Public School to bring 70 students to the theatre for an unforgettable experience. For many, this was their first time seeing a live performance.

Accessing theatre can be difficult for many schools, especially those with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leppington Public School, with a large number of foster care students, faced several barriers—the main barriers were transportation costs and logistics.

Through one of our staff members connected with the foster care system, we built a partnership with the school's principal and several foster carers to make this trip happen.

Monkey Baa stepped in to arrange the buses, working with a local company to ensure everyone could attend. We even adjusted the timing of the show to suit the school's schedule. After the performance, we sent our teaching artists to the school to run post-show workshops, making the experience even more impactful. One student said, "I've never been to the theatre before. It was such a great experience."

The feedback was incredible. Many of these children had never had the chance to see live theatre. One teacher shared, "Without this program, our students wouldn't get these learning opportunities or be able to go to the theatre. This was essential for them."

At Monkey Baa, we believe in the power of theatre to spark creativity and change lives. This partnership with Leppington Public School shows just how important it is to break down barriers like cost and access, so every child can experience the magic of live performance.

A special rehearsal for The Northern Sydney Pod School

When a group of families from The Northern Sydney Pod School reached out to us, explaining their unique needs, we worked together to find a solution. Their children, who face extreme risks from viral infections, cannot attend traditional theatre performances. So, we invited them to a private dress rehearsal of *Josephine Wants to Dance* that was adapted to their health requirements. The cast and crew even wore respirator masks to ensure the children could safely enjoy the experience. The performance became a first-time theatre experience for many of the children.

After the show, an outdoor Q&A session allowed them to ask the cast and crew all about the production—from costumes to quick changes.

One parent shared, “The opportunity you created was so special, thoughtful and kind... The children were absolutely delighted.”

For us, it was a privilege to meet these families and share a love of storytelling that left everyone inspired.



Partner for impact

Our key focus throughout 2024, was establishing and building meaningful partnerships with a range of partners to support and grow our social impact initiatives.

We established partnerships with Tanarra Social Purpose and BrandKind to support the development of our theory of change and impact measurement frameworks, as well as Culture Counts to support our data collection and analysis.

We also established a number of community and charitable partners to extend and enhance the impact of our theatre unlimited program, to reach young people most in need across Australia.

Camp Quality

In 2024, we established a strong partnership with Camp Quality to support the incredible work they do with young people and their families facing cancer. Through our theatre unlimited program, we provided tickets to Monkey Baa shows in New South Wales and Queensland. We are planning to expand this program in 2025.



Girls & Boys Brigade

Girls & Boys Brigade is a charity based in New South Wales that supports children and young people through a range of educational and recreational activities. In 2024, we continued our ongoing partnership with this incredible organisation by providing tickets to our shows to the young people they support. We looking forward to continuing this partnership in 2025.



CultureCounts





Youth engagement

Youth Advisory Council

Monkey Baa's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) provides young people with a platform to engage with theatre, share their perspectives, and shape our work. While our older YAC members were invited to productions and creative developments, our focus this year shifted to our junior YAC, working with Year 3 and 4 students at Bankstown West Public School.

Across four visits in 2024, we explored storytelling, creativity, and theatre-making, ensuring young voices remain central to our work. YAC continues to be a vital way for young people to connect with theatre, gain insights into the arts, and contribute to the future of Monkey Baa.

Work experience

Each year we welcome students to join the Monkey Baa team and learn how an arts organisation runs, from programming to direction, venue management to marketing, and producing to play development. Our work experience program develops skills and knowledge in making and presenting theatre and prepares young people for a career in the arts.

In 2024, we welcomed 5 students to the company.

- Jessica, Bradfield Senior College
- Juniper, Sydney Secondary College
- Luke, De La Salle Catholic College Caringbah
- Mariah, Montgrove College
- Ajila, CathWest Innovation College Loyola Campus



Co-creation program

In 2024, Monkey Baa deepened its commitment to co-creation, ensuring young people played an active role in shaping new work. Through workshops and direct collaboration, students contributed their voices, ideas, and feedback to our productions.

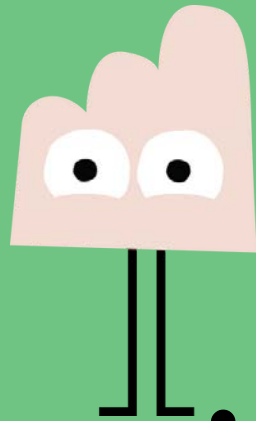
Where is the Green Sheep? was developed with Bankstown West Public School students, who participated in script workshops and early voice recording sessions. Their input helped shape the adaptation's creative direction.

Detention, adapted from Tristan Bancks' novel, engaged Holroyd High School drama students in script development and feedback. Their contributions influenced the play's structure and themes.

To My Future Self, in partnership with Headspace Port Macquarie, provided LGBTQIA+ youth with a platform for creative expression. Participants co-designed the project, led writing and performance workshops, and developed a podcast sharing their experiences.

In 2025, Monkey Baa will further its commitment to young artists by casting emerging performers (under 25) in Detention, launching a Young Artists in Residence program, and introducing an animation internship in partnership with the Department of Education. By embedding young voices in every stage of creation, we continue to empower and inspire through theatre.





Provide creative learning opportunities

- National Teaching Artist tours
- Schools Workshop Program
- Learning resources
- Teacher professional development

Central to our work is our Learning Program where we make theatre more accessible in an educational context.



National Teaching Artists Tours

For every Monkey Baa production, we deliver pre-show drama-based workshops across the country, helping students engage with the performance before they step into the theatre. In 2024, our teaching artists worked with over 2,200 students ahead of their experience of The Peasant Prince, deepening their understanding and connection to the story.

We prioritise employing artists from the regions where we tour. These artists bring a local perspective, strengthening community connections and making the experience even more meaningful for young audiences.

95% of teachers believed the workshop fostered creativity among students, with activities designed to encourage imaginative expression.

Our Teaching Artist Tour reflects our commitment to reaching young people wherever they live, ensuring that theatre is accessible, engaging and relevant to their world.

Tours

The Peasant Prince
2,200 student participants
119 workshops
25 communities

Teaching Artists

- Alexander Andrews (NSW, ACT)
- Eva Di Cesare (NSW)
- Jono Chan (NSW, NT, QLD)
- Julie Davis (VIC)

Schools Workshop Program

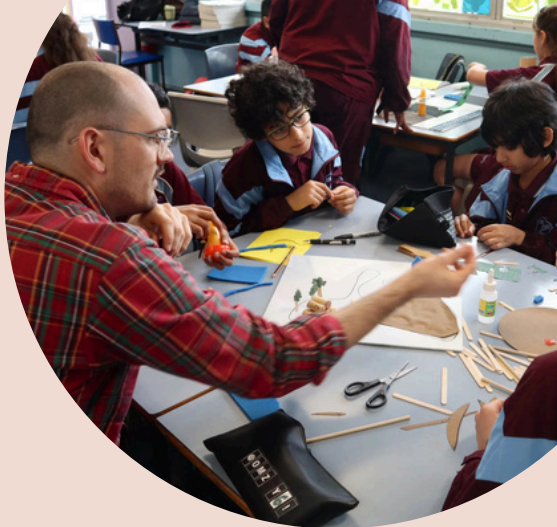
Monkey Baa's workshops bring the magic of theatremaking to thousands of students across Australia. Designed for Early Learning through to Stage 6, these dynamic sessions help young people build confidence, develop creative skills, and explore storytelling in an engaging and accessible way.

In 2024, we expanded our impact beyond schools by piloting workshops with community groups and libraries, including Girls and Boys Brigade. This initiative is part of our broader Social Impact Strategy, ensuring more young people—regardless of background—can access enriching arts experiences.

95% of teachers reported the workshops built confidence in their students.

In 2025, we plan to extend these workshops to more community and charity groups, as well as expand our reach to regional areas. By making theatre more accessible, we continue to empower young people through creativity and connection.

“Our students gained confidence and enthusiasm, with many going on to join school productions or pursue further study in the creative arts.” Principal, Bankstown West Public School



Schools

- Barker College, 3 workshops
- Brisbane Waters Secondary, 7 workshops
- Cedars Christian College, 3 workshops
- Clovelly Out of School Care, 2 workshops
- Farmhouse Montessori School, 1 workshops
- Glendale East Primary School, 4 workshops
- Kesser Torah College, 4 workshops
- Northside Montessori School, 5 workshops
- Queenwood School for Girls, 10 workshops
- St Aloysius' College, 1 workshop
- St Maroun's College, 2 workshops
- Trinity Grammar School, 3 workshops

Community groups and libraries

- The Girls & Boys Brigade, 4 workshops
- Epping Library, 1 workshop
- Liverpool City Library, 2 workshops
- Sutherland Library, 3 workshops
- Werribee River Association, 1 workshop
- Sydney Opera House, 4 workshops
- Castle Hill Library, 2 workshops

Workshops: 62
Participants: 1557



Learning resources

In 2024, Monkey Baa developed new learning resources to support teachers and students in exploring theatre. Linked to our productions, these resources take students behind the scenes, offering insights into script development, design, rehearsal, and performance.

Our classroom learning packs provide engaging activities to deepen students' understanding of theatre, while our workshops offer hands-on experiences led by industry professionals. We also expanded our professional development offerings, equipping teachers with creative tools to integrate drama into their classrooms.

With resources covering storytelling, adaptation, puppetry, and performance, we continue to empower young people to build confidence through creativity and develop skills across all areas of theatremaking.

5 new resources
2550 downloads



Teacher professional development

Monkey Baa's Teacher Professional Development workshops provide educators with practical tools to integrate drama into their classrooms, enhancing student engagement, creativity, and social-emotional learning. These sessions help teachers bring new energy to their teaching through performances, workshops, and interactive activities.

In 2024, we delivered four professional development sessions:

- Three sessions in Metro Sydney, in partnership with Drama NSW
- One session at Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre, reaching regional educators

With a focus on hands-on learning and practical application, these workshops empower teachers to use theatre as a dynamic teaching tool. As we expand this program, we aim to equip more educators with the confidence to bring drama into their classrooms, inspiring young people through creative storytelling.



Develop artists and our industry

- Penny Cook Creative Associate Program
- Mentoring artists and cultural workers

Penny Cook Creative Associate Program

The Penny Cook Creative Associate Program champions artists at every career stage, sparking fresh ideas and bold creativity in theatre for young people. Through mentorship and hands-on experience, our Creative Associates become part of the Monkey Baa Theatre Company, developing their craft under the guidance of Artistic Director Eva Di Cesare.

2024 marked the second and final year of Felicity Nicol's tenure as our Creative Associate. A director and artistic leader with a passion for socially engaged storytelling, Felicity focused her time with Monkey Baa on *To My Future Self*, a creative arts mentorship project supporting LGBTQIA+ young people in Port Macquarie. This project gave participants a platform to explore identity, resilience and self-expression through theatre, amplifying their voices and fostering a sense of belonging.

To My Future Self exemplifies the program's mission—to nurture artists who create impactful theatre for young audiences and build meaningful connections with communities.

As we look ahead, the Penny Cook Creative Associate Program remains a vital part of our commitment to supporting theatre-makers dedicated to young people's stories.



Felicity Nicol

Felicity Nicol is a director and artistic leader passionate about socially engaged storytelling. A graduate of NIDA's Directing Course, she has worked with companies across Australia and internationally, including Australian Theatre for Young People, Matriark Theatre, PACT, and Company3 (UK). Her work challenges assumptions and explores power dynamics through theatre, often collaborating with diverse communities.

During her time as Monkey Baa's Creative Associate, Felicity led *To My Future Self*, a mentorship project supporting LGBTQIA+ young people in regional Australia. She has received support from the Australia Council for the Arts, Create NSW, and the Mike Walsh Fellowship.



Mentoring Program

Monkey Baa is committed to nurturing the next generation of theatre-makers through informal mentoring. In 2024, Artistic Director Eva Di Cesare and Executive Director Kevin du Preez mentored over 15 artists and cultural workers, supporting them in developing their craft and navigating the industry.

This mentoring program fuels our pipeline of new work, from commissioning fresh ideas to developing full-length plays. It is our long-term strategy to invest in artists and foster innovative storytelling for young audiences. By supporting artists at every stage, we continue to champion bold, original theatre that speaks to young people today.

Our supporters

We are deeply grateful to all those who have contributed to Monkey Baa.

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Nahlous, Lucinda Armour, Richard Tulloch,
Tim McGarry, Tim Schaare-Weeks and Dr
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The Regular Givers

Professor Judith McLean, Dr Wendy Were,
Lucinda Armour, Janeen Brian, Ross Maher,
John McCallum, Michael Mitchell

Our Principal Sponsor

ARA Group

The ARA Group

Monkey Baa is delighted to have the ARA Group as their Principal Sponsor.

The ARA Group continues to believe that it has a responsibility to assist the communities where we operate. Since 2001, the ARA Group has contributed significantly to the community relative to the profits of the Group

With over 50 locations across Australia and New Zealand, the ARA Group delivers fully integrated essential services for infrastructure and facilities. ARA has approximately 3,000 employees working across our four operating Divisions, Fire & Security, Electrical, Property Services and Products.

ARA is an employee-owned company established in 2001 and has gained recognition as an industry leader that is committed to giving back. We believe it is our responsibility to assist the communities in which operate. We do this through the ARA Endowment Fund and by building meaningful partnerships with various charitable organisations.

ARA. Here for you. Here for good.



Thanks to ARA, we are able to...



Provide experiences for young people that are empowering and inspiring.



Facilitate workshops to communities who otherwise miss out.



Tour to communities in Metro, Regional, Rural and Remote Australia.



Bring innovative new Australian work to the stage.



Support the talent within Australia's creative industries.



Provide additional services to young people of all abilities.

Our People

We are a collective of super dedicated people bringing the joy of theatre to all young people across Australia.

Patrons

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Professor Judith McLean

Chair – from June 2024

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from September 2024

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from September 2024

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from September 2024

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until November 2024

Sara Mansour

until September 2024

Laura Pike

Secretary, non-voting

Staff

Kevin du Preez

Executive Director

Eva Di Cesare

Artistic Director

Felicity Nicol

Creative Associate

Emma Khamis

Producer

Sophie Wickes

Associate Producer (Queensland)

Alexander Andrews

Learning and Engagement Specialist

Laura Watson

Head of Production

Jem Page

Head of Technical Operations

Shaotong Li

Digital Marketing Specialist

Laura Pike

Business Development Manager

Mai Le

Development Coordinator
(until February 2024)

Annabelle Radford

Communication and Design Specialist
(until March 2024)

Amelie Downie

Customer Experience Lead
(until May 2024)

Martin Kinnane

Technical Coordinator
(from August to October 2024)

Technical crew and Front of House

Almitra Mavalvala

Anastasia Kennett

Atticus Llewellyn

Cally Bartley

Chris Davidson

Dana Loppolo

Daniel Rickets

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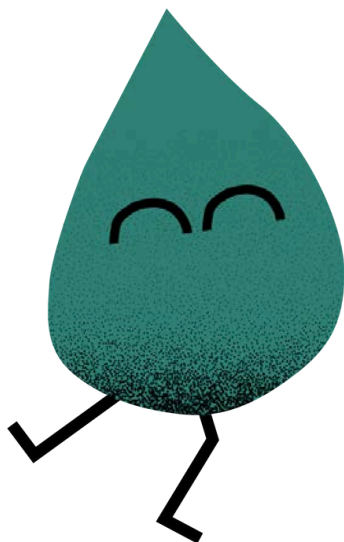
Lara O'Connor

Martin Kinnane

Paris Bell

Ryan Devlin

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