

Somebody's Daughter Theatre & Nobody's Fool Theatre

Unapologetically Myself

Regional Tour, 2019



Report and photos Jan Osmotherly, Osfield Consultants

Somebody's Daughter Theatre and Nobody's Fool Theatre

Dodging The Path North-east Regional Tour, 2019

Background

Since 1980, Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company (SDT) has been using the arts to break cycles of poverty and abuse faced by marginalised young people, including those in out-of-home care; women in prison and post release. Through the creation of high-quality drama, art and film with the disenfranchised, the Company raises awareness of complex issues that lead to addiction, mental ill-health, family violence, disengagement, homelessness and institutionalisation; motivating personal, social and systemic change.

SDTC has worked intensively with marginalised young people in North East Vic (including 16 years of HighWater Theatre) and now young people in Greater Geelong and South West Victoria, Nobody's Fool Theatre.

Based in Geelong, Nobody's Fool Theatre (NFT) is a partnership between Newcomb Secondary College, Barwon Child, Youth and Family and Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company (SDT). In 2016, this partnership established a full-time creative education program for young people who are 'school refusers' or who are too volatile to be in mainstream school. All who attend come from disadvantage and are impacted with mental health issues. The young people involved aged between 12- 22 are now undertaking full time study – their classroom and campus is based at Courthouse Youth Arts.

The Project

The working title for this project, Dodging the Path, was developed by two remarkable young people, Luke and James from Nobody's Fool Theatre who, despite incredibly difficult circumstances, and vastly different backgrounds (James is English and Luke is Aboriginal) clearly see their future in the arts. By taking steps towards a better future, they are clearly 'dodging the path prescribed for them' and have been driven to explore what this means artistically. Luke and James were both members of the team from *Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company (SDT)* & *Nobody's Fool Theatre (NFT)* who returned to north-east Victoria in June 2019 to follow up a successful performance and workshops tour in the previous year.

Preliminary planning meetings were held in Term One of 2019, between the Directors of Somebody's Daughter Theatre and two alternative learning settings – Borinya Community Partnership (run through the Catholic Education Service) and Benalla Flexible Learning Centre (a campus of Wodonga Senior Secondary College). Both schools offer tailored programs for young people whose needs are not met by mainstream education or training settings.

Meetings also took place in Wodonga with a range of stakeholders including Gateway Health, Headspace and Wodonga Secondary College. A late addition to the tour was *Bunjilwarra Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service*, where one of Nobody's Fool Theatre artists had received support.

In June, SDT & NFT presented 12 full-length theatre performances of their new work "Unapologetically Myself" and a series of creative workshops in the places mentioned above

This included

- a performance to open the Wodonga LGBTIQ Inclusion Workshop led by the Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality, Ro Allen.
- 3 performances and Q & A sessions with hundreds of students from Wodonga Secondary College plus an evening community show.
- Performances at Borinya Community Partnership, Wangaratta (alternative education setting) for students/staff and an evening community show
- Creative Workshops with Borinya students
- Performances at Benalla Flexible Learning Centre to students and staff and community show

- 2 days of creative workshops with students from Benalla & Shepparton Flexible Learning Centres
- Performance and Q & A session at *Bunjilwarra Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service*

The play “UNAPOLOGETICALLY MYSELF”

Unapologetically Myself is derived from the true stories of Nobody’s Fool Theatre (NFT) young members. It is a play about identity – young people exploring their sense of who they are – their sexual identity, their cultural identity and the anxiety that often accompanies this search.

KMALA – a young African woman: *“They don’t even see my gender they just see ‘African’...and people are scared of what they don’t know-”*

Or WURRA – a young aboriginal man *“my hearts black but my skins not black enough ...”*

WURRA is also grappling with his gender identity. He sings

*Who am I?
What am I supposed to be?
Am I LGBTQIA or just me?
As a child my letters were ADHD
I’ve got a bad case, of acronymia*

What binds this diverse group of young people together is their search for connection - a place where they belong without judgment.

Co-director Maud Clark: *“This play is all about finding your people – it doesn’t matter if they are the same colour or same sexuality – but people who support and accept you for who you are and who you can become. People who give you the courage to follow your own heart.”*

What Happened- Week One

On Tuesday, June 11 the team of Somebody’s Daughter Theatre & Nobody’s Fool Theatre (19 people in all) travelled many hours (approx. 450kms) from Geelong to Wodonga.

At this point, they learnt that one of their major performers was unable to make it to the first two performances. The play had to be rejigged and a last minute stand-in was recruited from a former HighWater Theatre member from Wodonga, Cassie. She had to learn her part in one day! (*The local newspaper, the Border Mail visited rehearsals and saw Cassie in action.*)

bordermail.com.au Thursday June 13, 2019 THE BORDER MAIL 5

NEWS

Identity forged on the stage

CASSANDRA Masterson is right at home under the glare of stage lights.

The Albury woman said theatre had turned her life around when she was just 15 and homeless.

She was couch-surfing when a friend encouraged her to join HighWater Theatre School in Wodonga during 2007.

“I was looking at a life of addiction and it (HighWater) allowed me to break the cycle; it was critical,” she said.

“It made me feel safe and gave me a safe place; it was my second home.”

Somebody’s Daughter Theatre and HighWater Theatre operated on Gateway Island in Wodonga from 2001 to 2016.

Their ground-breaking arts-led program for young people not in mainstream education fostered life-changing outcomes for hundreds of students.

Now a mother of two, Masterson has furthered her studies while performing and mentoring for HighWater.

Tonight Masterson is back



ON STAGE: Cassandra Masterson and the cast of *Unapologetically Myself* rehearse ahead of their Wodonga show tonight. Picture: MARK JESSER

in the spotlight in Wodonga in a new play, *Unapologetically Myself*, a work by Nobody’s Fool Theatre, the Geelong progeny of Somebody’s Daughter Theatre.

Co-director Maud Clark said the play focused on various dilemmas around identity.

“It features young people exploring their sense of who they are - their sexual identity, their cultural identity and the anxiety that often accompanies this search,” she said.

“The scenario is a diverse group of young people. What binds them together is their search for connection - a place where they can belong without judgement.”

A cast of 16 including 12 youth deliver a beautifully-scripted and highly-entertaining dramatic experience.

It has sharp humour, original music and songs and pathos - all delivered with loads of youthful energy.

Geelong-based cast member Luke Wallace relished the opportunity to work on this show.

“It’s about being yourself and finding your real identity,” he said.

Unapologetically Myself

will be officially launched by Victoria’s Gender and Equality Commissioner, Rowena Allen, at 7pm tonight at the Wodonga Senior Secondary College Performing Arts Centre.

Tickets are free and available at the door.

JODIE BRUTON

On **Wednesday**, they rehearsed in a studio space of the Butter Factory Theatre before going to Wodonga Senior Secondary College Performing Arts Space to set up the staging for school performances the following afternoon. Along the way, they had to check out the very challenging space at QUEST Conference Room, where they would be presenting scenes to open the LGBTIQ+ Equality Rural and Regional Roadshow the next morning.

Up before dawn on **Thursday**, the team headed to QUEST to rehearse their scenes in a tiny room before ascending upstairs for the Wodonga LGBTIQ Inclusion Workshop. (pictured)



Their performance was met with rapturous applause and accolades from all those attending. Many would return to Wodonga Secondary College that evening to see the full community performance of *Unapologetically Myself* launched by the Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality, Ro Allen.

On from there, the team prepared for their first schools' performance at 1.30 pm to over 100 students from Wodonga Middle Years College. This was followed by a 7pm evening show.

Friday saw two more school shows – one to students from Wodonga Senior Secondary College, followed by another to a second group of more than 100 students from Wodonga Middle Years. Bump out set and then organise travel for young people back to Geelong for weekend before all returning to Wangaratta the following Tuesday.

Sample Feedback from Week One of Tour

Performance at LGBTIQ Inclusion Workshop

“The power of telling stories can be life affirming and life changing. When you combine stories with song, told authentically from a young person’s perspective, the impact can be limitless. I was fortunate to have the Young People from *Nobody’s Fool Theatre* and *Somebody’s Daughter Theatre Company* perform an excerpt of ‘Unapologetically myself’ at an LGBTIQ Inclusion Workshop I hosted in Wodonga in June 2019. It was the perfect way to start our event and set the tone of inclusion. Our Rainbow alphabet never sounded so good.”

Ro Allen

Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality June 18, 2019



Commissioner Ro Allen 'opening' the Wodonga evening community performance

Wodonga Community Performance feedback

- I'll never judge anyone on how they look, their sexuality, race or background again, being now more aware of their feelings.
- Amazing. Goose bumps. Soul shifting.
- Fabulous. Opened my eyes a lot.
- Great show. I will be more accepting now I have a better understanding of refugees and colour of skin.
- Amazing young people. Touched my heart.
- Loved it. Made me feel happy, sad, inspired and proud.
- Particularly liked the song about 'Don't try to be me and I won't try to be you.' I'm trans male and I come from a large family. I was always wanting to be someone else.
- I'm really grateful that there are shows like this about diversity and equality.
- Brilliant. Powerful and incredible talent.
- I thought it was great. It made me think about just being me.
- Absolutely brilliant theatre with brilliant original music.
- Funny. Entertaining. Engaging. Confronting. Now I'm far more aware of what other people who don't fit the mould go through.

Wodonga Secondary College student feedback

- So good. It made me feel like I can be accepted anywhere no matter what.
- It was good. Changed my view on things.
- I liked it because I know people who this impacts. It felt good to know others do go through the same and overcome it.
- The script was great. It wasn't 'annoying' like other programs/shows that talk about these kind of topics. I especially liked Luke and his story.

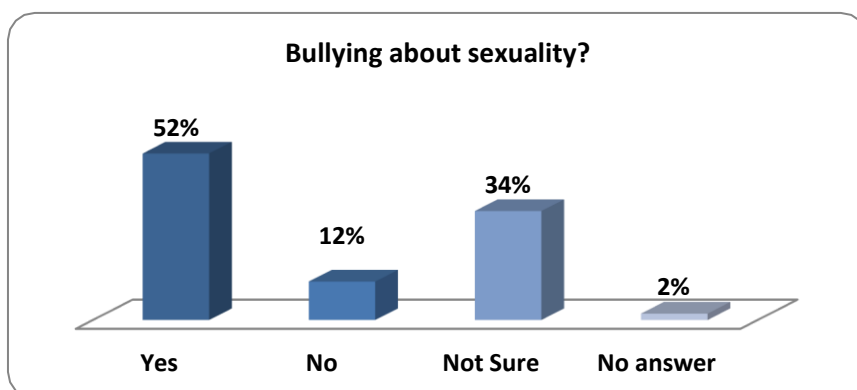
- It made me feel good because it focussed on LGBTIQ problems!! That makes me happy. Hopefully others will understand me more.
- I loved the performance and it made me feel more connected to myself.
- I now see how hard some of these issues are. It really helped put me in their shoes.
- You helped me understand more of who I am.
- This performance helped me be more understanding and not to be judgmental.
- It was pretty confronting but I enjoyed how they had the confidence to speak out.
- The performance was great. It made me feel that you shouldn't take shit slung at you personally.
- It was very inspirational. Made me feel more comfortable with myself. Very relatable.
- I didn't really think much about these things like gender and identity and stuff until this performance. It really widened my point of view.
- You really opened my eyes.
- When the black chick talked about her life, it really got me because I can relate.

(Students filling out their feedback forms)



Responses to one of the questions on the Feedback Form clearly showed that the play had raised very important and relevant issues for the school community. Acceptance of diversity is a challenging task, even more so in rural communities.

Is bullying about sexuality an issue at your school?



- Yes. Most people do it – even if only 'jokingly' but it still impacts me a lot as part of the LGBTIQ+ community. Fortunately, no one knows I am.
- Yes. School can be a toxic place.
- A lot of people do it.

While that question particularly focused on bullying and sexuality, other comments highlighted that acceptance of race and cultural diversity is another demanding issue.

The performances were outstanding and gave our students an experience some will never get again. The messages within the performance were very important for our students to deal with. The issues that were raised (*such as sexual identity, race*) are the issues our kids are going through right now - very relevant. Gave us staff a chance to reflect quietly on this.

Assistant Principal Wodonga Middle Years College

The area of refugees and how they are treated in our community provided particular insight to what we are currently involved in as we have an increasing number of Congolese students. It provided a dramatic representation which allowed for discussion on how accepting we have been to our own recent arrivals. For those who were lucky enough to see this show, I think it has had a **major effect** on improving their understanding of the minority groups we cater for in our school and what challenges they face.

Executive Principal Wodonga Secondary College.

What Happened- Week Two

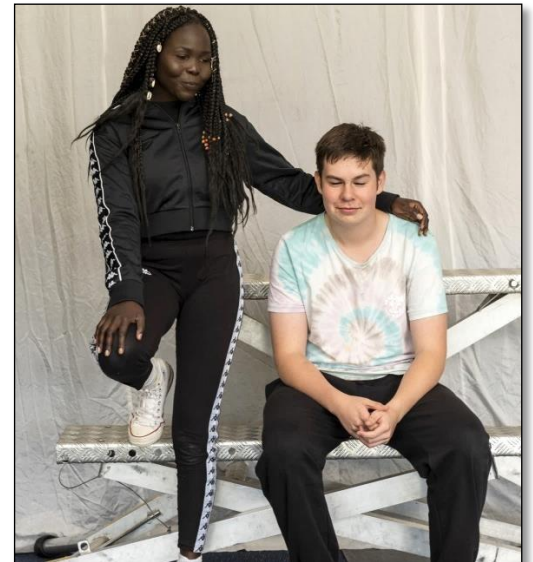
Tuesday, 18th June, the team arrived in Wangaratta and rehearsed ready for a morning performance the next day at Borinya – a small community partnership alternative school. *“Borinya offers young people an opportunity to be members of a supportive, learning community during a time in their lives when they may be struggling with social or emotional challenges or when mainstream education does not meet their needs.”*

[Borinya website](#)

The play on **Wednesday** 19th June was followed by a question and answer session with many in the audience clearly identifying with the issues raised. After a short morning tea break, SDT and NFT members ran a series of drama workshops involving Borinya students and staff in movement exercises and improvisations based on issues they wanted to portray.



Workshops in action



Lunch together before the Borinya students took their visitors on a guided tour of their school site, proudly showing them some of their environmental projects before some further creative interactions. It was a wonderful day.

But it was not over yet

Borinya, were hosting a *Stand Tall* evening for parents and friends of the school community. More than 60 people came along and saw some of the student work, mixed informally with staff over refreshments before a presentation of 'Stand Tall' awards for student achievement.

At 6pm these people were joined by others from the local area for a full performance of *Unapologetically Myself*. (pictured below) As one of the audience said on leaving, "this is the best piece of drama I've seen in a long time. anywhere."



Sample Borinya Student Feedback

- It was great. It made me feel alive. It fell together perfect.
- I thought it was awesome. It made me feel connected.
- It helped me see that it's OK to be different.
- This performance made me feel happy and not alone. It might help me with my anxiety
- It was really awesome because I don't feel so different now. These were kids like us... maybe one day I could do something great too.
- When James said he had anxiety because I have anxiety. So maybe I can be OK too.
- The first part really connected with me but I loved all of it.

- I wasn't looking forward to a drama thing but it was awesome. It made me look at myself. Maybe I should be more positive



Sample Borinya Wangaratta Community Performance Feedback

- Great. It influenced me to be open about being different. That's it's OK to be different.
- Clear, concise, clever, engaging, moving, meaningful, fabulous! It was fun, sad, - it challenged, it moved and it was also celebratory!
- Really excellent performance. It brought light and normality to some tough issues relevant to our community.
- Brilliant performance!! Confronting with how some young generation feel – looking to belong in this world.
- I felt admiration for the performers and the writers/collaborators of this performance. Thank you so much for your insights into lives and challenges in a wonderfully entertaining way.
- Connected really well to the show as a parent. Really great to see the message that it's OK to be who you are.
- You brought it home that different skin colours, different genders are all the same. We're all the same.
- You have prompted me to think about what assumptions I have been bringing to some people.
- I learnt a lot about everything. I've been sheltered.
- You really helped grow my understanding as a parent of life for our young.
- Thank you! Clever! Moving and meaningful. I loved it! This was great!
- Well done to you all. I would highly recommend this to everyone. Great theatre with topics that are really important for our community!!

Borinya Staff Feedback

- I haven't seen much theatre before but it was so intimate – in the sense that I felt I knew all the actors and they were my friends at the end. Also really enjoyed the humour – it was so funny!
- Brilliant performance. I love the wonderful way in which you bring many challenges to the audience and reflect to us that in life – it's all normal. It's all challenging.
- Enjoyed it IMMENSELY. It energised me as a teacher.
- I learnt a lot. I am white and I really appreciated other cultures explaining their point of view.

- These issues are so relevant to our local community. Indigenous issues. Racism. Xenophobia. White-washing. Bullying. Disengagement. Domestic violence. LGBTIQ+ - difference between generations. You guys are absolutely amazing.
- Loved seeing our kids connect with other students going through similar things
- There was such a great buzz within the school.
- Our students were inspired by the honesty of the NFT students and willingness to 'know themselves' – to be approachable and non-judgmental
- On speaking with one student the next day (who rehearsed with me a speech he was to give) he mentioned his nerves. He reflected that he had spoken with one of the NFT girls after their performance and he thought that she would be very confident due to her acting, but that she was very quiet and nervous. He felt that if she could do that, then he could too.
- The VIBE of the day was so positive. Seeing our kids come out of their comfort zone and participate in the drama workshops was so good.



The performance was thought provoking, providing valuable insights into what is going on for our young people. It was clever, entertaining and had powerful messages around the fluidity of gender identity.

Drama is such a powerful tool to provide young people with a voice. If we have the ability we would like to access more opportunities like this for our young people to access drama/performance. Our students participated in workshops and without exception report the experience as having a significant impact on their sense of self and well-being. Parents also were very positive and found the performance illuminating. We are very grateful for the opportunity to host this.

I congratulate all involved for their on-going commitment and passion.

Borinya Principal

Thursday, 19th June, the team travelled to Benalla Flexible Learning Centre where they spent the morning transforming an old art and craft space into a 'theatre.'

In the afternoon, they performed to students, staff and some parents.

However... before that performance was a surprise.... a wonderful surprise.

During the morning set up, a member of SDT had been chatting with the school's music teacher. She told them how their visit the previous year had inspired their students to take on some of their own creative projects and a small music group had formed. They happened to be practising that day. It was suggested that perhaps they would like to perform publically as the 'opening act' for the afternoon show. And with quite a considerable amount of encouragement, they did ...

It was an amazing time. For the first 2 or so agonising minutes, the lead solo singer sang very quietly and tremulously with her back to the audience (and ever so gradually with members

of SDT & NFT singing out whoops of encouragement and exclamations of 'beautiful' (she did sing like an 'angel..').. she turned around and sang to the audience. This was followed up by another song by the whole group.



It cannot be expressed strongly enough what a highlight this was – for everyone.

Benalla FLC students have not had the opportunity to perform in public. They were extremely apprehensive and lacked confidence in their abilities. The offer to perform on a stage with an extremely supportive audience and with support from their Music Teacher was accepted. This was an amazing experience for our students. This safe environment enabled our students to 'step outside of their comfort zone' and understand that they can perform. They were so confident after their first performance that they all returned to the evening community session to perform without the support of their own teacher.

Benalla Flexible Learning Centre Principal

So, the evening performance of *Unapologetically Myself* again had an opening musical support act. SDT's own musical director Justin, quickly learned the songs so he could accompany the group as their own music teacher had done earlier. It was a wonderful collaboration.

Friday saw further performances at Benalla to visiting students and staff from Shepparton Flexible Learning Centre. Again, the response was quite overwhelming. While the audience sizes were small (approximately 12 - 26) as one of NFT's own young people reflected – "I learnt that it doesn't matter if you are playing to five people or five hundred – it can be just as powerful."

Most of the students attending these shows were in 'alternative education settings' because they didn't fit in at mainstream. Many had mental health issues. Many had experienced bullying. They connected with the performance and felt reassured about their own struggles as some of the quotes from their feedback show below.

Sample Benalla & Shepparton Flexible Learning Centre Student Feedback

- I liked it how it was from others experiences but we could all relate to them.
- Fantastic. I'm not alone anymore.
- It was so relatable. The bits about anxiety and not being able to breathe. I know that feeling. It was all pretty great. It made me think I could I should come out.
- It was good seeing others around my age having the courage to share their stories and discuss topics that us teens struggle with.
- What got to me was when they talked about black and white. Made me realise a lot about how black people and whiter aboriginal people feel.
- Whole thing was good. When the mum was on drugs and the uncertainty of the kids.... I related to that.

- It made me feel empowered and I related a lot.
- The parts about Aboriginal culture had the most impact on me. Because I relate and am still confused about my identity.
- I loved it. It was like my story. The bullying part made me think on the same way I was bullied.



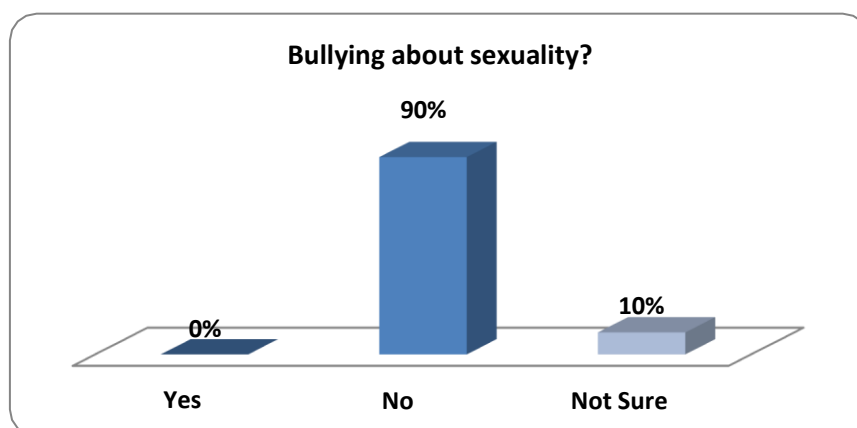
Sample Staff Feedback

- All the issues that young people face – brought them home so well and showed how complex they are.
- The performance was absolutely amazing. The skill, competence and passion displayed by performers was awe inspiring!
- It was amazing. I even teared up a few times. The messages were very relatable.
- The whole thing was wonderful. The opening was great. The music and singing was great. It all had a huge impact on me. Particularly loved how you showed getting through all the struggles to the other side. Inspired hope.
- The students absolutely loved it. Some of the songs sent shivers down their spines. They loved the characters and how the performance covered so many different aspects of diversity. The stories or aspects of the characters' stories rang true to many of the students.

It is worth noting that students from these alternative settings were asked the same question as students at the mainstream Wodonga Secondary College about bullying and sexuality. **Not ONE** said it was an issue. There were a number of LGBTIQ students who all clearly felt and were very supported.

There is a message in that.

Is bullying about sexuality an issue at your school?



What Happened - Week Three

On Monday, 24th June – the team returned, this time to run creative workshops at Benalla Flexible Learning Centre in the same space. The workshops continued all day Tuesday. This time some students from Shepparton Flexible Learning Centre travelled over to participate – being so inspired by the performance they had seen the previous Friday.

Workshops were varied. On Tuesday in addition to the drama workshops, there was also a song-writing session with one group and another went off to film a short video clip.

It was such a positive, productive couple of days for all involved, with much enthusiasm to meet up again soon and continue on this collaboration.

One of the best things was seeing so many smiles on faces.

I thought the day was very fun. I really enjoyed interacting with the other students and doing new experiences. I would **love** for them to come back.

Student



Further Benalla Staff Reflections

It was so wonderful having the SD & NF theatre team from Geelong come to our school and run workshops with our students. Watching the students being prepared to share their stories and portraying so much more confidence as the workshop progressed was something special. I believe, this has been such a rewarding process for our students, and the visiting performers, realising the stories are very similar no matter where you live.

It was particularly beneficial for one of our students, that keeps very much to herself and rarely joins in with any activities. After a little cajoling to be just an observer, slowly this young person began to realise these visiting young people had similar stories to herself. The young person stayed for most of the day, and with encouragement from Maud and Luke involved herself in a group. This group was led by Luke, who was so encouraging and supportive. It was wonderful to see this young person, feel safe and comfortable enough to participate, and help write material that she and others could relate to.

Her comment as she left was: "This was fun, and they are nice people".

Thank you to all involved and I hope we are able to come together again, and perform more magic.

Lynne

What a wonderful opportunity for our students! The Somebody's Daughter/Nobody's Fool Theatre experience has inspired and encouraged many of our students to step outside of their comfort zones, share their ideas and talent and collaborate with others.

Thank you for providing such a safe and encouraging platform for our music students to perform to a public audience – this has built their confidence IMMENSELY.

Above all, the sense of connectivity and relatability between our students and the performing students has been so strong – expressing shared experience has played a huge part in encouraging many students to engage further in their learning, particularly in the Arts.

Big thanks and we hope to collaborate again in the future.

Music Teacher

Song writing workshop pictured



The reactions to the SDT/NFT performances were fantastic. To see students engaging with the performance in a positive way was inspiring to all. Many of the messages that were portrayed in the performance were **identical** to those that many of the students have experienced in their own private lives. SDT/NFT were able to break down the barriers that often exist with our students.

They understood that many of the students were anxious and self-conscious but were able to encourage them to participate in an extremely positive way. One student who could not attend the performance due to anxiety – attended the workshop as a passive observer – she normally can only remain at school for an hour- however, she remained at school, participated in sharing ideas and thoughts, wrote a poem and called her family to let her stay till lunch (some 3.5 hours). An amazing breakthrough. One very proud student shared a copy of her work (poems) the following day.

The collaboration between the SDT/NFT and the Benalla FLC has been an outstanding success. A small country alternative setting school does not often have the opportunities to see / perform in live theatre. The students and staff from SDT/NFT were amazing people and understood the needs and supports required for our students to have a positive experience from the visit. The sharing of lunch, the casual conversations and the social interactions that occurred over the days were also very valuable.

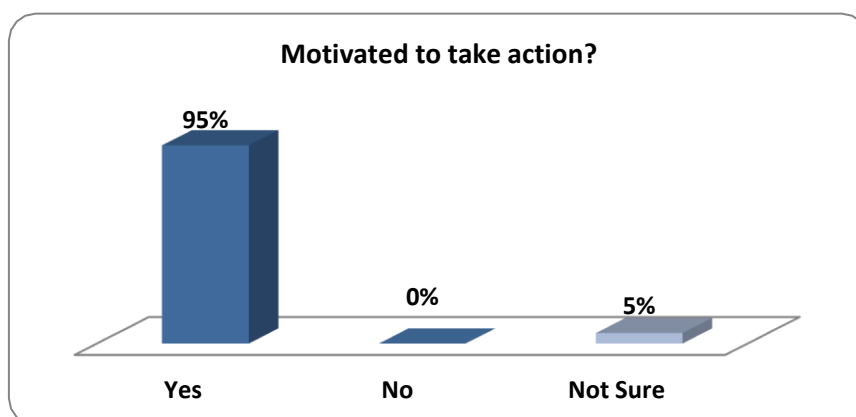
Thank you so much for your efforts in making this a success
Benalla Flexible Learning Centre Principal

On Thursday, June 27, the team travelled to Hastings for a special performance at the *Bunjilwarra Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service*. Although the audience was small, the impact was large. Comments included:

- Just amazing, absolutely loved it! Felt inspired, touched, sad, happy
- Loved it. Luke's performance about being Aboriginal but also being white especially got to me. I can relate to this so much.

One of the Aboriginal elders, a staff member, exclaimed how incredibly 'special' and inspiring it was – particularly with one of their clients (Luke) performing his story in a major role. Needless to say, it was incredibly challenging for a very, very nervous Luke.

Importantly, the vast majority of those who attended the performance found it motivating to take positive action in their own lives.



Luke performing



It was a very special way to conclude the *Dodging the Path Tour*.

Feedback from Nobody's Fool Theatre young people

The outcomes for the young Nobody's Fool Theatre performers and emerging artists were as positive as they were for those in audiences and workshops.

In focus group discussions and written evaluations to review the tour, the young performers' enthusiasm and pride was palpable. They were almost overwhelmed by the impact on others of sharing their stories through the play and workshops.

To their credit, this led to feelings of humility rather than 'swollen heads'. When asked about the highlights, their reflections were predominantly about the experiences of others.

Highlights

- Watching the girls sing at Benalla, inspired by our performance there last year was such a highlight for me
- Seeing kids that have never expressed themselves in a creative place and watching them love and enjoy it.
- Making people smile and seeing people come out of their shells in the workshops.
- Knowing that we changed at least one person's life and that's such a privilege to be a part of

As one other young woman expressed it:

"(The tour)... was a life changing experience in the most exhilarating and eye opening way." And another, when asked what was most worthwhile:

"The impact it has on the people we work with and showing them that even though we might look confident - that we are struggling with the same shit. Whether you are from Geelong or a small country town that it's the same issues that we are dealing with.

I believe that we should do more workshops and performances to bring awareness that these people aren't alone and maybe give them HOPE. I believe we can show that the path you are on is not the only path and that's it possible that you can take a new pathway instead of just accepting what has been chosen for you.

Also, seeing people that are fighting their own demons like being LGBTQIA, or telling their true blue Australian parents that they are gay or they feel like they're in the wrong body - gives me hope because it took me so long to find who I was and to find the strength to express myself. It took me 19 years to have the strength to face myself."

I believe we can show that the path you are on is not the only path and that's it possible that you can take a new pathway instead of just accepting what has been chosen for you.

NFT performer

TOUR OUTCOMES

The SDT & NFT regional tour, 2019 has had a **profound** impact in many ways.

The performance of the original play *Unapologetically Myself* embraced topics that are often difficult to discuss, especially in country towns – such as sexual identity, racism, dysfunctional families, addictions – drug, alcohol, digital (phones, etc).

So MANY young people connected and were reassured about their own struggles.

Many found **HOPE**. Many felt there was *another path* ...

Summary of major outcomes

- Many young people were **reassured, inspired**. A significant proportion of students reported really 'connecting' with the issues as portrayed in the performance. Most commonly expressed was reassurance that 'I'm not alone anymore' that others 'are going through similar things' and find positive ways forward. When a 14 year old says "I don't feel so different now. These were kids like us... maybe one day I could do something great too"... the power of the tour comes sharply into focus.
- For others, **prejudicial views were changed**. An average of 62% of people who saw the performances recorded that it had changed the way they would view some people in the future. "This performance helped me be more understanding and not to be judgmental. "From simple comments as .. "because I understand more. I won't judge," to "you have prompted me to think about what assumptions I have been bringing to some people."

- All school Principals reported that the performance/discussions and workshops had been extremely valuable for students and staff.
- All schools are considering further opportunities to incorporate more creative opportunities into their curriculum with the view to creating their own works giving voice to their stories
- Students at Benalla Flexible Learning Centre have been motivated to pursue more public performance opportunities
- Members of Nobody's Fool Theatre have realised the potential of their work to change lives – which in turn has given them the strength to continue on their positive educational and creative journeys.

Conclusion

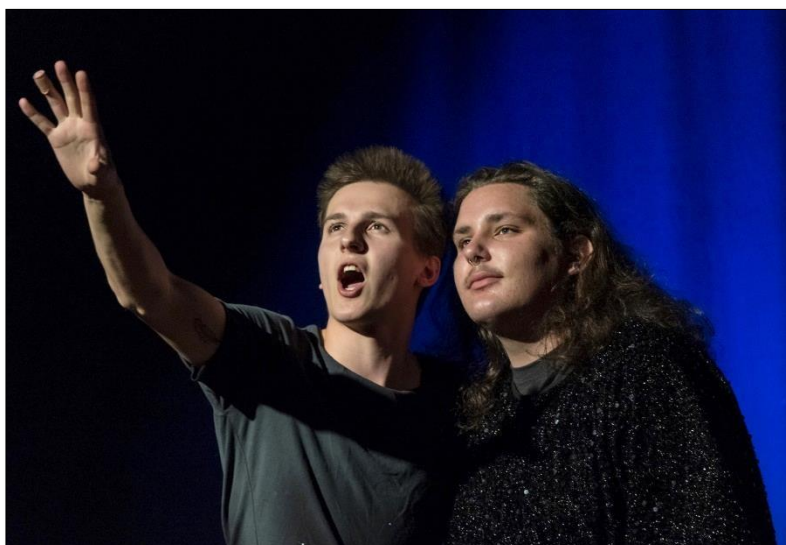
This has been an extraordinary tour with outcomes that exceeded expectations.

The powerful role that the arts can play in creating more inclusive, empathetic and informed communities has been on display with community theatre at its finest.

Unique collaborations have been formed with enthusiasm for further work together.

Lives have been touched and changed for the better.

Nobody's Fool Theatre students & young people from Benalla & Shepparton Flexible Learning Centres after two days of workshops together.



James & Luke from Nobody's Fool Theatre in a scene from play

Appendix

Media coverage

bordermail.com.au

Thursday June 13, 2019 THE BORDER MAIL 5

NEWS

Identity forged on the stage

CASSANDRA Masterson is right at home under the glare of stage lights.

The Albury woman said theatre had turned her life around when she was just 15 and homeless.

She was couch-surfing when a friend encouraged her to join HighWater Theatre School in Wodonga during 2007.

"I was looking at a life of addiction and it (HighWater) allowed me to break the cycle; it was critical," she said.

"It made me feel safe and gave me a safe place; it was my second home."

Somebody's Daughter Theatre and HighWater Theatre operated on Gateway Island in Wodonga from 2001 to 2016.

Their ground-breaking arts-led program for young people not in mainstream education fostered life-changing outcomes for hundreds of students.

Now a mother of two, Masterson has furthered her studies while performing and mentoring for HighWater.

Tonight Masterson is back



ON STAGE: Cassandra Masterson and the cast of *Unapologetically Myself* rehearse ahead of their Wodonga show tonight. Picture: MARK JESSER

in the spotlight in Wodonga in a new play, *Unapologetically Myself*, a work by Nobody's Fool Theatre, the Geelong progeny of Somebody's Daughter Theatre.

Co-director Maud Clark said the play focused on various dilemmas around identity.

"It features young people exploring their sense of who they are - their sexual identity, their cultural identity and the anxiety that often accompanies this search," she said.

"The scenario is a diverse group of young people. What binds them together is

their search for connection - a place where they can belong without judgement."

A cast of 16 including 12 youth deliver a beautifully-scripted and highly-entertaining dramatic experience.

It has sharp humour, original music and songs and

pathos - all delivered with loads of youthful energy.

Geelong-based cast member Luke Wallace relished the opportunity to work on this show.

"It's about being yourself and finding your real identity," he said.

Unapologetically Myself

will be officially launched by Victoria's Gender and Equality Commissioner, Rowena Allen, at 7pm tonight at the Wodonga Senior Secondary College Performing Arts Centre.

Tickets are free and available at the door.

- JODIE BRUTON

Students learn how to be “Unapologetically Myself”

BORINYA students enjoyed the performance of a brand new play ‘Unapologetically Myself’ by Nobody’s Fool Theatre, the Geelong progeny of Somebody’s Daughter Theatre, who were in Wangaratta last week to perform and lead workshops with students.

Many people in North East Victoria will remember Somebody’s Daughter Theatre and HighWater Theatre who resided here from 2001-2016, based in Wodonga but who visited Wangaratta many times.

Their “ground breaking arts-led education program” for young people brought “wonderful life changing outcomes for hundreds of students”.

Moreover they brought the town brilliant theatre with annual performances of plays based on the participants’ true life stories.

Co-director Maud Clark said Unapologetically Myself is all about finding your people.

“It doesn’t matter if they are the same colour or same sexuality, but people who support and accept you for who you are and who you can become,” she said.

“People who give you the



BY LEAH ANDERSON-BYRNE
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courage to follow your own heart.

“The play focuses on various dilemmas around identity and features young people exploring their sense of who they are, their sexual identity, their cultural identity and the anxiety that often accompanies this search.

Maude said the performance in Wangaratta was “fantastic” and the workshops went wonderfully.

Anonymous student feedback certainly supported this with many words of praise.

“I learnt that little steps help big, I just loved it and I would see it again,” said one student.

“It was really awesome because I don’t feel so different now; these were kids like us and maybe one day I could do something great too,” said another.

HAVING FUN: Nobody’s Fool members Kgshak Akec (left) and Maude Clarke (back) with Borinya students Jarrod Sedgwick and Keely McIrath. PHOTO: Mel Guy



‘Benalla Ensign/Game On’, Wednesday, June 26, 2019- www.benallaensign.com.au



Compelling: Benalla’s flexible Learning Centre hosted a performance of *Unapologetically Myself* last week.

“What binds them together is their search for connection – a place where they can belong without judgment”

Inspiring play

Unapologetically Myself is a brand new play by Nobody’s Fool Theatre, the Geelong progeny of Somebody’s Daughter Theatre.

Many people in north-east Victoria will remember Somebody’s Daughter Theatre and HighWater Theatre, which resided in the area from 2001 to 2016, based in Wodonga but visiting Benalla many times.

Their ground-breaking arts-led education program for young people brought wonderful life-changing outcomes for hundreds of students.

Moreover they created brilliant theatre with annual performances of plays based on the participants’ true life stories.

On Thursday, June 20, this amazing group was back in Benalla at the Flexible Learning Centre with performances of their new play followed by workshops.

Co-director Maud Clark said she was excited to see the kids performing in Benalla.

“This play is all about finding your people,” Ms Clarke said.

“It doesn’t matter if they are the same colour or same sexuality — but people who support and accept you for who you are and who you can become.

“People who give you the courage to follow your own heart.

“The play focuses on various dilemmas around identity.

“It features young people exploring their sense of who they are — their sexual identity, their cultural identity and the anxiety that often accompanies this search.

“The scenario is a diverse group of young people.

“What binds them together is their search for connection — a place where they can belong without judgment.”

This performance was a powerful and highly entertaining dramatic experience featuring quirky humour, original music, songs and pathos — all delivered with lots of youthful energy.