

Case Study

Senior IMPACT Ensemble, 2017: {Cross My Heart}

What: Since 2011, the Empire Youth Arts IMPACT Ensemble has operated as an elite performance program for young artists aged 13-20. Thanks to the generous support of the Sidney Myer Fund and the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation's Capacity Building program, Empire Youth Arts has been able to continue the work of previous years by establishing the Senior and Junior IMPACT Ensembles in 2017.

The IMPACT Ensemble aims to offer young people professional performance experiences, whilst making an impact on audiences. Entry is based on audition, and the ensemble work across the year to create, develop and rehearse a polished performance piece at the Empire Theatre under the guidance of experienced industry professionals. This program was established as a platform for youth voice to be heard within our region, and continues to cultivate new opportunities for the development and empowerment of young artists.

Led by Empire Youth Arts Director Ari Palani and Creative Collaborator Daniel Evans (The Good Room), with creative assistance from Marcus Oborn and Nicole Haeusler, the 2017 Senior IMPACT Ensemble worked from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to create an original performance work titled {Cross My Heart}.

{Cross My Heart} is a reimagining of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, following the story of lovers Hermia, Lysander, Helena and Demetrius across three timelines – a depiction of the original story as if being performed in the Renaissance, a re-telling set in a contemporary world, and an insight into a dystopian future where love is a commodity rather than an emotional experience.

The task set to the ensemble was to break down and analyse the content of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and to then discuss the major issues they face as young people in a contemporary world. From there, the creative team worked to shape

the ideas and concepts generated from this process into a scripted outcome ready for performance. To assist the creative team, each ensemble member was responsible for generating content for inclusion in the final production.



The Senior IMPACT Ensemble, 2017, present {Cross My Heart}

When: October 13-14, 2017

Where: Empire Theatres Precinct, Armitage Centre

Partners, Contributors and Sponsors:



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Outcomes: The project engaged fifteen young artists over the course of five months. During this time they worked alongside and engaged with a wide range of professional theatre and performance artists, including lead creative and director Ari Palani, award winning playwright Daniel Evans of The Good Room, actors Marcus Oborn and Mitch Wood, training theatre student Nicole Haeusler, choreographer and movement coach Kirsty Lee, photographer Simon Hall, and USQ Lecturer Associate Professor Janet McDonald.

Each ensemble member carried their own formative and creative responsibilities, with an expectation that each would endeavour to fulfil these to the best of their abilities. Team work, communication, creative problem solving and the development and refinement of artistic sensibilities were essential attributes that were developed by each member of the ensemble during this process under the guidance of the supervising artists.

The final result of this project were two seventy minute performances which took place in the Heritage Bank Auditorium on October 13 and 14, engaging over 400 audience members, from the local community, local tertiary institutions, and Brisbane based theatre practitioners.

Positive feedback regarding the show was received from audiences post-show and in the days following the production.



Ensemble members in the Shakespearean timeline of {Cross My Heart}

This project also correlates with Community Outcomes 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 in the TRC 2014-2019 Corporate Plan.

Learnings and reflections: This is the ninth Senior IMPACT project and the tenth overall IMPACT production with the introduction of IMPACT Junior this year.

Initial interest in the project was strong, as indicated by the good turn out for auditions. The show also sold well, with in excess of 460 audience members in attendance over the two nights.

{Cross My Heart} proved that IMPACT is creating and maintaining an audience base for new work and as a result, is able to take risks both thematically and aesthetically.

The engagement of guest artist Daniel Evans was an excellent addition to the project. This type of collaboration allows the work to be connected to the wider industry and ensures that the work does not become insular. IMPACT will continue to engage guest artists who possess unique and varied skills, knowledge and abilities that expand our capacity to continue to produce varied and innovative work.

This project directly correlates with six objectives in the Empire Theatres Projects Company Business Plan.

Strategy One	Be accessible and engaging.
1.1	Create and facilitate programs and projects that are mindful of the diversity and richness of all regional Australians inclusive of all ethnic and cultural origins and demographic and socio-economic circumstances.
1.2	To address the issues of remoteness and accessibility to the arts in regional Australia through the provision of arts services locally including training and education resources delivery.
Strategy Two	Link arts and community.
2.2	Artistically respond and contribute to discussion of cultural, social, political and environmental issues important to regional Australians.
Strategy Three	Increase and deepen cultural consciousness and capacity in the region.
3.1	Develop audiences and increase engagement in creative activity throughout our community.
3.2	To develop and nurture a community of artists and arts workers in and around the Toowoomba region.
Strategy Four	Be a stable and reliable resource for the community.
4.1	To develop thriving arts business practices through strong partnerships, commercial income streams and alternative funding programs