



Project: Catastrophes (Australia), Produced by Ella Hetherington and Renee Newman

Discipline: Contemporary Performance (Theatre)

Target Audience: 18+

Creators/Artists:

Renee Newman and Ella Hetherington (Co-creators/performers),

Mark Haslam (Scenography)

Ben Collins, (Sound Design)

Will Gammel (Cloth Operator)

Andrew Sutherland (Text Dramaturgy)

Emma Fishwick (Movement Dramaturgy)

Catherine O'Donoghue (Stage Manager)

Cast: 3

Touring Company: 4

Length: 50 minutes, no intermission

Project Contact: Ella Hetherington, Producer – ejshproducer@gmail.com, +61 402 774 896

Premiere: Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA) 2023, Perth, Western Australia.

Project Description-

Formal

Catastrophes is a new contemporary performance work by Renee Newman and Ella Hetherington. It explores internal and external crises/catastrophes: isolation, failing bodies, and the chaos of parenthood with a backdrop of increasing political conservatism, war, rising water, and warming global temperatures. The work was commissioned by PICA and with support from Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural industries, the work premiered 16-26th August 2023.

Inspired by the autobiographical performance genre and a poetic, gestural and sonic/image-based dramaturgy the work incorporates text largely made up of text messages over the course of 5 years. With a unique and evocative design of floating felt sails within a perimeter of donated chairs from the community, the work also sits inside a complex sound design incorporating breast pumps, train signals and other found sounds. At the core of *Catastrophes* is the notion of Parrhesia – truth-telling that is risky and brave. *Catastrophes* moves from the personal truths of the joy and trauma of first-time parenthood, to the political, scientific and sociological and asks can truth-telling in performance be an act of self-care and kindness?

Casual

Catastrophes is an autobiographical archive of the micro and macro - babies and breastfeeding, everyday crises, war and climate change and everything in between - an archive of the past 6 years including the day the work is performed.

Built from 6 years of the text messages, conversations, stories and media grabs, it is a carefully curated (beautiful) chaos that reflects our humanity and celebrates our connection. It gives voice to universal human taboos, vulnerabilities and fears. Darkly funny, brutally honest, shame free and saying a whole lotta things out loud that you may have wanted to say, but never did - about what it's like to be a parent, about how the world is ending, in fact, what it feels like to be a parent as the world is ending. All the big, little big stuff and big little stuff. But funny. Laugh out loud funny.

Catastrophes is performed under a stunning, suspended 160 square meters of puppeteered cloth (the third "character") and encircled by 15 loaned, eclectic chairs, that provide not only a greener more sustainable design, but also creates a resounding reflection and celebration of the connection and support that exist within the community where the work will be performed. Set to a layered and evocative soundtrack the work leaves you laughing at not only the ridiculous honesty of the stories but also with hope and joy at witnessing a deep and abiding friendship. It's real, fast paced, beautiful to look at and despite it going to some tough places we promise you'll leave with a belly full of hope.

A really common response from audiences in the premiere season was 'You made me feel like I was heard'.

Copy-

Brutally honest friends juggling imminent global collapse, parenthood and failing bodies. The leading Boorloo (Perth)-based theatre makers – who are also close friends – spent over six years creating Catastrophes. The resulting performance sees the audience invited into their shame-free friendship as they share intimate and often excruciating truths across one chaotic, yet hopeful, hour of confessions.

Curated from the pair's text messages and conversations, Catastrophes reminds us that though the world may be ending you are not alone.

Set beneath the soft, omniscient folds of the billowing, cloud-like set, playing to an evocative soundtrack and grounded by a perimeter of chairs on loan from family and friends, Catastrophes is an absurdist archive of the pair's friendship as they become first-time mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's a soul-bearing tale – as funny as it is poignant.

Short Copy-

In Catastrophes [Renée Newman](#) and [Ella Hetherington](#) are brutally honest friends juggling imminent global collapse, parenthood and failing bodies.

The leading Boorloo theatre makers invite the audience into their shame-free friendship as they share intimate and often excruciating truths across one chaotic, yet hopeful, hour of confessions.

Curated from six years of the pair's text messages and conversations, Catastrophes reminds us that though the world may be ending, we are not alone.

Marketing By-Line-

It takes a village or a F*cking good friend

Review Quotes:

4.5 ★

'A piece of theatre that will leave you feeling very satisfied' – Kimberly Shaw, Stage Whispers

'A warm hug of a show.' – Kimberley Shaw, Stage Whispers

'Powerful, compelling and the right amount of everything, this hilariously sad show is tragically funny. A celebration of beauty as much as a symptom of angst, this bittersweet dialogue will make mothers cry, and bees rejoice.' Nanci Nott, Artshub

'Part observational comedy, part poignant ode-to-parenthood, Catastrophes is hard to describe, but easy to get lost in.' – Nanci Nott, Artshub

'Catastrophes is a succinct piece of theatre that is both sobering and uplifting, a gentle reminder that you are magnificent and worthy despite feeling like you may be falling short of an impossible standard.' – Hannah Fredriksson, Theatre Travels

Biographies

Renée Newman has been an educator, actor, writer, dramaturg, director and producer for nearly twenty years. Her performance interests/credits include: producer and performer *Those who fall in love like anchors dropped upon the ocean floor* 2014; 2015; 2016; *Sleeping Beauty* 2016; director *Public Space* 2013; writer, performer and producer *Virgie* 2011; 2012 and writer, performer, director and producer *Seeking Basic Needs and Other Tales of Excess* in 2018; dramaturg *I feel fine* 2019; *slow burn*, together 2021, and *Beginning At The End (of Capitalism)* 2021. She is a lecturer/researcher/research supervisor for WAAPA/ECU.

Ella Hetherington has worked extensively as an actor, physical performer, producer and contemporary performance maker across a range of performance disciplines. As an actor, deviser and collaborator she has worked with all the major Western Australian theatre companies, *The Last Great Hunt*, *Sensorium*, *aMoment*, *Steamworks*, *littleY*, *Emma Fishwick*, *Renegade Productions*, *Encounter* and *kdm Industries*. She has toured internationally as a physical performer with her own projects and created works with companies such as *Patch*, *La Fura Del Baus*, *Erth*, *Legs on the Wall* and *Force Majeure*. As a writer she has had works commissioned by *WASO*, *Bizircus*, *The WA Museum* with her first major work *ShadowBoxing* being commissioned, produced and toured by *Black Swan State Theatre Company*.

Mark Halsam's practice is a hybrid of technical production, design, direction and performance, with a particular focus upon raw performance styles and the integration of media into contemporary performance. He established *kdmindustries* in 2009 as a vehicle for cross-artform collaborations and remains as the company's Artistic Director. He has built major projects with *erth Visual and Physical*, *Performing Lines*, *Marregeku*, *Branch Nebula*, *Stalker Theatre*, *The Farm*, *Legs on the Wall*, *Co3 Contemporary Dance*, *Force Majeure*, *Company B* and *Sydney Theatre Company* as well as unique festival performances with artists such as *Wesley Enoch*, *Nigel Jamieson* and *Shaun Gladwell*. He has lit some of the world's top DJs (*Fatboy Slim*, *Carl Cox*, *Sasha*) and fashion houses (*Alexander MacQueen*; *Gucci*).

Emma Fishwick is a Perth based artist who lives and works on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja, WA. Emma's practice often questions whether dance can achieve the often-complex connections between the human and non-human, working across multiple mediums/practices. Some of these mediums are movement, photographic image, film, scenography and scholarship. Emma has worked extensively across Australia and abroad, is a member of the STRUT Dance Board, a lecturer and supervisor at WAAPA and is a mentor for artists with a disability via support provider, My Place. Her recent choreographic works include Slow Burn, Together (2021 Perth Arts Festival), Dance, Quiet Riot (2018) and microLandscapes (2016).

Ben Collins has a background in jazz performance and education, Ben has worked as a sound designer and composer in theatre since 2008. He has worked throughout Australia and toured nationally and internationally in bands both jazz and electronic. He continues to explore the use of technology in the composition of sound and music, and teaches design and audio technology at WAAPA. Ben is most interested in collaboration across varied creative disciplines, the use of field recordings in his design process and making music in larger ensembles.

William Gammel is a 27-year-old emerging visual theatre maker working in design, performance, movement, and film. Currently residing and working on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar, Gammel recently graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts with a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Performance Making) in 2022.

MARKETING COLLATERAL AND ASSETS

Artwork-

Poster-

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ajPEblgy71BlIat8whVm98NLNBjM8WFw?usp=drive_link

Hero Image-

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yVjVaET_TfZ1vTf6iPKpANID9_Dy-j94?usp=drive_link

(please credit Aaron Claringbold)

Production Images-

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1a2SSQp69nj0re2S0Y0M2poVkDcmFs4Ia?usp=drive_link

(please credit Emma Fishwick)

Video -

2min Trailer

<https://youtu.be/YZCYMYsmV8I?si=eCbPXhfnebCJJ4jf>

60sec Trailer

Coming soon!

Archival

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/0ywulukkb4gxmepmaz7pp/Catastrophes-V7-CW-Only.mp4?rlkey=5lt1bh9wayc8tg4i0ali5vry&e=1&st=jvpa0vdy&dl=0>

Media Coverage

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Lu0BasRNxyNuGTepRX4hFnnsP3QmGhX1?usp=drive_link

Website Link-

<https://www.ellahetherington.me/catastrophes>

Media Release- Premiere Season 2023

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HI-NjnkKe7uwyFielisHR3WHXJg1qlp2/view?usp=drive_link

Premiere Season Program -

<https://catastrophes.pica.org.au/>

Required Logos

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rsQnhID4F-qN1VliaLlvWO0dtV-laA9n?usp=drive_link

Social Media Handles -

@84ellas

@whatnewman

@circuitwest

@circuitwest.sotg

@DLGSCarts

@deptlgsc

Other Information

Education Resources (PICA)

<https://pica.org.au/catastrophes-learning/>

Audience Feedback/Culture Counts

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qEROOQjsOGkFZX07FANwWIVlYsp7PbWb?usp=drive_link

Previous Social Media Campaign Example

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12UFWcmSiFTRLsVuE5Ffbp997v_9QeMh?usp=drive_link