

# Creative Adventures in Sustainable Touring

The purpose of this document is to stimulate conversation and inspire solutions to a touring system under stress in the face of the Climate and Ecological Emergency.

At this moment, the end of 2023, with the recent United Nations Committee of the Parties (COP28) meeting in Dubai, it has been recorded that despite years of scientific evidence, international commitments to emissions reduction and increased public awareness about the Climate Crisis, emissions continue to rise. This is primarily due to failure to take the required action and drastically reduce our use of fossil fuels. The Australian Government became a signatory to the Paris Agreement in 2016 in a global initiative to stop the world from warming more than 1.5 degrees. We have committed to reducing emissions by 43% by 2030. However, emissions are still growing.

***“Artists and cultural workers have often led new initiatives, informing attitudes and behaviours that support change. When change is so desperately needed, arts workers also need support to help their communities and audiences imagine and rehearse much needed action.”***

There was a time when people travelled less and more slowly, when touring players and circuses would come to town, bringing new ideas from far flung places. Now everyone is the circus, constantly on the move. We are all being called to consider the impact, our supply chains and use of resources, then commit to making change and a liveable future. In our current systems this inevitably means less travel in both making and touring of works, with opportunities to find new ways to create, exchange and share.

## How?

We hope to provide some interesting alternatives and pause for thought about bold new ideas and solutions in performing arts touring. This documents explores alternative models in four categories:

1. First Nations First touring model, pages 2-6
2. Sharing & exchange without travelling, pages 7-12
3. Lower emissions travelling & deep engagement, pages 13-17
4. Travelling arts projects, pages 18-21
5. Cultural networks and orgs focused on Climate Action, pages 23-28
6. The path to Transition, page 29

It's normal to feel resistance, a big 'but' that rises to defend current systems. We must change and keep exploring ideas, values, and new ways forward. You may have suggestions to help lead this journey. This is the creative challenge...

This document includes networks and cultural organisations both in Australia and internationally that are putting Climate Action at the heart of their work.

## 1/ FIRST NATIONS FIRST



The Visitors by Jane Harrison, created by Moogahlin Performing Arts, image Daniel Boud

***“To begin to understand the importance of Country to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we have to grasp that the term means so much more than land, earth, sea, or sky – Country isn’t close to the nouns we use in English. Rather, a connection to Country is better explained as a sense of belonging and identity to the original people of Australia. That connection to Country and land is deeply spiritual, a relationship formed in the footsteps of ancestors.”*** Evolve Communities

This connection and respect for the living world not only aligns with urgently needed Climate Action but can lead us with strong principles and protocols. Following Indigenous leadership that is held in Care for Country, Care for Kin (all living things), Respect for Elders and Responsibility for Future Generations, could help direct holistic Climate Action initiatives and be of benefit to all Australians.

**First Nations first** is a pillar of the REVIVE National Cultural Strategy in recognition of the oldest continuous living culture in the world, uniquely Australian and inextricably connected to Country, the natural environment and place. With regards to touring we can learn a lot from the restoration of traditional practices taking place all over Australia. Even the idea of being ‘Welcomed to Country’ offers insights into what it means to be a stranger travelling on somebody else’s land, the responsibilities and opportunities to share and exchange.

## a) Saltwater Freshwater Alliance – Annual Saltwater Freshwater Festival



Image: Saltwater Freshwater Alliance website

**PROJECT:** Day-long Aboriginal cultural festival held annually, produced by Saltwater Freshwater Alliance

**WHERE & WHEN:** Rotating location each year in the Saltwater Freshwater region of the Mid-North Coast NSW during Reconciliation Week

**PRESENTATION:** Festival; outdoor, site-specific. Supported by a year round program of engagement

**TRAVEL MODE:** Local travel only – ‘micro touring’

*Saltwater Freshwater Festival* is a celebration of Country and culture. It began in 2010 with the mission of celebrating and sharing authentic Aboriginal living culture within the alliance and the wider community to create a positive, inclusive family day for all communities to enjoy. It is the only Aboriginal cultural festival of its kind in regional NSW, a showcase of local culture, skills, music, dance, art, lifestyle, and culinary talent. This self-determined nomadic Aboriginal cultural Festival moves to different locations each year to cover the Four Nations - Gumbaynggirr, Dughutti, Biripi and Worimi, within the Saltwater Freshwater footprint on the Mid North Coast of NSW.

The alliance has representatives of ten Local Aboriginal Land Councils including Karuah, Forster, Purfleet Taree, Bunyah (Wauchope), Birpai (Port Macquarie), Kempsey, Thungutti (Bellbrook), Unkya (Macksville), Bowraville and Coffs Harbour. Saltwater Freshwater Festival honours the natural environment of the mid north Coast as essential to Indigenous culture and strengthening relationship between different Nations helps strengthen Country and the region. It offers a beautiful example of regional partnerships in action.

## b) Plant a Promise by Henrietta Baird – Saltwater tour 2025



Image: Jacqui Manning

**PROJECT:** First Nations-led, four-part performance & cultural participation work

**WHERE & WHEN:** Currently in development, Saltwater tour planned for 2025

**PRESENTATION:** Regional PACs, locations to be determined first by Elder meetings and invitations

**TRAVEL MODE:** By train - 'slow touring' – following the ancient Saltwater pathway up the East Coast

Henrietta Baird is a proud Kuku Yalanji woman from Far North Queensland. Inspired by the 2019/20 Summer of fires, her new work *Plant a Promise* is in four parts: dance, installation, weaving conversations and community planting sessions. Through the show fires burn, eucalyptus and politics are examined, and Country is honoured. Participants are invited to add epicormic growth to the stark set, put their hands in the earth and leave with a promise to look after country.

As we all struggle to respond to the growing challenges of the Climate and Ecological Emergency; *Plant a Promise* offers lyrical provocations and spaces in which to remember and reflect, with practical ways to contribute to solutions. The *Plant a Promise* team are exploring how to tour this work by rail, taking it from Gadigal Land in Sydney back to Kuku Yalanji Country, Henrietta's ancestral lands, following the ancient saltwater pathway up the East Coast of Australia.

In order to honour all the Countries, we will be passing through the first step is a pre-tour exploration is to meet with Elders along the route, exchange stories about environmental impacts and threats, asking if they are interested in receiving this work to raise awareness of these issues and catalyse action on their Country. We aim to bring local arts centres to these conversations.

*Plant a Promise* is created with the generous support of Critical Path, Carriageworks, Create NSW and Creative Australia.

c) **SILENCE - Choreographed by Thomas E.S. Kelly**



Image: Simon Woods

**PROJECT:** First Nations-led dance work, building a national call for Treaty

**WHERE & WHEN:** Currently touring through Blak Dance, premiered

**PRESENTATION:** Regional PACs, with strong engagement program

**TRAVEL MODE:** Built on a residency model with deep cultural engagement over time in each place

SILENCE is an urgent call for TREATY, highlighting the stories and struggles of Blak communities since colonisation. Through SILENCE, Karul Projects take their place in the lineage of fierce First Nations makers calling for Sovereignty.

Choreographed by Thomas E.S. Kelly, SILENCE is a powerful dance performance, featuring seven performers on a stage slowly engulfed in dirt, representing the call for Land Back.

Dynamic live percussion drives the dancers' exploration of past, present, alternate realities and dreamscapes of the milky way and Murun, the emu in the sky.

[Karul Projects](#) is an emerging First Nations professional contemporary dance company based on Minjungbal Jogan, founded in 2017 by Thomas E.S. Kelly, Minjungbal-Yugambah, Wiradjuri and Ni-Vanuatu, and Taree Sansbury, Kurna, Narrunga and Ngarrindjerri.

#### d) Baiame's Ngunnhu Festival – Moogahlin Performing Arts



The girls and boys at the Corroboree. Image by Stephen Wilson Barker

**PROJECT:** Biennial cultural festival celebrating connection for the local tribes of the Ngunnhu

**WHERE & WHEN:** Different locations in Brewarrina, NSW, Reconciliation week June

**PRESENTATION:**

**TRAVEL MODE:** Local travel – ‘micro touring’

*Baiame's Ngunnhu Festival* is in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, Baiame's Ngunnhu is a celebration of the connection that local communities have with the Barwon River, the life blood of the Ngemba, Baranbinja, Morowari, Kula, Naualko, Ualarai, Weilwan, Kamilaroi, Kamu, and Paarkinji communities. The Brewarrina Fish Traps, or as they are traditionally known Baiame's Ngunnhu, are a complex network of river stones arranged to form ponds and channels that catch fish. Known as one of the oldest human-made structures in the world.

Moogahlin Performing Arts acknowledge and pay tribute to the Ngemba people, the custodians of Baiame's Ngunnhu, those of whom are with the ancestors and those living today. The festival is presented by Moogahlin Performing Arts with strong local partnerships in the Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum, Brewarrina Shire Council, Brewarrina LALC, and the Bre RSL Club. Artistic Director, Lily Shearer describes this setting as our ‘Landscape Parliament’, the Ngunnhu has been a gathering place of many tribes Ngemba, Murrawarri, Barinbinja, Weilwan, Gomerioi, Ualarai/Yuwaalaraay, Koam/ Kooma and Kula.

Baiame's Ngunnhu Festival is a social impact project through the combination of Ceremony, Celebration, Creativity, and Protest that has grown through partnerships and audience participation. This project does not tour. Lily Shearer lives in Brewarrina and also works with Moogahlin in their office at Carriageworks, on Gadigal Land in Sydney. Making a local festival connected to Country and community maintains strong cultural connections for Moogahlin's other work.

## 2/ SHARING & EXCHANGE WITHOUT TRAVELLING

Travel and transport are two of the greatest challenges for the Performing Arts Sector in Australia. According to Monash University's Just Transitions report 2022; 'Australia's vehicles are amongst the most polluting in the world, with carbon emissions higher than in the EU or the United States and contributing to a fifth of the country's total emissions. Efficiency standards, the elimination of the internal combustion engine, and targets for net zero mobility are below international expectations. Yet mobility transitions mean more than simply moving to low-carbon technologies; they also require a shift in the meanings, routines, and practices that shape mobilities within society. They also require attention to social inequalities in order to create a just transition.'

Artists and audiences all long to be on the move and in-person connection remains a challenge on this vast continent. In the face of Climate Catastrophe and eco systems collapse, the current levels of travel cannot be sustained. This begs the question; How can we stay meaningfully connected and continue to learn from the wealth of knowledge and experience in other places without travelling? What follows are some creative solutions to that question.

### a) BiDiNG TiME (1987-2023) – Pippa Bailey - AUSTRALIA / UK



Images: Pippa Bailey, Tromolo Productions & Brit School

**PROJECT:** Long form international project, sharing an unfinished text & inviting locally adapted shows

**WHERE & WHEN:** Multi-location project, open to engagement

**PRESENTATION:** First performed in a Sydney café, adapted for venues including Summerhall, Edinburgh; various shops in Tonbridge town centre UK, Brit School theatre, London; Calais residential camp, France; Country Halls, regional NSW.

**TRAVEL MODE:** Adapted locally, no travel

This long form performing arts project, is centred on a young woman's 'coming of age' story, made in response to global environmental and economic crisis.

BiDiNG TiME is a glittering ambitious experiment to create live events based on a story shared around the world. It's an invitation to make theatre, in many different ways, and honour local culture and local resources by offering a 'fair trade' model founded in ideas of creative commons.

The invitation is to adapt the shared story locally and find ways to connect it to the place where you live. It invites creatives to play with the source material and become a custodian for the story in your setting to support young women and the social changes needed to meet the challenges of our times.

Started in Sydney in 1987 and toured to Melbourne and Adelaide in 1992, the BiDiNG TiME story was reimagined into a participatory project in 2007 and adapted by hundreds of artists in a range of productions all using the original story as their inspiration. BiDiNG TiME is specifically written in capitalised letters, except for the small ‘i’, a reminder that this project is focused on shared action.

Following 5 productions in the UK and Europe in 2012, Mudgee based artist Sam Paine created an Australian *Biding Time* first staged reading at Dubbo’s Artlands regional arts conference in 2016 and undertook a country halls tour to five villages in central west NSW in 2020. In 2023, Pippa has returned to the project with original collaborator Sarah Butler and thanks to residency space at Shark Island Institute, has been updating the unfinished text with ambition to create a new participatory iteration using traditional media, focused on green transition. <http://www.bidingtime.org>

## b) Come to where I am – Critical Stages – AUSTRALIA



Image: Critical Stages

**PROJECT:** 10-minute stories created by playwrights to share perspectives of place

**WHERE & WHEN:** Online - 2020 (during COVID-19)

**PRESENTATION:** Created to be shared virtually, focused on sharing local context during lock down

**TRAVEL MODE:** Adapted locally, no travel

In 2020, during COVID-19, writers from across the country were commissioned to create a new 10-minute story that was made into a short video postcard – a snapshot of where they live – the places, people and environment that shapes their experience as Australians and artists. They took many forms – autobiographical monologues, new works of fiction, and contemporary tales based on traditional stories. This project was an initiative of UK’s Paines Plough and Critical Stages Touring, Australia’s national touring theatre company.

These new works offered local insights and celebrated the huge diversity of environment and people across our vast nation. During the global pandemic (a predicted symptom of Climate Change) this project speaks to ongoing need to build curiosity about people in different contexts and their unique connections to place. <https://criticalstages.com.au/whats-on/come-to-where-i-am/>

The four volumes of stories now live on as on-demand presentations in our [Screening Room](#) and on the [Paines Plough](#) website.

c) **White Rabbit Red Rabbit – Nassim Soleimanpour – IRAN**



**PROJECT:** A shared script and performance instructions are performed by local performers

**WHERE & WHEN:** has been performed in 78 Countries and translated into 30 languages since 2011

**PRESENTATION:** Originally performed in a studio theatre, multi-location, performed in a range of venues

**TRAVEL MODE:** Adapted locally, no travel

One of the most toured plays in the contemporary history of theatre.

No rehearsals. No director. No set... No Travel!

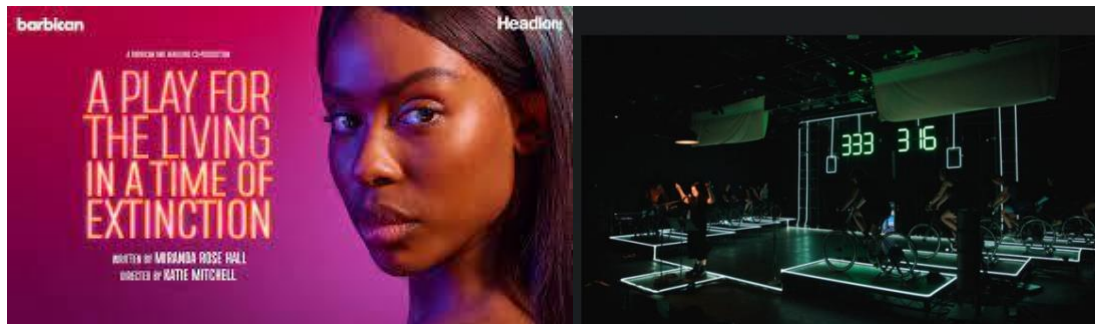
A different local actor reads the script cold for the first time at each performance. *"I was born on Azar 19th, 1360 in Tehran. That's Tehran, December 10th, 1981 in Christian years..."* Forbidden to leave his country, playwright Nassim Soleimanpour distilled the experience of an entire generation in a wild, utterly original play. WHITE RABBIT RED RABBIT is a work about contemporary Iran and of Nassim's generation. A generation born amidst the hardship of the Iran-Iraq war. A generation of computer-literate, well-informed young people who have never known an Iran other than the Islamic Republic.

Since its joint premiere in 2011 in Edinburgh and Summerworks festival WHITE RABBIT RED RABBIT has been translated into more than 30 different languages and been performed over 3000 times by some of the biggest names in theatre and film including actors John Hurt, Whoopi Goldberg, Sinead Cusack, Marcus Brigstocke, Dominic West, and film director Ken Loach. Australian actors include Geraldine Turner, Amanda Muggleton and Sam Longey.

<https://www.nassimsoleimanpour.com/whiterabbitredrabbit>

This playwright did not intend to make an environmentally sustainable work but Red Rabbit White Rabbit has led to more discussion about related issues of globalisation, cultural exclusion, and the need for intercultural understanding in a rapidly changing world. These are the principles of Climate Justice. All environmental action offers opportunities to embed Human Rights and find ingenious ways to travel ideas from places we may never visit.

d) A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction – Headlong Theatre - UK



**PROJECT:** One woman show, powered by bicycles and a community choir

**WHERE & WHEN:** First created at Theatre Vidy-Lausanne, Switzerland 2021 & remounted at Barbican by Headlong Theatre Company, London 2023

**PRESENTATION:** Mainstage theatre show, workshop toured to help prepare local works

**TRAVEL MODE:** Adapted locally, no travel for performers, artists travel in advance

*Naomi is part of a theatre company who have made a play especially for you, those living through extinction, but the actors haven't shown up yet. In the meantime, Naomi has a plan.*

This innovative one woman show directed by Katie Mitchell takes us on a life-changing journey to confront the urgent ecological disaster that is unfolding around us. Part ritual, part battle cry, and powered entirely by bicycles, this fiercely feminist production is a moving exploration of what it means to be human in this era of man-made extinction. Featuring live music from Citizens of the World Choir.

<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2023/event/katie-mitchell-headlong-a-play-for-the-living>

The marketing for this show primarily sells itself on two decidedly intriguing USPs: “**a brilliant touring production model, the first of its kind, where the production tours but the people do not**”, with all lighting and sound for the show produced live, by on-stage cyclists sourced from the local community at each tour stop.

The concept for this work is to match the machinery of making and touring the production with the content and themes of the performance. This alignment asks us all to consider the machinery that supports and enables a performance to take place and how we can limit resource use through supply chains to local places. Like Red Rabbit White Rabbit, this work engages local communities in leading production.

e) At home in Gaza and London - Station House Opera (2016-23) – UK



Image: Rob Harris

**PROJECT:** An international intercultural exchange between London and Gaza

**WHERE & WHEN:** Various theatres in London and Gaza, five iterations since 2016

**PRESENTATION:** Simultaneous performance in two settings using digital technology to connect

**TRAVEL MODE:** No travel for performances, some artists travelled to set up this exchange

At Home in Gaza and London follows the lives of people living in two locations separated by great political, economic, and physical divides.

By using a mix of live-streaming and recorded video, a single performance space is created where artists work together. They occupy each other's homes, streets, and other social spaces. Sharing their everyday behaviour and concerns, as they dissolve into each other or become ghostly protagonists in the drama.

<https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/project/at-home-in-gaza-and-london>

Many of the collaborators in the production are still living in Gaza. They have lost family members, friends, and homes. One of them, Ayah Abdulrahman died of cancer in 2019, having received intermittent yet insufficient treatment due to the blockade on Gaza. Both of the theatres that Station House Opera have worked in have been destroyed in ongoing conflicts. The project has been resurrected during the Israel/Gaza war in November 2023, returning to the space to share messages from the Gazan team and trying to connect to some of the participants live.

This international project is environmentally sustainable because the exchange takes place virtually, live as part of the performance. It offers audiences in both countries opportunity to connect virtually to strangers in another very different reality and raises awareness of the conditions and challenges of many people in faraway places.

f) Climate Change Theatre Action - USA / CANADA



**PROJECT:** global festival of short 10-minute plays about the Climate Crisis

**WHERE & WHEN:** biennial festival of 50 commissions, available to perform anywhere during festival time

**PRESENTATION:** scripts are shared virtually and performances take place in different local settings

**TRAVEL MODE:** Adapted locally, no travel

This global festival of short plays about the climate crisis that brings communities together to take local and global action on climate. Every other year, 50 professional playwrights, representing all inhabited continents as well as several cultures and Indigenous nations, are commissioned to write five-minute plays about an aspect of the climate crisis based on a prompt. This collection of plays is then available to potential organizers interested in presenting an event in their community during the festival's time window.

CCTA was originally conceived by Elaine Ávila, Chantal Bilodeau, Roberta Levitow, and Caridad Svich following a model pioneered by [NoPassport Theatre Alliance](https://www.nopassporttheatrealliance.com/). It has since evolved into a U.S.-Canada collaboration between the Arts & Climate Initiative and the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts. <https://www.climatechangetheatreaction.com/about/>

### 3/LOW EMISSIONS TRAVELLING & DEEP ENGAGEMENT

The following artists and projects align with a groundswell of ideas about slowing down. If the speed of progress has created the current crises, then slowing is part of the solution.

In 1986, Carlo Petrini, angry at a new McDonald's in the center of Rome, gave birth to the Slow Movement. Slow has a long philosophical pedigree, from Daoism to Descartes. It also features in Japanese aesthetic culture. Slow eating, slow culture, and slow social events are three ways that you can benefit from more slowness in life. This thinking has also informed initiatives such as the 4-day week, slow food, and slow travel.

With growing awareness that connecting to the natural world and paying attention to changing seasons and shifting ecosystems will help us transition to a net zero future, the slow movement has become a significant part of the climate solutions story. Here are ways in which artists have approached slow touring.

Artists in residence forms a part of this section, slowing the touring process by spending more time in a given setting, getting to know the community and offering ways to get involved in art making/performance as a critical part of the process.

#### a) Paper Escaper - Terrapin - AUSTRALIA



**PROJECT:** Small touring show for....

**WHERE & WHEN:**

**PRESENTATION:**

**TRAVEL MODE:** No freight/no flight/residency model

Benny, the plucky puppet protagonist in *The Paper Escaper*, knows they are destined for greater things than a simple pop-up book. But in a world that's trying to squash Benny between its pages – from a monstrous chomping sketchpad to a disillusioned illustrator – Benny will need the help of new friends to achieve their dreams.

This bright new puppetry work from Terrapin tells a story of determination, friendship and the power of following your own path.

From their island home in Tasmania, Terrapin create worlds of creative adventure. Their-theatre productions transport children and families to incredible places with narratives of adventure, humour and beauty. Terrapin's interactive installations use simple technologies in dazzling ways to make audiences of all ages essential creators in transforming public space. In 2022 Terrapin embarked on a pathway to certified carbon neutrality.

#### **b) Saturday Night Social - Dance Makers Collective - AUSTRALIA**



Image: DMC

**PROJECT:** Artists host a participatory dance event in local venues as part of a residency

**WHERE & WHEN:**

**PRESENTATION:** In theatres/ local dance halls with opportunity to reinforce or rekindle social dance

**TRAVEL MODE:** No freight; no touring party; artists in residence

Dance Makers Collective hosts a solid hour of joyous participatory dancing with your partners, family and friends. This event, a spin-off of Dance Makers Collective's 2020 Sydney Festival hit *The Rivoli*, takes inspiration from the peak dance hall and disco eras of the 1960s and 70s, reimagined for the modern lover of dancing.

Whether you have a dance partner, like a night out on the town, or have a boogie in your bedroom, *The Saturday Social* is the place for you.

DMC is a vital force in the independent dance sector in NSW. It is our democratic structure, expansive network and our commitment to shared practice that sets us apart. We are independent artists who understand first-hand that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. DMC is the only collective-led dance organisation in Australia.

c) so near | So Far (SNSF) by Emma Che Reathke (in development) - AUSTRALIA



**SO NEAR  
SO FAR**

**PROJECT:** interactive performance between two countries about our changing relationship to air travel

**WHERE & WHEN:** In development, hoping to premiere in 2024/25

**PRESENTATION:** Waiting rooms - foyers, airport lounges, galleries, train stations , doctors surgeries ?

**TRAVEL MODE:** Participatory, hybrid, small touring party

SNSF is a new interactive performance work between two countries that looks at our changing relationship to air travel. Using playful, social and existential provocations, audiences are enrolled as travellers on your final travel experience. Wearing headphones you are guided on a journey in an airport waiting lounge where you meet strangers and glimpse into the world of two characters' long distance relationship, Harold and Rose.

In the lead up to the event, text messages from So Near So Far Travel invite audiences to phone in and record their significant destination. For the actual show, you will arrive at an airport waiting lounge. While you wait, you will meet three main characters who take you on a journey of a different kind, performing across live and mediated domains. Harold is physically in the audience while his close companion Rose Zooms in from overseas via the Departure screens.

With an expert guide plugged into your ear, "So Near So Far Travel" takes you on a journey with Harold and Rose through changing landscapes of dis/connection and longing. As their relationship buckles and evolves from the challenges of physical distance, limited time and conflicting desires, we are invited to contemplate our wanderings and the way we stay connected through the world. This "new travel experience" has been conceived by a travel agency forced to pivot and now provides the cultural service of active reflection on travel. 'Travellers of the world' are ushered into a liminal, contemplative space.

So Near So Far has had a research stage at the Brisbane Powerhouse in 2021 and then a short creative development at QPAC in 2022. In early 2024 So Near So Far will do a final development to develop the live hybrid performance for foyers (theatre and airports) and audio version for galleries and transport spaces.

#### d) Baltic Takeover – FINLAND (ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA)



**PROJECT:** Curators from Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania ‘takeover’ URB Festival, Finland

**WHERE & WHEN:** Helsinki, June 2023

**PRESENTATION:** A range of performances over 3 days

**TRAVEL MODE:** Slow travel from the Baltic states to Helsinki, Finland

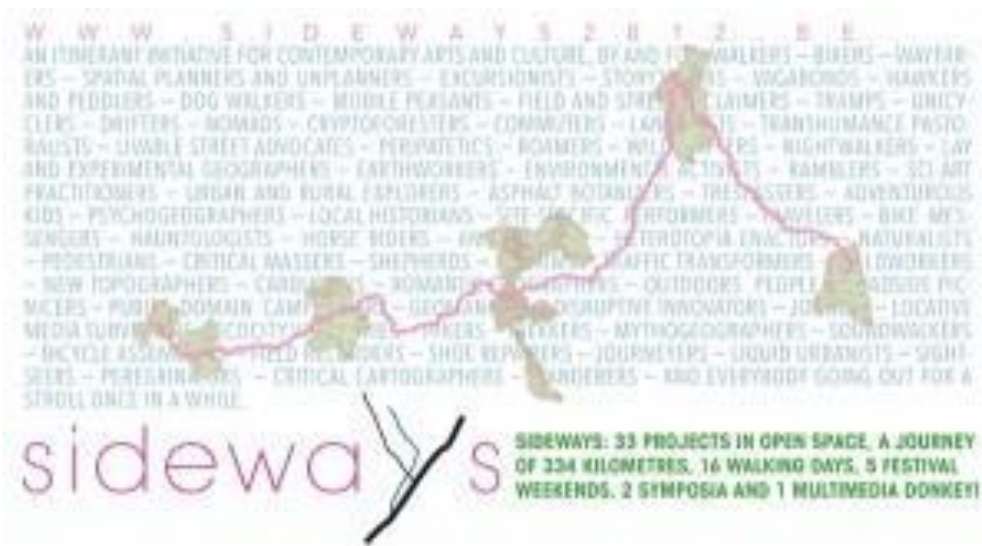
Baltic Take Over sounds like the beginning of an anecdote – Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian enter a theater. Is this an attempt to find Baltic identity or to export Baltic performing arts? A geopolitical lecture? Well, Baltic Take Over is a festival, a radical experiment, a crash course on Baltic arts, and the destination of a road trip from Lithuania to Helsinki. Curators from each country have invited artists from all three countries to take over the city of Helsinki.

When talking about the Baltics it’s hard to ignore the question “What is this Baltic identity?”. The keyword ‘Eastern European’ is not exotic anymore and Post-Soviet as a marketing article is awfully outdated. Is Baltics merely a geopolitical framing, shared culture and history, or common taste in arts? Apart from the [Baltic human chain](#) and coastlines of amber, is there anything else that could form “an identity”?

Sometimes a foreign gaze is necessary to see clearly – that’s why the Australian-born curator and producer Bek Berger took the matter into her own hands by initiating the festival Baltic Take Over. The festival co-curated by the New Theatre Institute of Latvia, Kanuti Gildi SAAL, and Lithuanian Dance Information Centre provides contexts in which to present Baltic work, under the lens of Baltic curators. The Baltic Take Over is in collaboration with URB Festival ([www.urb.fi](http://www.urb.fi)), Kiasma Theatre, Annantalo, Viirus Theatre, Mad House Helsinki and with the help from Eskus, Takamo, Tanssin Talo, TINFO and Circus Dance Finland. Baltic Take Over has been centrally funded by Baltic Culture Fund and The Nordic-Baltic NGO Program from the Office of Nordic Ministers Latvia, Estonian Ministry of Culture, Lithuanian Culture Council and State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia. <https://baltictakeover.com/about>

This courageous new project took place in 2023 was an expedition and exploration, touring work from neighbouring countries to their wealthy host and taking over.

e) Sideways Walking Arts Festival 2012 - BELGIUM



**PROJECT:** Month long 'tour' of Belgium across 334km by foot, 5 Festival weekends

**WHERE & WHEN:** Across Belgium in 2012

**PRESENTATION:** Five local venues hosted the festival program across 5 weekends

**TRAVEL MODE:** Walking tour

The backbone of the Sideways festival was a 4-week expedition through Belgium, from West to East, between August 17th and September 17th, 2012. During the 5 festival weekends, the mobile laboratory takes a halt at 5 festival locations: Menen (19.8), Herzele (25-26.8), Brussels (1-2.9), Turnhout (8-9.9) and Zutendaal (15-16.9). Here, the different artistic trails are entwined into a knot of activity. These 5 festival locations host the actual festival programme: a series of performances, talks & walks, live art, site-specific interventions, and walk-shops. <https://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org/wan-events/wan-sideways/>

This festival 'moving at the speed of a donkey' travelled with a real donkey that carried all the technical equipment required for the festival.

## 4/ARTISTS TRAVELLING PROJECTS

### a) Artist as Family - The art of Free Travel – AUSTRALIA



**PROJECT:** Artist family tour the east coast of Australia by bicycle

**WHERE & WHEN:** Daylesford to Cape York, 2013

**PRESENTATION:** The trip was followed by a bicycle book tour of independent bookshops 2016

**TRAVEL MODE:** No freight; no touring party; artists on the road

Patrick, Meg, and their family had built a happy, sustainable life in regional Victoria. But in late 2013, they found themselves craving an adventure: a road trip. With Zephyr (10), Woody (1) and Zero their Jack Russell, they set off on an epic 6,000km year-long cycling journey along Australia's east coast, from Daylesford to Cape York and back.

Artist as family aimed to travel cheaply, as slow travel is more expensive and takes more time. Their guerrilla camping, hunting, foraging, and bartering offers real world examples of living differently. The team survived on a diet of free food, bush tucker, and the occasional fresh roadkill. They spent time in Aboriginal communities, joined an anti-fracking blockade, documented edible plants, and dodged speeding cars and trucks on the country's most dangerous highways. *The Art of Free Travel* is the remarkable story of a rule-breaking year of ethical living on the road.

<https://www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/art-free-travel/>

## b) Walking Forest – UK



**PROJECT:** Groups of women artists process through outdoor settings carrying trees

**WHERE & WHEN:**

**PRESENTATION:** In theatres/ local dance halls with opportunity to reinforce or rekindle social dance

**TRAVEL MODE:** No freight; no touring party; artists in residence

Walking Forest is a 10-year artwork taking place in sites across the UK exploring links with activism, natural forest networks and communities. The group draw inspiration from trees and the forest ecosystem, in particular the hidden world beneath the forest floor; creative movements of resistance and change making across the world, and the growing call for rights for nature in our legal system.

The Walking Forest manifests in different ways, a collection of women carrying trees and walking through a local festival, town centre or natural landscape. a winter tree vigil and seeding a network of relationships led by women in the UK and internationally and initiates three site-specific public residencies in South Devon, Coventry and Dalby Forest near Scarborough and a mass participation event scheduled to take place during the COP26 Climate Talks in Glasgow in 2021.

*'We are inspired by a call to stand up for the natural world; the energy of a living and life-giving network connecting women Earth Protectors on our doorstep and those around the world; the performative genius of the Suffragettes and the lines from Shakespeare's Macbeth that conjure Birnam Wood's 'moving grove'.* <https://www.walkingforest.co.uk>

Walking Forest combines feminist principles with Climate Action in the understanding that women and girls have still not achieved gender equity in 21<sup>st</sup> Century societies and will be more adversely impacted by Climate Change.

c) **ACTION HERO - Oh Europa – UK**



**PROJECT:** Artists host a participatory dance event in local venues as part of a residency

**WHERE & WHEN:** Europe, 2018 - 2021

**PRESENTATION:** 43 Beacons across Europe, live radio show, installation and book

**TRAVEL MODE:** Campervan – 56,755km

Oh Europa is a creative response to the UK leaving the European Union via the BREXIT vote in 2016. Inspired to talk about all the love stories between the UK and EU, Oh Europa is a collection of works by Action Hero that span a continent and seek to re-imagine the ways in which we think about Europe, and how we continue to share this space together.

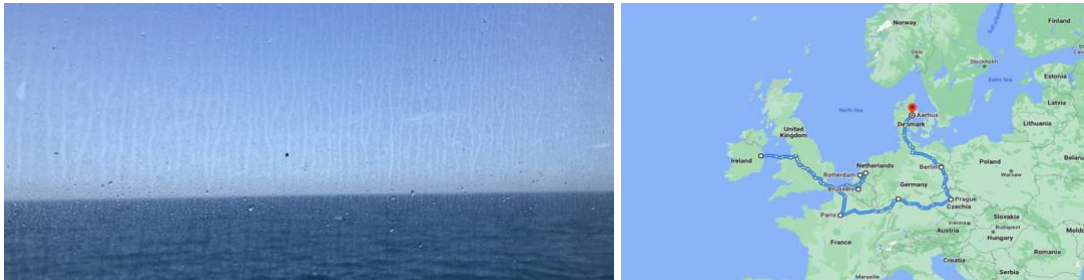
Action Hero travelled across Europe in their motorhome, asking strangers to sing a love song. Beginning their journey in April 2018, the artists have now travelled over 50,000km through 35 European countries, all the while living and working in their van.

Gemma and James from Action Hero have recorded over 1200 love songs, all recorded inside their van and sung by people they've met as they are travelling. The songs are about being in love but also falling out of love: about heartbreak, joy, and hope.

This ever-evolving archive of love songs is broadcasting 24/7 from a network of "beacons" placed by the artists on the borders and edge-spaces across Europe. Situated on invisible boundaries, margins, cultural junctures and geological sedgeland, the love songs will play forever in these special locations, audible to anyone who visits and tunes in. There are 43 beacons across Europe.

Action Hero have created **RadiOh Europa**, a live "radio show" playing love songs sung by people from across Europe which invites the audience to join an act of collective listening over the course of 8 hours. Audiences can tune in online or join the performance in person. Gemma & James have also created **Postcards From The Edge**, a micro-installation inside their van using video from the project with an accompanying book. [Oh Europa](#)

#### d) Surface Tactics – Lian Bell – IRELAND



**PROJECT:** Theatre designer travels from Dublin to Aarhus by sea and rail

**WHERE & WHEN:** 2023

**PRESENTATION:** Report

**TRAVEL MODE:** Sail and Rail

In 2023 Lian Bell decided to research a creative slow travel journey from Ireland to Denmark and has documented her process and learnings.

*“I’m doing this research as an ethical thing, but not just one to do with the pollution of aviation fuel. This journey is also about the ethics of deliberately going slower in an industry that increasingly values speed and productivity.”* <http://lianbell.com/author/lian-bell>

This is an example of how individuals are taking action, forging new paths and rehearsing new travel futures.

## 5/CULTURAL NETWORKS & ORGS FOCUSED ON CLIMATE ACTION

There are many cultural networks and organisations across the world. In recent years some are changing direction or forming new alliances to focus their impact on Climate Justice, green transition and sustainable touring. With a growing consciousness about the need to take a holistic approach, touring and exchanging ideas and practises, is considered one part of the wider cultural ecology that needs to change. Here are some of the cultural organisations putting Climate Action at the heart of their work.

### a) [SEEDMOB – AUSTRALIA](#)



**ORGANISATION:** First Nations Youth led Climate Action

**WHERE & WHEN:**

**MISSION:** Ongoing activism to protect First Nations Country and Sea Country

‘Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing humanity, but we also know it is an opportunity to create a more just and sustainable world.

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at the forefront of climate change, and as young people it’s our generation with the most at stake. It’s our communities on the frontline who need to be at the forefront of change; leading the solutions and building a society that is healthier, cleaner, more just and puts people before profits.

That’s why we launched Seed: Australia’s first Indigenous youth led climate network. We are building a movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people for climate justice. Our vision is for a just and sustainable future with strong cultures and communities, powered by renewable energy.’

Climate Justice is a growing ambition of the Climate Movement and considers the impact of climate change on those who are most vulnerable to its effects — women, young people, and indigenous communities — as a human rights issue.

To support SEED MOB please sign the Heal Country Declaration <https://nt.seedmob.org.au/declaration>

b) [Climarte](#) and [ClimActs](#) – AUSTRALIA (Vic)



**ORGANISATION:** First Nations Youth led Climate Action

**WHERE & WHEN:** Since 2010, Melbourne Victoria

**MISSION:**

Established in 2010, CLIMARTE works to harness the creative power of the arts to inform, engage and inspire action towards a fairer, zero emissions future. Underpinned by climate science, it seeks, through the arts, to amplify and mobilise public responses to the climate crisis. Climarte held a biannual festival over 10 years and in 2022 hosted a shopfront gallery in Richmond, Narm (Melbourne).

Deborah Hart co-founded Climarte with Guy Abrahams in 2010 and initiated ClimActs in 2013, using satire and spectacle to highlight the urgency of the Climate Emergency. Acts include the Climate Guardians, Coal Diggers and Flat Earthers combining performance and Climate activism. *'Based on the best available science, we are calling for a transition to a [zero emissions](#) while drawing down legacy carbon using natural [climate solutions](#) at emergency scale and speed, before 2030.'*

c) [Creative Recovery Network](#) – AUSTRALIA (Qld)



**ORGANISATION:** First Nations Youth led Climate Action

**WHERE & WHEN:**

**MISSION:** Ongoing activism to protect First Nations Country and Sea Country

**Creative Recovery Network** is a not-for-profit organisation working to develop and embed the vital role of culture, creativity, and the arts in Australia's disaster management systems. Their approach is relational, people-centred, and future focused, underpinned by a framework of respect, engagement, and self-determination. With the growing impact of Natural Disasters, Creative Recovery Network is

working with communities and governments to explore how arts and culture can help mitigate, respond, manage, and adapt.

**The National Taskforce for Creative Recovery** is a cross-industry collaboration that brings together key influencers in disaster management, mental health, government, and the arts. It is exploring practical steps to upskill both artists and disaster management teams in the importance of cultural practices in disaster management.

d) **Australian Earth Laws AUSTRALIA (Qld)**



**ORGANISATION:** First Nations Youth led Climate Action

**WHERE & WHEN:**

**MISSION:** Ongoing activism to protect First Nations Country and Sea Country

The Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) is a national not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to increase the understanding and practical implementation of Earth centred governance in Australia, with a focus on law, economics, education, ethics, and the arts.

Led by Dr Michelle Mahoney, AELA offer webinars and other resources. Their Regenerative Songlines Australia is an Indigenous led initiative, working to create continent wide connections, conversations and initiatives that enable people to Care for Country and build regenerative economies and societies.

- led by First Nations peoples and inclusive of all Australians.
- focused on amplifying local and bioregional initiatives, with a view to maintaining diverse approaches, while strengthening interconnections, mutual learning, and real project collaboration and outcomes.
- multidisciplinary and includes regenerative economies, societies, ecological stewardship and design practices; and
- connected to international “regenerative roadmap” partners. <https://www.regenerative-songlines.net.au/>

e) [Cultural Gardeners](#) – Australian Cultural Alliance for Climate Justice – AUSTRALIA (NSW)



**ORGANISATION:** Cultural Gardners, co-convened by Pippa Bailey, Climarte and Arts Front

**WHERE & WHEN:** Monthly online meetings, since 2021

**MISSION:** An alliance of artists and cultural actors taking a leading role in social transition to net zero

Over 300 arts and cultural workers have signed up to this alliance, all deeply concerned with taking action on the converging planetary climate and ecological crises. Australia is at the forefront of these crises. Cultural Gardeners align to First Nations principles of Caring for Country and the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#). We align to a [Just Transition](#) the framework developed by the trade union movement to encompass a range of social interventions needed to secure workers' rights and livelihoods when economies are shifting to sustainable modes that combat climate change and protect biodiversity.

These principles are outlined in the [Paris Agreement](#) and are also embedded in the 17 [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Alongside net zero targets, shortening supply chains and recycling; we believe that artists and the cultural sector must take a leading role in social transition to mitigate further devastation and adapt to a warming climate. Accelerated action is urgently needed. This group meets on the last Tuesday of the month.

f) **Culture Declares Emergency** – UK



**ORGANISATION:** Culture Declares Emergency

**WHERE & WHEN:** Based in London, founded in 2019

**MISSION:** putting action into creative practice, and culture into environmental activism

A network of international and UK-based Hubs, sharing knowledge and practical support to seek justice, work towards regenerative change and provide care through culture, heritage and the arts.

1,692 organisations and individuals have declared already. Build this movement with us by [Declaring](#)

Co-creating a regenerative culture – one that is inclusive, healthy, life-supporting, and adaptable – requires rebuilding relationships between ourselves, with other species and the land. This takes time. [Declaring emergency](#) is just the first step of a journey. You can't do everything, so here are some pathways you can follow – in solidarity with others and learning as you go.

g) [Art Climate Transition](#) – UK/ CROATIA/ MACEDONIA/ LATVIA/ GERMANY/ THE NETHERLANDS/ BELGIUM/ FRANCE/ PORTUGAL/ SLOVENIA



**ORGANISATION:** 10 cultural orgs collaborating to accelerate Climate Action

**WHERE & WHEN:** Across Europe since 2008

**MISSION:** Presenting the arts as a strong designer of possible futures

ACT is a project initiated by 10 cultural operators from 10 European countries, working in the field of performing and visual arts. ACT is a project with the support of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

ACT emerged from the cultural operators of the preceding [Imagine2020](#) project that began in 2008. This European project evolved around raising awareness of the climate crisis and presenting the arts as a strong designer of possible futures. Social awareness and citizen action on these issues recently saw an enormous increase in intensity and spread.

This is an excellent example of how forward-thinking organisations in different places can work together to achieve greater influence and impact.

h) [Green Tease Events](#) - CREATIVE CARBON SCOTLAND



**ORGANISATION:** Creative Carbon Scotland

**WHERE & WHEN:** Based in Edinburgh, Since 2011

**MISSION:** to embed environmental sustainability within the arts and cultural sector in Scotland

Creative Carbon Scotland is a 'peak body' leading the essential role of the arts, screen, cultural and creative industries in contributing to the transformational change to a more environmentally sustainable Scotland. Green Tease is an ongoing informal events programme connecting cultural practices and environmental sustainability across Scotland.

Since 2013 Green Tease has provided a platform for those interested in teasing out the links between the arts, climate change and environmental sustainability through the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and practices. Green Tease events are equally open to people from creative and environmental backgrounds and free to attend with teas and biscuits provided!

Green Tease is an excellent example of how cultural organisations can attract and interact with other sectors, driven by shared purpose.

i) [Perform Europe](#) – IETM, International Performing Arts Network – EU



**ORGANISATION:** IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts

**WHERE & WHEN:** Based in Brussels, Since 2081

**MISSION:** Support collaborative partnerships to reinvent the way we tour across borders.

Perform Europe is a forward-looking funding scheme for the European performing arts sector, The first Perform Europe Edition (2020-2022) and from January to June 2022, 19 partnerships, comprising more

than 85 partners, showed 45 artistic works from all performing arts disciplines more than 250 times across 27 Creative Europe countries and the UK. All projects tested innovative ideas and models for touring with one common goal: redefining how the performing arts can reach audiences in a fairer, more inclusive, and more sustainable way.

The second edition will take place 2024/25 through an open call, launched on 1 December 2023, Perform Europe will support inclusive, diverse, and green touring projects submitted by applicants from the 40 Creative Europe countries. <https://www.ietm.org/en/projects/perform-europe>

IETM, the international performing arts network based In Brussels, is a membership organisation representing, Creative Australia is an Associate member of IETM. The network rewired in 2019/2020 and the membership identified three focus areas: Access and Inclusion, Green Transition and Reimagining the International. Perform Europe aligns with these agendas and is modelling new touring imagined by self-organised arts organisations across Europe.

a) [Yale Climate Connections](#) – USA



**ORGANISATION:**

**WHERE & WHEN:** Based in Brussels, Since 2081

**MISSION:** Support collaborative partnerships to reinvent the way we tour across borders.

This network is interested in the power of storytelling to help us imagine different versions of our shared future. For example, Kim Stanley Robinson's novel [Ministry for the Future](#) describes a world where an oppressive heatwave in India – bearing uncanny resemblance to [recent events](#) – spurs unprecedented action on climate change. In that storyline, climate damages result in societal tipping points, leading to transformation.

Yale Climate Connections is multidisciplinary and connects across sectors, offering a useful model for how we can engage diversely through content about the urgency of this crisis. With so much fake news and misinformation influencing both traditional and social media, there are challenges to the arts where 'truth' is often explored through fiction. Forging new relationships with scientists and scenario modelling that is taking place across Australia the world, often without input from the cultural sector, is vitally important to imagining and achieving green transition.

## 6/THE PATH TO TRANSITION

(Just wondering if you want to put some more markers on the road map? And I may, once again be getting ahead of the purpose of this doc. I don't mean to write on your behalf but some ideas below...

### **Arts on Tour – leading the touring revolution**

After years of consultation and reports Arts on Tour have been leading action to green the performing arts touring system. Partnering with NSW touring organisations Bangarra Dance Theatre, Bell Shakespeare, CDP Theatre Producers, Critical Stages Touring, Monkey Baa Theatre Company, Performing Lines and Sydney Dance Company, The Green Touring Initiative started with a workshop, facilitated by environmental consultant Grace Nye-Butler, where we pulled apart AOT's 2020 tour of Siren Theatre Co's *HMS Pinafore* and succeeded in reducing emissions by 32%.

Having undertaken this work, the enormity of the task and courage required is more apparent.

**Reimagining Playing Australia & funding for touring** – this is an essential part of the process, and we welcome contributions to share local approaches and unite our efforts.

### **Travel challenges in Australia**

It's important to acknowledge that vast distances and lack of good public transport infrastructure makes slow travel a challenging option on this continent. The east coast is relatively well serviced with trains and coaches and the west coast remains an isolated predicament when wanting to connect sustainably across the country. Perhaps it's a moment for the performing arts and tourism sectors to join forces and lobby for greener travel options, particularly to engage with regional and remote parts of Australia.

### **Loving it live in the digital age**

Live performance is our business and our passion. There are so many studies and evidence of the benefit of bringing people together for shared live events. And there are environmental challenges. While there is a lot of talk about digital solutions, these are often missing from the carbon and resource audits, and we hope to balance our need for sustainable live connection with digital solutions.

### **Call to action**

Unprecedented disasters are likely to continue, and we need to be both thinking long term and adapt in the moment, able to respond quickly. Through this work, Arts on Tour is aware of the scale of the task and the courage required to take collective action. We remain committed to a systemic approach and welcome ideas and partnerships with others who are also keen to step into this work. We are determinedly hopeful about the power of artists and cultural workers to create positive change.

### **In 2024 we aim to... ???**

Suggestions

- Support artists to develop new content and solutions to tour sustainably
- Support a group of presenters wanting to experiment with new ways of working
- Work with funders to explore new ways to fund this work
- Partner with like minded organisation to accelerate action across the culture