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Company of 200 prepares for State tour of Festival Show

Big hART, together with actors Lex Marinos, Anne Grigg & Bruce Myles and communities in Wynyard, Latrobe, Glenorchy and Huon Valley have formed the largest theatrical company in the country. This week they come together in workshops, preparing for the world premiere of This Is Living for Ten Days on the Island 2009

This Is Living is not your average theatre company. With over 200 members across Tasmania, This Is Living brings professional actors and an expert production team together with local performers, singing groups, crochet weavers, jam makers, musicians, skaters and school students! A large scale community project building towards a touring theatrical work of scale, This Is Living is about building new social connections, addressing the changing demographic of our community as well as creating a beautiful work of art as the ultimate expression of this process.

The project began 6 months ago with interconnected activities: School students and youth group members have been interviewing the older members of the community, sharing memories of their era and communities; skaters have been practicing their routines for the show and sharing their skills with the older members of the company; photographers have been sharing their archives for the slideshow that forms the show's backdrop; and chorus workshops have involved older community members from diverse backgrounds - teachers, Rotarians, singers, librarians, accountants, tank makers, poet boat builders and business owners - working with Melbourne based choreographer Kelly Alexander they've experimented with "arthritic dance", "text with hearing aids" and "walking frame skating"!

Through these activities This Is Living bridges generations to create understanding, social inclusion and improve quality of life for both old and young. It explores intergenerational participation, generating educational and employment opportunities for young people and highlighting issues requiring discussion at a time when the ageing of Australia's population - and particularly Tasmania with the oldest population of all the States - is increasingly on the social and political agenda. Such demographic change calls for a cultural shift, impacting on our family and friendship structures, the media and products we consume, our attitudes to work, sexuality, and leisure. What does it mean to be a young person in an ageing society?

Glenorchy young person Dean Wyman of Rosetta High School spent a day at Glenview aged care facility, articulating that, *"The experience does not get offered to kids like me anymore. I'm grateful to have such a unique opportunity to interact with people who have obtained such knowledge"*.

With each passing week the friendships have strengthened and now the excitement is building as the Company prepares for Australia's premiere International arts festival, Ten Days on the Island.

Uniquely Tasmanian, Big hART is an arts and social change company highly regarded nationally for its extraordinarily prolific output. It has premiered large scale, highly innovative new works in every Ten Days on the Island Festival, the last 4 Sydney Festivals, as well as Melbourne International Arts Festival, and Perth and Adelaide Festivals. The 2009 Ten Days on the Island Festival is no exception with This is Living, a large performance piece with a cast of 17 - including skateboarders, the elderly, a live band and one of Australia's leading theatrical families.



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Lex Marinos (Kingswood Country) has been involved in almost every production in Big hART's 17 year history. A frequent visitor to the North West Coast over the years, he and his wife Anne Grigg (Home and Away) and their best friend Bruce Myles (Blue Heelers, The Club) were deliberately cast alongside Sophia Marinos - their daughter as Producer - to reflect the "touring theatrical family" of Australian theatre in the past. From the first workshop to the finished product, this unique casting has added an intensity and feeling of yesteryear to the production as the trio play out the secret love triangle, central to the narrative on stage. Is this life imitating art or art imitating life...?

Creative Producer Sophia Marinos comments: *This is one of the largest and most remarkable theatrical companies in the country. **This is Living** celebrates intimate stories from within the community by bringing them to the stage with professional performers and universal themes. It's really rewarding to be developing a project from the grass roots up, bringing together younger and older groups in the community.*

To celebrate the beginning of 2009 and the countdown to the festival, the Company is holding a summer BBQ in each of the 4 communities. The gathering will be an opportunity for the career actors Anne Grigg & Lex Marinos to meet the rest of the family. Young interviewers, older interviewees, skaters, chorus members and other company members will gather to share their involvement in the project. Entertainment will be provided by local musicians and singing groups.

- Wynyard – Friday 9 January 3pm
Wharf Theatre, Wynyard**
- Latrobe – Monday 12 January 1pm
Shearwater Skate Park
Memorial Hall, Latrobe**
- Huon Valley – Tuesday 13 January 3pm
Palais Theatre, Franklin**
- Glenorchy – Wednesday 14 January 1pm
Pulse Youth Health Centre, Glenorchy**

Actors Anne Grigg and Lex Marinos and Creative Producer Sophia Marinos will be available for interviews during each of the 4 Summer BBQ's.

For further enquiries or to arrange an interview or photo please contact:

Sophia Marinos

Creative Producer

0417 286 254 / sophia.marinos@gmail.com

