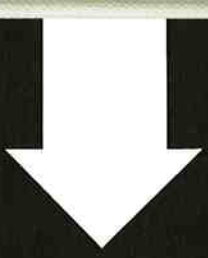


artwork

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The Community Arts Network of SA is a member based organisation. It forms part of a national network of sister organisations in most capital cities across Australia.

AIM

The Community Arts Network aims to support arts development and creative expression at community level toward the ideal of diverse and vibrant community cultures.

COMMUNITY ARTS

Arts practice and creative expression are at the heart of a community's vitality. People have always come together to sing, tell stories, enact rituals, to celebrate, to mourn and to mark significant events in their lives. Besides being able to see great art, people need to actively participate in these activities. This is what is meant by the term community arts, it might be a new name but it is not a new idea.

LOCAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

It is through the things we do together as groups and communities that we gain a sense of collective identity, a sense of place and a sense of belonging. When we value these things a positive concern for our social well being follows and we begin to take charge of our present and shape the future to meet our aspirations.

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Cover: Detail, mosaic armchair, Willmot NSW, artist Cynthia Turner. Photo: Marla Guppy. See article page 16.

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inside out

Kath Walters



Maud Clarke
Photo: Ponch Hawkes

I hurry away from my afternoon with Maud Clarke, director of theatre company *Somebody's Daughter*, promising myself to write something powerful about this extraordinary woman. Is this the same yearning that she inspires in her troupe of players, whose performances have moved and changed so many audiences?

Somebody's Daughter is different: it's made up of women who were once at Fairlea Women's Prison [in Victoria]. The group began on the inside of the prison in 1980 when Clarke, then a student at the Victorian College of the Arts, began taking drama workshops.

'They were fun,' Maud recalls with animation. 'There was this huge old rec hall and we'd be locked in there for two hours. We could do whatever we wanted. We'd have improvisations where we'd all pretend we were at a school dance for a whole hour. And then you'd just hear the jangling of keys outside and you'd know it was time to go.'

Now *Somebody's Daughter* exists both inside and out. For more than ten years the company's performed inside the prison and Clarke's work inside still continues. But, when several of the original cast members finished their sentences and were released, the company decided to continue working in the outside world.

It was then that Melbourne's audiences felt the full force of the theatre created by *Somebody's Daughter*. *Tell Her That I Love Her* opened in 1992, and explored



the choices made by one woman on her release from prison: to go back down the old path or risk embarking on a new kind of life. Drawing the real life experiences of the women in the group, the play revealed the pain and conflict of addiction to drugs. Despite the gruelling content, audiences flocked to the Playbox Theatre and their enthusiasm sparked a return season in 1993. They came back for more in 1994 when Somebody's Daughter performed *Call My Name*, a harrowing account of life in prison, in particular the extraordinary experiences of the women while they were held in men's prisons. Yes, it really does happen.

With box office success the whole project ballooned, leading the company into celebrity and Maud Clark into a lot more work than she had bargained for.

At the door of her terrace [house] in Albert Park, Maud Clark welcomes me into her home. Her eyes are intense and dart about distractedly. Her lounge room is small, elegant and neglected. She steps around the clutter with the gangly step of the very tall. She's tired and down. Her current project at Fairlea is demanding. It's an irony that her work there is being hampered because the women she's working with keep getting released.

Last year, Maud Clark won the \$25,000 Ros Bower Memorial Award for outstanding achievement in community arts. She tells me that the day before she got the news, she was going to 'slit her wrists'. It was funny the way she said it and I laughed. But when she explained more, I wished I hadn't.

Somebody's Daughter was working on *Call My Name* at the time. The production was under pressure from the start, working with a development period of five months, which Clark assures me is short. As well, members of the group were struggling with their own life problems: injuries, illness and family. Then, tragically, two of the group died.

This is part of the price Clark pays for working in the way she does. The members of the group have tough, painful lives compounded by their years in prison. Some are struggling with