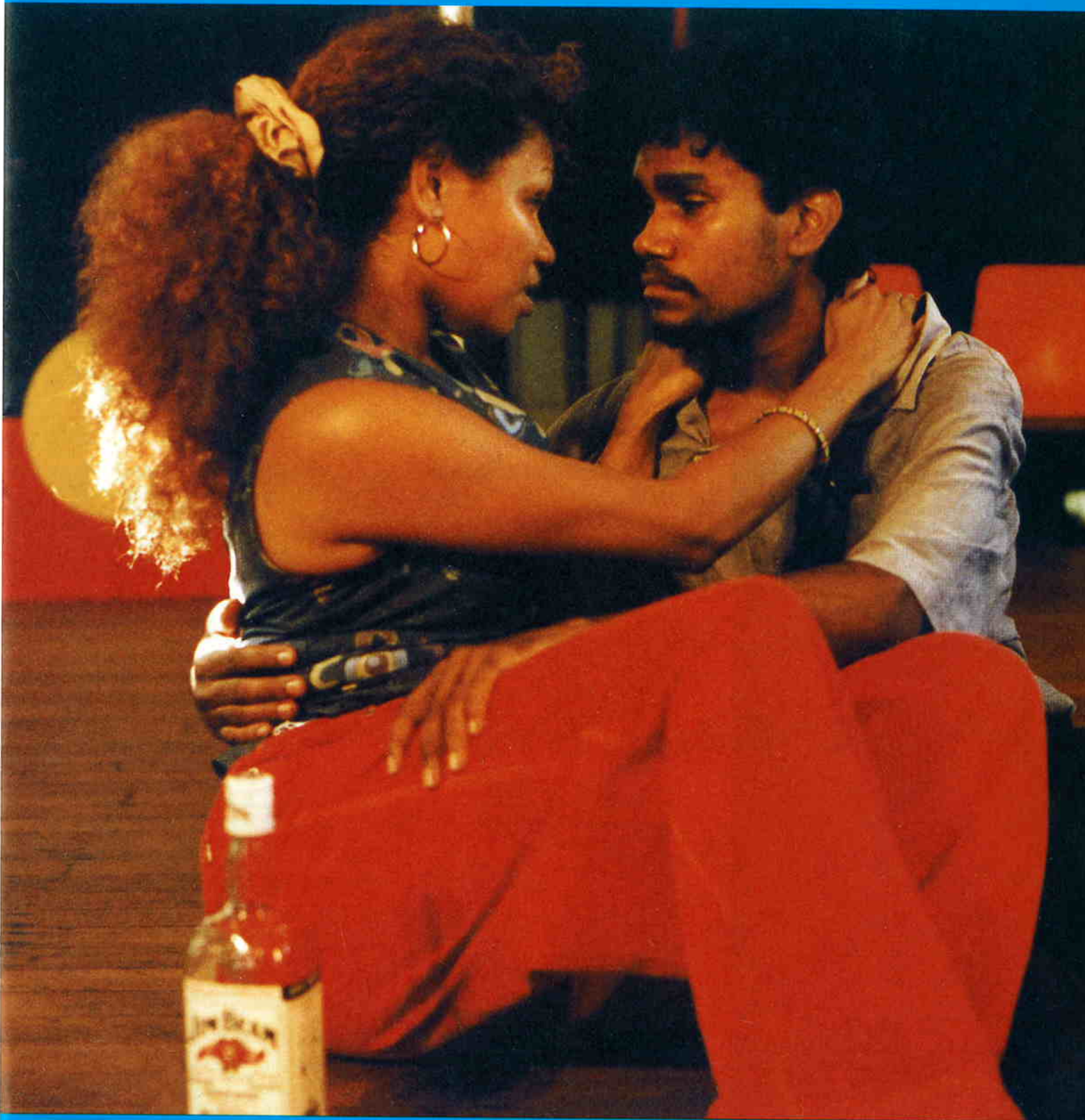


# artwork

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C O M M U N I T Y   A R T S   N E T W O R K   S A



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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 towards 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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# sounds of



# the street

MARIA LEONARDIS

**Maria Leonardis reports on a unique music program helping young homeless people take control of their lives.**

*Locked into the bright lights and street life/  
Only to wind up a statistic if they live that  
long/They get around through the day and  
night/ Selling their bodies to support their  
addictions...Wanting to get out of the hole  
that they dug so deep/Loosing the concept of  
a normal life/Wanting so badly to change  
and make wrongs right/Will it ever  
happen/Or is it all an illusion in their  
mind/Living in fucking Kings Cross  
(G Dean/C Campbell)*

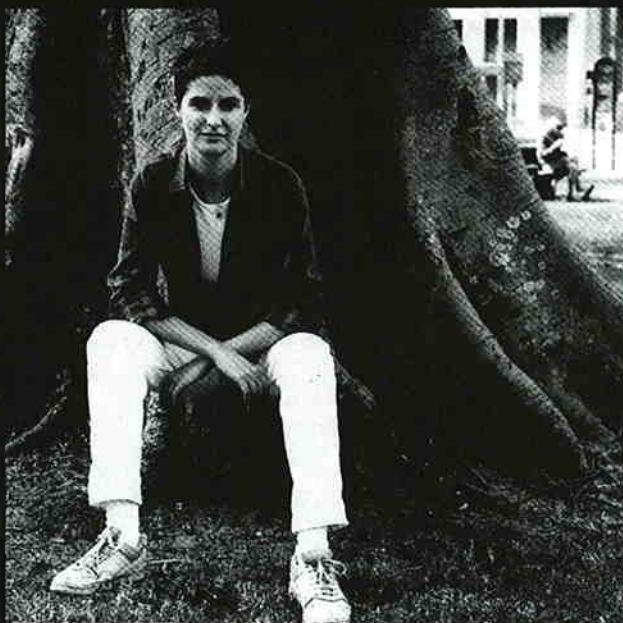
**S**ydney can offer a young person forced out of home, a fast route to homelessness. Without a support network, the skills to get a decent paying job or the basic literacy levels required to fill out an application form, a young person faces displacement and poverty.

Leaving home usually for reasons of sexual, physical, emotional and psychological abuse - what they may simply describe as 'not getting along' - young people often drift to Kings Cross because of its history and hype.

*I roller, ecstatic highs/to lows that crunch  
your bones inside/In vice-like grips/feel like  
they're squeezing life out of you... (A  
Condren/S Bull)*

Images from Sounds of the Street CDs: top - Hereditary, middle - Zone, bottom - Unscarred

'...Out on the street they might be a whore or a junkie (as they refer to themselves) but at SOTS they're a singer, an artist or a poet. The focus is not on the negative aspects of their lives - what's wrong with them or their problems - it's on potential and achievement.'



Ally

**O**n the street these young people are exposed to further violence and abuse, as they are prime targets for pushers and pimps. Drugs and alcohol become a readily available escape, while the boredom of life on the street - being a no-one, having nothing and nowhere to go - deepens a young homeless person's negative self-image.

Ignorance regarding safe-sex practices, irregular patterns of eating and sleeping, compounded by the difficulty of maintaining personal hygiene, leads to health problems. Hanging out on the street and doing crime to survive means that at some point, they will come in contact with the police and have to deal with legal issues.

Homelessness is not just about someone losing a roof over their head or a place to put their stuff. It's about losing the social networks that they've built up over a lifetime, a sense of who they are and where they belong.

Becoming homeless disrupts every aspect of a young person's life and is particularly detrimental to their education and training, at a crucial point in their lives. Their employment prospects are drastically reduced, and this in turn

decreases their ability to become independent and take control of their lives.

#### **Gimme shelter**

Creating a safe place for young homeless people is a start. Providing them with a stable environment to explore something they're interested in, which has an achievable and real outcome, can help young homeless people feel capable and in control.

Sounds of the Street (SOTS) is a course run for young homeless people, which tackles the serious issues and offers participants a safe place to heal, tell their story and achieve something through music.

The project was initiated by Phil Nunn, who is employed by Sydney City Mission as the manager of Creative Youth Initiatives, an umbrella program which provides creative outlets for homeless young people through arts courses such as SOTS, Artworks (visual arts program) and Face-to-Face (drama program).

A registered psychologist, Phil has worked at the Mission for seven years. Before this, he worked for ten years as a professional musician. 'In the last seven

years working with homeless young people, I've found that a lot of them have had very poor education experiences, and they don't read or write very well. The probability of them going back to any formal schooling is very unlikely.'

About four years ago, he hit on the idea that if the young people were offered an activity they were interested in, such as music, they'd want to learn about it. And so, Sounds of the Street began, by taking a group of ten young homeless people with no musical experience, and helping them to write, produce and record their own music.

Phil considers himself lucky to be able to combine his interests in music and creativity with psychology. As I was leaving SOTS' new home in Little Albion Street, I asked which he considered himself first, a psychologist or musician? Just the other day he said, he was talking to his supervisor about his training needs and the kind of skills needed to do his job. He came to the conclusion that ten years on the road as a musician - touring, dealing with agents and sleazy venues - gave him the skills he needed to do what he does at SOTS, much more than his psychology degree.