

FRAME  A biennial  
of dance

# Program & Impact Report





# A Foreword

## FRAME, Dance Massive, and the end of an era

For 15 years, we've had a dance festival in Naarm/Melbourne.

This foreword is offered by some key stewards of FRAME, Dance Massive, and other imaginations of a biennial dance festival in Naarm/Melbourne.

This is not representative of the views of all partners, artists, or contributors to these events but it is offered by some experienced voices to celebrate and acknowledge the end of an era, express sadness, and resolutely confirm that a dance festival is needed, wanted, and possible.

As a dance sector between 2020-23, we created the model of the festival we wanted. We tested it, and know how to make it better. It is ready to go.

Sadly, in 2023/24 the organisations in Naarm/Melbourne with active relationships with the dance sector do not have the financial capacity or human resources to invest and deliver the festival at the scale that can safely support the principles and FRAMEwork the dance sector has designed.

This *FRAME Program & Impact Report* encapsulates the pilot efforts of that festival design, how we did it, and how it worked. The report reflects incredible collectivity, collegiality and gumption from the local dance sector.

Historically, Dance Massive (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019) and FRAME (2023) have been significant moments for the Australian dance sector. Their contributions are incalculable, but if quantitative measures are useful: Dance Massive saw 75,000+ attendances, 136 presentation seasons, 64 world premiere seasons, and engaged 2,000+ artists, dancers, choreographers, and FRAME's impacts are outlined in this report. Dance Massive was iconic — drawing artists, audiences and national and international visitors to celebrate Australian dance and dance artists. Dance Massive built literacy and awareness of the strength and brilliance of the Australian dance sector. It created a large audience for dance in Melbourne. It was the launchpad for many careers generating national and international profile for artists, local dance companies and producers and generating momentum for the circulation and mobility of artists and tours of works both locally and abroad. It influenced the Australian dance sector we see today. It wasn't perfect, but its achievements are indisputable.

These festivals — both Dance Massive and FRAME — were unique, appearing without a distinct organisation or leadership from an individual. To outsiders they may have appeared magical, to insiders they were the hard work of collective organising under the ethos that, for the dance sector, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. These festivals created and delivered by the Naarm/Melbourne dance sector prove that our relationships and collaborations generate exponential capacity. Our festivals are far more influential, brilliant, and impactful to artists, organisations, communities, and the sector than what we can generate as individuals. Importantly, artform-specific festivals created by the dance sector can begin celebrating the intersectionality of artists, generations and forms — FRAME intentionally made space for this in an expansive way.

It is not easy, but we did it for 14 years.

When we think about doing more with less, about re-energising sectors, systems and structures, of soft power and distributed resources, innovation, creativity, community engagement and design, artist-led practices, creative thinking, experimentation, collaboration, and collective organising — remember these festivals and what our dance sector achieved.

We all want and value a biennial dance festival in Naarm/ Melbourne.

So when someone, or something, ventures to start a dance festival ... please, start here.

– Dancehouse & Arts House

# What is it?

FRAME: A biennial of dance was an invitation to celebrate and connect; to assemble, discuss, participate and witness dance across myriad cultures, forms and styles.

Following three years of consultation with the independent dance community and small-to-medium sector, FRAME was co-led and co-designed by an unprecedented number of independent artists and producers.

FRAME's inaugural program featured performances, talks, workshops presented by Dancehouse, Arts House, Bunjil Place, Centre for Projection Art, Chunky Move, Darebin Arts Speakeasy, Lucy Guerin Inc, Punctum, The Australian Ballet, The Substation, Temperance Hall, and more.

## Background

The last Dance Massive took place in March 2019. Since that time, the dance community has participated in a long-form conversation about the kind of festival Melbourne needs and aspires towards. People have shared their views in surveys, focus groups, workshops and round table discussions. There have been conversations led by artists, presenters and companies. We are proud to have involved 518 members of the dance communities here and nationwide in the discussion, through a time of significant challenge for our artform and sector.



"Triptych" (2023), Phillip Adams. Photo by 3 Deep with Georges Antoni. Presented by Temperance Hall.

# New Festival Principles & Framework

The Principles of the festival are what we do.  
The Framework of the festival is how we work.

## Principle 1

This festival is an opportunity to come together, compare, discuss, witness, expand, participate and connect with dance and its plurality of voices.

## Principle 2

This is a festival for audiences. A public engagement and invitation for artists and communities to celebrate and appreciate dance.

## Principle 3

This festival's partners contribute multiple projects and curation, which incorporates artist-led, self-determined, and ongoing partner-artist relationships and projects.

## Principle 4

This festival's partners commit financial resources to both their projects, and wider resources that are shared and support the Festival's viability and independence.

## Principle 5

This festival's presenters pay award rates to artists for their works.

## Principle 6

This festival is an expression of a partners' ongoing commitment to growing and strengthening the dance sector. It will not be the only time each presenter supports dance and dance artists in their year.

## Principle 7

We welcome new networks and people and voices each edition. It doesn't feel like the same people every time.

## Principle 8

This festival is realised through active participation in a collectively organised festival. This means partners contribute to regular, collaborative meetings working across advocacy, stakeholder management, marketing, ticketing, digital and administration.

## Principle 9

Everyone is accountable. Partners commit to self-evaluation, transparency and feedback throughout the festival's life cycle.

## Principle 10

Everyone is equal at the table. Once committed to this agreement a partner has equal responsibility, and equal decision-making, in the realisation of the festival.

## Self-Determination

The festival prioritises First Nations leadership and artists at the beginning of its program (opening weekend), and at the core of its program. It collectively creates space and resources for First Nations-led companies and artists to enact the culturally appropriate pathways and mechanisms for the development and presentation of First Nations' projects and voices. Further, artists from marginalised and multiple marginalised groups are a priority for the Festival's equity goals, decision making processes, and programming. This framework of evaluation, transparency and accountability drives this commitment.

## Transparency

The festival will conduct a single nation-wide Expression of Interest process for artists and companies interested to contribute projects to the festival: shows, talks, masterclasses, public programs, showings and events. These EOIs will be critically appraised and evaluated against the priorities outlined in this Agreement, by an independent artistic curatorium. The Curatorium comprises artists identified and waged by Consortium partners, with respect to the priorities outlined in this agreement. Additional appointments to the Curatorium may be required to ensure equity of community representation in this group. Partners will present their programs to each other and the Curatorium for feedback.

## Equity

The festival's program will set targets and measure its success against clear quotas for representation which will be publicly available, and continually assessed.

## Accessibility

The festival is committed to making projects accessible, and presenting work by Australia's leading Deaf, disabled and or neurodiverse dance artists.

## Locality

With a concentration of cultural infrastructure and long-term investment in audience development for dance, the festival's home is Naarm/Kulin Country. Should national partners identify with the principles and framework outlined in this document, they are very welcome contributors.

## Resourcing

The festival is primarily resourced through leveraging the existing resources of the Partners. It is highly attuned to a broader funding landscape and does not seek to replicate or compete with existing or emerging festival platforms. Competition for resources between partners and across the festival is inevitable but should consider the best outcomes for the festival as a whole. The festival's collective resources are focused on Australian independent dance artists and small-medium companies. Dance companies led by making artists are encouraged as participating Partners. All Partners adhere to the Principles — specifically Principle 2 to realise multiple projects by multiple artists. This could be a project by the making artist and at least one other artist independent of the organisation.

## Wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of artists, staff and partners in the festival is fundamental to operations. All Partners and participants adhere to responsible, ethical and professional behaviour and to uphold and protect the name and ethos of the festival. We share a collective responsibility to work to improve, learn and develop the festival together.

## Sustainability and Growth

The festival's growth can and must align with a sector recovering from, living through and preparing for climate crisis and the lasting impacts of Covid-19. It is unlikely the festival can fulfil its principles, and represent a large program of shows and events, in its first year. We seek to understand the festival's role in the sector using a lens of a minimum 10-year commitment.

## Decision-Making

The Festival utilises collective organising and regular meetings (in person and virtually) to produce and program the Festival. Decisions are by consensus of the attending people.

## Collective Producing

Collective producing a festival is a challenge. If resources are available, engaging staff temporarily across the Festival will be useful. Some Partners will be required to take responsibility and lead in particular areas of producing e.g. ticketing, branding, website, marketing.

## Guests

It's likely the Festival will welcome visiting artists, producers, presenters and colleagues nationally and internationally over time. Neutral partners and stakeholders will be best placed to facilitate future delegations.

## Audience Experience

The Partners and Curatorium will work actively together to create a rich, deep and exciting Festival experience for audiences, artists and communities.



# FRAME 2023

## Program Key Stats

**12** partners

**90** free classes

**192** works / events

**284** artists employed



"CUDDLE" (2023), Harrison Ritchie-Jones. Photo by Charlie Kinross.  
Presented by Chunky Move.



# Impact Summary

The impact summary offers a comprehensive analysis of the inaugural edition of FRAME Festival, following its rebranding from Dance Massive (2009-2019). FRAME Festival is envisioned as an evolving and transformative gathering, bringing together audiences, artists, and partners to represent the diverse spectrum of dance artists and practices.

## Consortium Model

Similar to its predecessor, Dance Massive, FRAME Festival operates as a consortium model, driven by collective cooperation within the dance sector. It brings together artists, organisations, arts workers, producers, presenters, advocates, communities, and stakeholders. The festival does not have a central governing organization, ongoing year-round staff, or resources. Two key roles guide and deliver the festival:

1. The Partners: Partners commit resources to create the festival and produce multiple artistic projects and their associated communications.
2. The Curatorium: Comprised of making dance artists appointed and compensated by the Partners, the Curatorium has a festival-wide perspective. They facilitate project submissions from artists, appraise ideas, identify program gaps, and provide oversight and feedback on projects and contributions from Partners.

FRAME Welcome to Country (2023). Photo by Gerardo Martinez.





# Impact for Audiences

FRAME Festival was designed with audiences in mind, offering a unique opportunity for deep engagement with dance and dance artists, distinct from traditional dance programming. Over the course of one month, the festival attracted around 16,000 attendees, comprising:

**14,000**

participants at talks, performances, screenings, showings, exhibitions/installations, and Party/Hospitality Events.

**1,597**

individuals participated in classes and workshops.

**30%**

of festival attendees were first-time visitors, indicating a successful outreach to a fresh audience.

**33%**

of attendees rated their overall experience at FRAME a perfect 10.

**49%**

of attendees appreciated the month-long duration, which allowed them to explore a diverse range of events. An overwhelming 80% recognised the importance of a contemporary dance festival in Melbourne.

**29%**

of attendees identified as LGBTIQA+, and 24% were aged 25–34, introducing a more youthful demographic. Additionally, 27% of attendees hailed from overseas. Remarkably, 50% listed FRAME as their primary reason for visiting Naarm/Melbourne.



# Audience Feedback Themes

## Diversity of Programming

Attendees commended the rich diversity of programming and how it showcased various facets of Melbourne-based dance.

*"I loved the diversity of programming. How many different artists were in the festival and how they represented very different aspects of Melbourne based dance."*

## Affordability

Many appreciated the opportunity to watch numerous performances at reasonable or even free prices, particularly beneficial for full-time dance students.

*"I really like how we get a chance to watch so many performances, showings, screenings, either for free or at a very reasonable price. As I am currently a full-time dance student, I got so inspired by watching the performances in FRAME. Because I didn't really know about when the dance performances were happening before, so this was my first time watching contemporary dance performances in Melbourne, which was an amazing and eye-opening experience. It told me about how unlimited contemporary dance can be."*

## Abundance of Events

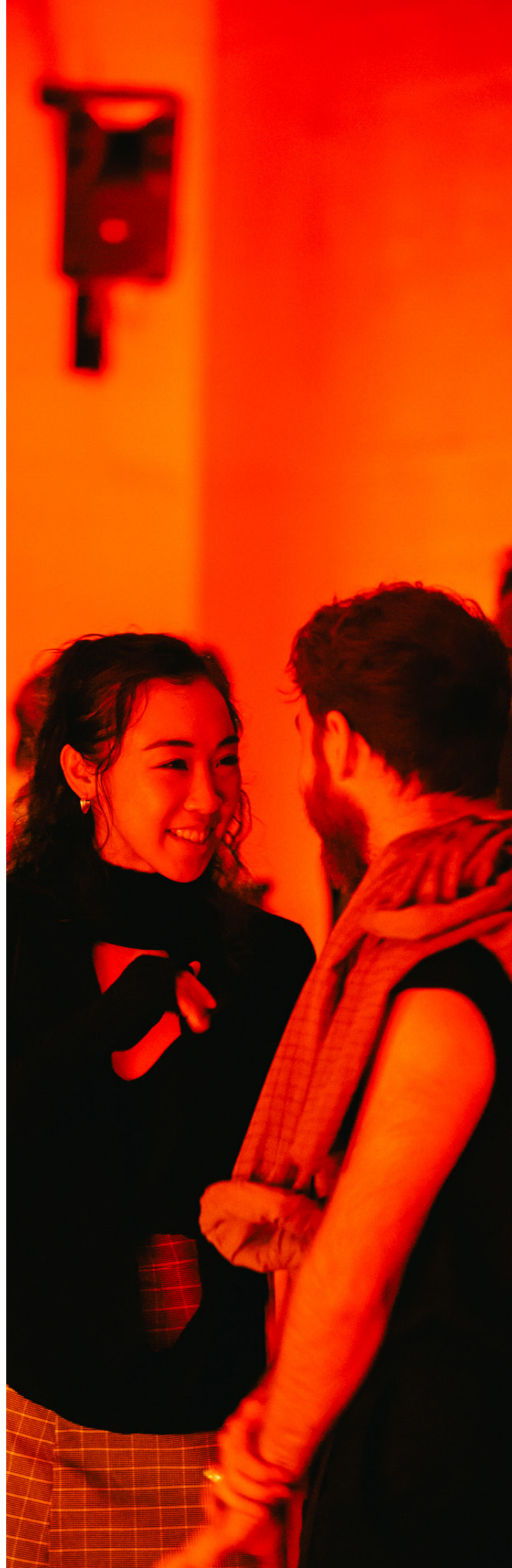
The multitude of events allowed attendees to explore different mediums and discover new performers, ultimately contributing to Melbourne's reputation as a desirable hub for independent artists.

*"The huge quantity of events allowed me to engage in so many different mediums and be exposed to different performers. A month dedicated to dance creates many opportunities for independent artists, something that makes Melbourne a very desirable place to base yourself. I feel that FRAME was able reach a wide audience with its variety as well as the low cost, something that is so important to keep contemporary dance relevant and accessible."*

## Inclusivity

The festival's commitment to featuring artists from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, was well-received. The extended festival duration made it easier for attendees to experience multiple works.

*"The variety of work on offer, representation of artists from different backgrounds including artists with disability, the long duration of the festival that made it more accessible for me to view multiple works."*





# Challenges for Audiences

## Disjointed Experience

Some attendees felt that the festival lacked cohesion and integration, describing it as five separate entities operating in isolation. They also noted challenges with ticketing platforms and called for a more celebratory launch event.

## Scheduling Constraints

Audiences faced limitations in attending multiple shows per day, similar to their experience with Dance Massive. They highlighted the quick sell-out of shows and the need for more flexibility in scheduling popular performances.

## Cost Concerns

Despite the introduction of a FRAME Pass to reduce costs, 92% of respondents did not purchase it, as it didn't provide significant financial incentives for concessions. Respondents requested more low-cost events in the future.

## Audience Reach

Some attendees noted a need for improved promotion to audiences proximate to dance but not directly within the dance community. Many discovered the festival through word-of-mouth rather than formal promotion.





# Impact for Artists

FRAME Festival serves as a public celebration of dance and invites artists and communities to appreciate this art form. The festival's collective resources primarily support Australian independent dance artists and small-medium companies. It encourages dance companies led by making artists to become Partners, emphasising Principle 2, which focuses on realising multiple projects by multiple independent artists.

FRAME Festival in 2023 showcased a significantly broader range of works compared to Dance Massive 2019, with approximately 192 performances and screenings compared to 14 new works in the latter. However, the number of engaged artists decreased by 39%, with FRAME engaging approximately 284 artists compared to Dance Massive's 731 artists across all festival aspects.

## 31%

of artists identified as Culturally and/or linguistically diverse.

## 27%

of artists identified as LGBTQIA+.

## 11%

of artists identified as Deaf, Disabled, or Neurodivergent.

## 5%

of artists resided in regional Victoria.





# Impact for Partners

The level of partner engagement compared to the financial outcomes for FRAME Festival 2023 reveals both the dedication of partners to deliver a deeply engaging and rich dance program as well as the challenging financial landscape the festival faces. Partners invested a substantial total of 8,169 hours, underscoring their commitment to the festival's success. However, the disparities between the financial investment made by partners/artists against the festival's total income paints a concerning picture, with the festival generating \$125,993 in gross revenue from ticket sales while the combined investment from partners and artists reached \$1.6 million.

This financial gap indicates a significant deficit, prompting a critical examination of the festival's financial sustainability. The data emphasises the need for strategic financial planning, alternative revenue streams, and collaborative efforts to ensure the long-term viability of FRAME Festival. Addressing this financial challenge will be essential for the festival to continue delivering its cultural impact and supporting the vibrant dance community it represents.

**8,169 hours**

invested by partners in the festival in total.

**\$125,993**

generated in gross revenue from ticket sales.

**\$1.6 million**

combined partner and artist investment.



## FRAME Partners

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**ARTS HOUSE**

ausDANCE  
VIC

**B** Bunjil  
Place

Centre <sup>(for)</sup> Projection Art

**CHUNKY MOVE**

**DANCEHOUSE DA**



Darebin  
Arts

**LGI/**



TEMPERANCE  
HALL

THE  
AUSTRALIAN  
BALLET

**THE SUBSTATION/**

## FRAME Associate Partners

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Abbotsford  
Convent.

AUSTRALIAN  
PERFORMING  
ARTS MARKET  
**APAM**

 **BlakDance**

Next Wave,

THE ARTS  
**wellbeing**  
COLLECTIVE

## FRAME Curatorium

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Alisdair MacIndoe  
Amos Gebhardt  
Antony Hamilton  
Deanne Butterworth  
Feras Shaheen  
Jennifer Ma  
Jo Lloyd  
Jonathan Homsey  
Lilian Steiner  
Lucy Guerin  
Lz Dunn  
Ngioka Bunda-Heath  
Olivia Adams  
Phillip Adams  
Priya Srinivasan  
Rachel Coulson  
Raina Peterson  
Raka Maitra  
Victoria Chiu

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