

Case Study

The Arrival

What:

The Empire Theatres partnered with Mercy Community Services to present the Spare Parts Puppet Theatre adaptation of Shaun Tan's book *The Arrival* in October 2017.

The Arrival is a unique theatrical experience. Built on the animation of the images from Shaun Tan's book, Spare Parts weaves acting and puppetry to tell the story. Shaun Tan's fantastical world comes to life in a strange and wonderful metropolis full of floating ships, mysterious lights, alien symbols and weird animals. It is in this new place that the hero Aki makes his home.

The show presents a universal tale of the challenges, the humour and adventures of arriving in a new country and resonates far beyond any arrival... a new school, a new job, a new town. The absence of words not only makes the story ideal for puppetry but emphasizes the isolation that is experienced by many people arriving in a new place.

As many new refugee and migrant arrivals settle in Toowoomba, the choice of this show was designed to appeal to this audience. Mercy Community Services was happy to support this event and assist in getting the word out to the newly arrived community.



When: 20-21 October

Where: Empire Theatres Precinct,
Armitage Centre

Partners, Contributors and Sponsors:



Mercy
Acceptance
Excellence
Dignity
Empowerment
Integrity



Contact further information:

Empire Theatre Projects

Ph: 4698 9925

Email: jeanette@empiretheatre.com.au

Links: www.empiretheatre.com.au

Outcomes:

In order to better communicate the content and themes of the show to the newly arrived community, Mercy Community Services assisted us to translate the flyer into three languages additional to English. The flyers in Farsi Dari, Arabic and French were distributed throughout MCS's networks and clients encouraged to come along to the show. The financial barrier was also lifted as MCS was allocated free tickets as part of the sponsorship which were distributed to foster children and their families and the refugee and migrant networks throughout the city. Over 700 people attended the performances across the season with approx. 300 of these being MCS clients who would not have gotten the chance to attend otherwise.

School audiences were also attracted to the performance and post show Q and A sessions were popular. A preshow workshop was conducted at the Ramsay school to prepare the students for the show and to show them how to make their own paper bird puppet.

The Multicultural Development Association arranged for the Gathering of Women Catering to sell traditional Afghan food and sweets between shows on the Saturday. This is a business set up by refugees and migrants to share their culture and create a sustainable income.



The character of Aki in The Arrival

Learnings and reflections:

Toowoomba is a mega diverse community with many new arrivals coming into the region each year. The adaptation of Shaun Tan's beautiful book by Spare Parts Puppet Theatre was a wonderful opportunity to connect with this community, introduce them to the Empire Theatres precinct and reflect on a shared experience of many of these people.

The non-verbal style of the show made the content accessible to anyone of any language background and involving the community with the food stalls enabled local connection and contributed to the sustainability of this community.

This project directly correlates with six objectives in the Empire Theatres Projects Company Business Plan.

Strategy One	Be accessible and engaging.
1.1	Create and facilitate programs and projects that are mindful of the diversity and richness of all regional Australians inclusive of all ethnic and cultural origins and demographic and socio-economic circumstances.
1.2	To address the issues of remoteness and accessibility to the arts in regional Australia through the provision of arts services locally including training and education resources delivery.
Strategy Two	Link arts and community
2.1	To foster and maintain relationships with a broad range of cultural, community and government groups and individuals in order to be in tune with current priorities and desires.
2.2	Artistically respond and contribute to discussion of cultural, social, political and environmental issues important to regional Australians.
Strategy Three	Increase and deepen cultural consciousness and capacity in the region.
3.1	Develop audiences and increase engagement in creative activity throughout our community.
Strategy Four	Be a stable and reliable resource for the community.
4.1	To develop thriving arts business practice through strong partnerships, commercial income streams and alternative funding programs.

This project also correlates with Community outcomes 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 in the TRC 2014-2019 Corporate Plan.