



**FRENETIC PACE** Crocosmia works as well for adults as it does for children.

## Taking the cake proves to be child's play

### THEATRE Crocosmia

Little Bulb Theatre  
Blue Room

REVIEW **STEPHEN BEVIS**

**T**his whacky yet touching short show from Britain's Little Bulb Theatre centres on the free-wheeling antics of three precocious children whose playtime reveals a tragic past.

The Brackenbergs kids, 10-year-old twins Finlay and Sophia and their little sister Freya, 7½, play

dress-ups and act out their stories through songs, dance and puppetry using a chewed-up carrot and pieces of Battenburg sponge cake.

Putting the literal meaning back into the term "cakehole", an audience-pleasing gross-out moment comes when their Brackenbergs Battenburg Cake Puppetry show descends into a ravenous cheek-stuffed, spluttering free-for-all.

Directed by Alexander Scott, the pace is frenetic and the focus and mood abruptly chops and changes as the siblings' inventive shows are accompanied by playing the old

vinyl records of their parents, who take an anniversary trip to Paris by way of a nostalgic slide show and a bottle of wine.

For all its face-pulling, multiple role-playing and physical comedy, the triumph of Crocosmia is that the actors — Dominic Conway, Shamira Turner and Clare Beresford — can convey a sophisticated sense of the nature of child's play without condescension or phoniness.

Play is a serious business through which children rehearse and explore their interactions with the world around them. In this case

the stakes are higher than usual because a mid-show revelation explains the kookiness as something much more — a way of coping for three orphans heading into foster care.

Working as well for adults and children as part of the Awesome festival and taking its name from a type of iris, Crocosmia is a bulb illuminating the capacity of the imagination to deal with trauma, grief and loss. ☺

**Crocosmia** ends tomorrow.

# Sowing seeds in the bush

Regional arts bodies are primed to reap the benefits of rare political times, writes **Stephen Bevis**

**A**rtists and farmers have at least one thing in common. Whenever they have a good season, they are always preparing for the next drought.

For now, the political climate seems to be favouring a flowering of the arts in regional WA but artists and arts administrators are wary of any sudden, detrimental shift in the winds blowing from Perth and Canberra.

The arts have had some major successes through the Royalties for Regions (RFR) scheme that underpins WA's Liberal-National Government and Country Arts WA chief executive Jessica Machin is hopeful of progress in a hung Federal Parliament where Labor clings to power with the support of key regional independents.

"I do think it is a major opportunity," Ms Machin says. "But while the stars may be aligning we also have to be very astute and keep the arguments coming because we don't know how long this is going to last."

Former Federal arts minister Peter Garrett made cuts to the Regional Arts Fund from \$16.1 million in 2008 to \$11.8 million in 2012, representing a 27 per cent reduction in funding to WA. Ms Machin and other State-based regional arts leaders are lobbying new Arts Minister Simon Crean, who also has the sensitive post of Regional Development Minister, to reverse the cuts.

At a State level, Ms Machin is concerned that Royalties for Regions will become an excuse to cut other arts funding. The RFR scheme has pumped money into such arts projects as the Gascoyne Focus Region, the Michael Leslie Foundation performing arts



**OPTIMISTIC** Jessica Machin

**NEW HEIGHTS** Buzz Dance Theatre performer Peter Fares in the Big Stretch regional program at Jigalong. PICTURE **JAMES WELSBY**

program in the Pilbara and an extension of the Voices of the Wheatbelt program run by Community Arts Network WA.

Two CANWA projects, as well as a regional arts program run by Buzz Dance Theatre, were honoured at the recent Arts and Health Australia Awards in Melbourne for their contributions to good community health and wellbeing. CANWA, which celebrates its 25th anniversary today, was recognised for its Rock Hole Long Pipe project in the Goldfields and Voices of the Wheatbelt.

"We firmly believe in the transformative power of community arts to empower and give voice and mobilise communities,"

CANWA managing director Pilar Kasat says. "I see a bright future for the community arts sector in Australia, and in particular WA, as awareness grows of the positive impact that the arts can make in people's lives."

Buzz Dance Theatre was awarded for its three-year Big Stretch regional outreach program to the Pilbara, which most recently involved workshops and performances with children at Jigalong.

Ms Machin says society and the arts will be the focus of Open Your Eyes, the next quadrennial State Regional Arts Event to be held in Geraldton in September. It will be notable for its strong artistic vision led by

former Perth Festival director Sean Doran — and for not having a single keynote speaker from the arts.

It is important that delegates hear health, environmental, Aboriginal and other experts to better help the arts engage across all levels of society rather than dwelling in the fringes, Ms Machin says.

A manifesto will be developed to work towards a legacy to the 2029 State bicentenary and beyond. "We can't wait for government. We have to show some vision and leadership. From the small seedlings that we plant, we will be judged on how they bloom five or six years down the track." ☺