

On a sweltering Saturday morning in January, after a typical Adelaide toss-and-turn hot summer night, people woke to discover a hefty Adelaide Fringe program in their local paper.

Outgoing Fringe director Christie Anthony describes her final festival as "astronomical", a dazzling galaxy of events to satisfy every traveller to the 2010 Adelaide Fringe. Anthony is guaranteed to go out with a bang.

From February 19 to March 14, visitors to the Adelaide Fringe will be able to choose from 171 comedy acts, a record 121 theatre shows, another 121 visual arts exhibitions, 120 music gigs, 60 cabaret creations, 27 dance productions, 22 circus acts and 15 puppetry shows. And that's not counting the larger free events, such as the Opening Night celebrations, the Adelaide Street Theatre Festival and the various free events and busking performances dotted throughout the city. Adelaide seems set to rival her sister Fringe in Edinburgh, or at least prove a worthy compatriot in the southern hemisphere.

And that is all happening concurrently with two other major cultural events on the Adelaide calendar: the Adelaide Festival, this year under the artistic direction of renowned jazz musician Paul Grabowski; and the phenomenal world music festival, WomAdelaide. Over four weeks, artistic gluttony will explode into a banquet of cultural feasting.

Standing in the wings, intently watching the event unfold, will be Fringe Director designate Greg Clarke.

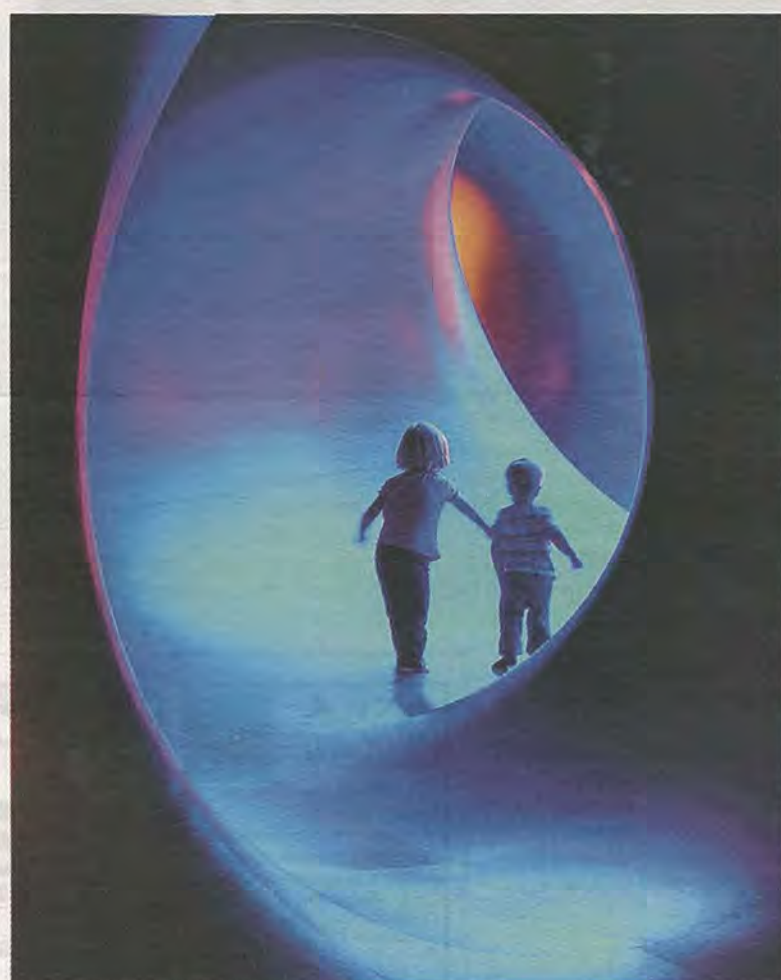
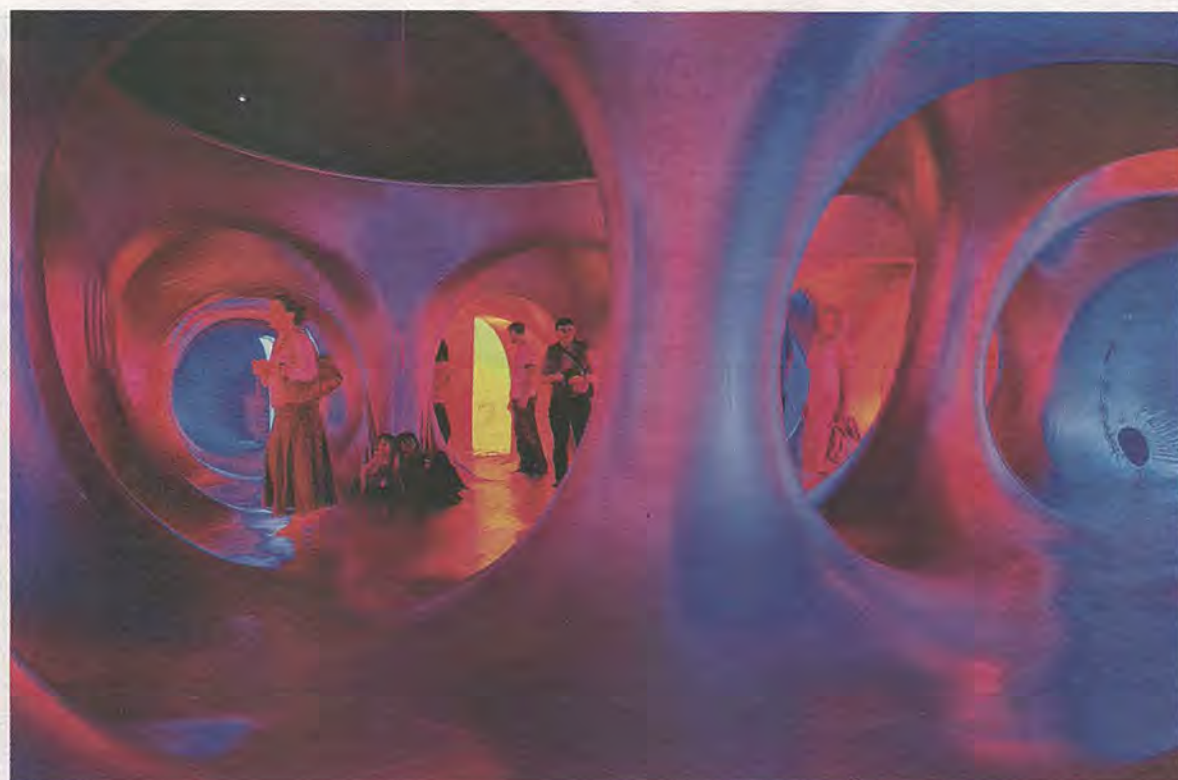
In a return to previous structures, the Fringe Board has decided to appoint a chief executive officer, who will embrace the previous positions of artistic director and general manager. This one-for-two approach to a restructuring of the management of the 2011 Adelaide Fringe creates a challenge that excites the affable Clarke. As his tall frame slides lankily into a café chair too small for any person of Clarke's height, he enthuses about the kind of Fringe that he might envisage for the future.

"I love the open access concept," he tells me. "I want to work with artists using the parklands, for example. The Garden of Unearthly Delights has been fantastic – a great success, but I think you can create more hubs of activity around the city."

Like Anthony, Clarke is keen to build audiences. With so much happening at festival time, I wonder whether it may be demanding too much of audiences. Too often, Fringe performers have far outnumbered audience members at their sparsely attended shows. Cancellation notices have appeared on the Fringe box office windows. It is the risk performers take when they pay their registration for a festival that has a "come one, come all" philosophy with no curatorial control.

Clarke, with his background, staging major community events for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority around Darling Harbour, The Rocks and the Sydney Opera House, is quietly confident that he can excite wider community participation. "I think they want more than just that whole static experience," he says. If past experience is anything to go by, the 2011 Adelaide Fringe is certain to see a greater emphasis on community participation. In the '80s, Clarke staged a series of Jamie and Vanessa Dance Parties throughout Sydney.

For the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, flush with rental income from businesses in the area, Clarke was able to stage extravagant events, such as Firewater, based on a historical event, in which a 12m boat rises from under the water, is set alight, and then submerges; Hoopla, a circus event; and Fiesta, at which 400 people at a time learn Latin American dancing. "If they



The remarkable *Amococo* in Adelaide. Photos: Richard Osborn, Joke Mertens, Mirjam Vermeulen and Ingrid Freeman

Fringe benefits

Adelaide's all-singing, all-dancing festival has something for all, Peter Wilkins writes

take part in workshops," Clarke suggests, "they may be more likely then to go and see a show in which the artists appear."

Clarke knows why artists will come from overseas and interstate to take part in the Fringe. He performed "a terrible outdoor show" in the Botanic Park, where WomAdelaide is now staged, over 20 years ago.

"It's the experience, the atmosphere. You can't beat it." Originally from Adelaide, a city he left in 1985 to try his luck in Sydney, Clarke has had several career changes, working as a community artist, undertaking an art gallery management course, and working with the late art

curator, Nick Waterlow ("One of the nicest men I've ever met"), setting up the Sunset Club at Bondi and running the Downstairs Theatre at Belvoir Street before joining the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

For the time being, Clarke is happy to watch Anthony's swan song unfold before he puts his theories to the test and formulates a vision that can build on the successes of the past while forging the vision for the future.

"I like observing, researching and finding out what people are interested in," he says. No stranger to festivals, having attended virtually every arts festival over the past 25 years, Clarke is clear about what he regards as a

successful Fringe experience for audiences. It's a lesson that recent events in Canberra have revealed can be a tough one to learn.

The demise last year of Canberra's only fringe festival, the Multicultural Fringe Festival, and the ACT Government's decision to withdraw funding and allocate it to the National Folk Festival to create a Folk Festival Fringe reflects some understanding of the need to create the circumstances that have contributed to the obvious success of the Adelaide Fringe since its establishment almost 40 years ago.

Detractors and supporters of the ACT Government's decision alike will have to agree that the National Folk

Festival enjoys a far wider audience base and that the organisation has been consistently operating in the black with little financial support from government and some sponsorship – a far cry from the considerable government and sponsorship support enjoyed by the Adelaide Fringe, recognised as the largest fringe festival event in the southern hemisphere.

Building audiences continues to be a priority for Anthony and her team, and Clarke constantly refers to his plans for introducing events, such as workshops and community events that will bring more people to the theatres, halls and performance spaces around the city of Adelaide.

While many people may define their festival experience by attending one Fringe event, one Adelaide Festival event and one WomAdelaide event, Clarke believes that they have not had a full experience unless they can enjoy the excitement of rushing from one show to the next, and seeing up to three different kinds of shows in a day. It's a tall order, both financially and artistically.

"Getting audiences to try something different too," Clarke comments on the role of a Fringe, "so that those new younger audiences, creating that new risky work, get audiences. That's the hard thing." I think of two veterans of the Adelaide Fringe festival over the past years. Theatre Simple from Seattle has been bringing shows to the Fringe for the past 15 years, and has been playing to full houses in schools and theatres. This year they are bringing four different shows to the Fringe, and, as in the past, are certain to be playing to sell-out audiences.

Canberra people who are unable to travel to the Adelaide Fringe will have an opportunity to see this outstanding company's work in March, when they will present their show *52 Pickup* for high school audiences, *MythUnderstandings* for primary school audiences, and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen* at The Street Theatre at the end of March. Actor and entrepreneur Guy Masterson will also bring a number of shows to Adelaide's Higher Ground theatre venue in the heart of the city throughout the Fringe. Since his first successes many years ago with his one man *Under Milk Wood* and *Animal Farm*, Masterson has, like Theatre Simple, presented intimate, minimalist "must-see theatre".

Innovative, experimental and excellent theatre, fuelled by outstanding reviews, Fringe awards and word of mouth, will always play to good houses. In an open access fringe festival, unlike the carefully curated Adelaide Festival, individuals and companies vie on a crowded playing field, offering audiences a plethora of choice. I sense while talking to Clarke that a balance between the open access and curated approaches may become a feature of the Adelaide Fringe in the future.

For now, Anthony and Clarke offer valuable food for thought, if the ACT is to encourage and support a Fringe that is truly a fringe festival, open to all and accessible to all. A visit to the 2010 Adelaide Fringe would be a good place to start.

Be sure while you're there to visit the remarkable *Amococo* in Rymill Park. This giant inflatable structure, with 71 interconnected pods, illuminated by a kaleidoscope of natural light and colour, replaces the two-day Fringe Family Weekend with three weeks of activity and performances by roving artists.

The 96-page Fringe guide, which is also available online, is a stellar tribute to Anthony's farewell festival, and an invaluable resource as Clarke begins his journey to next year's Adelaide Fringe.

■ For further information and bookings visit www.adelaidefringe.com.au

OFFSITE

Art meets architecture

Structures made of air might sound like the things of dreams – but that's exactly what the UK's *Architects of Air* created with their fantastical inflatable luminariums. The labyrinthine Amococo, made its Australian debut in Adelaide's iconic parklands as a key part of the 2010 Adelaide Fringe.

The colourful inflatable structure of winding tunnels, soaring domes and cavernous

atriums was inspired by the beauty of natural geometry and Iranian architecture. The walk-through sculpture is a chill-out zone of a most unusual kind that's suitable for all ages. It is a monumental inflatable installation where people are moved to a sense of wonder at the beauty of light and colour. The visitor enters to discover a landscape of columns, labyrinthine passages and soaring domes all shining with radiant colour.

Amococo is based on a floor plan generated by 86 'triaxial' domes. Inspired by the modular elements of the Iranian bazaar, it makes possible the ever-turning paths that create a dense winding maze. Every now and then the paths open out into a luminous, spacious dome awash with saturated colour.

Amococo has 71 'pods' – large niches where people can sit and relax out of the

way of the visitors making their way around the structure. Each pod has its own coloured window arched like the windows of gothic architecture. The colours of Amococo are calculated to generate the greatest diversity of subtle hues – using only three colours of plastic.

Adelaide Fringe Festival, 2010



RANT

There are a few better briefs coming out these days for feature projects; particularly those which position tertiary education institutions or those which are centred on civic spaces with public transport connections.

There is also a mostly unwritten, but very real client body sentiment, that interstate or international architects are needed to realise the lofty aspirations of these projects. These architects bring interstate or international best practice experience, the likes of which our local practitioners could not possibly learn through education, sabbatical or conference experiences. They may lack local flavour, innate understanding of local culture, history, social interconnections or a commitment which

sees them actually live, pay taxes and raise their children in our state, but I guess they are skilled enough that they can in fact remedy these shortcomings through education or a sabbatical.

So acknowledging this disparate architectural prowess, while they are here to educate our local teams by doing the good work and taking the good fee, I wonder if we could set them a challenge? Perhaps if our interstate or international best practitioners could achieve aspirational outcomes with the same brief and budget as our local players; perhaps on the small mundane projects left after the feature is built, or the briefs and budgets we have worked to in the post State Bank South Australia for the last 20 years. Then perhaps we could really learn something.

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AMOCOCO

by Robert Dunstan

The UK's Architects Of The Air are bringing their latest structure, Amococo, to Adelaide Fringe 2010 to make its Australian debut. The company, which is led by Alan Parkinson and which currently has four other structures touring the world, have been touring around the globe for the last 20 years with their constructions which take less than three hours to erect and can be inflated in 30 minutes using the power required to operate two domestic electric kettles.

"People go in to a luminarium not knowing what to expect and they are often surprised by what they find," Alan Parkinson says. "The luminosity of a luminarium leaves visitors struggling for metaphors to describe their experience - or even their awe."

"My desire as a designer is to arouse a sense of wonder. To be struck by a sense of wonder is to step out of the everyday world and enter a world where phenomena become foreground in consciousness."

"The surprising intensity of the colour inside a luminarium provokes a reflection on the phenomenon of light and perhaps of self and the beauty of the world," he adds.

What type of architecture inspires you?

"Gothic cathedrals, mosques and [German architect] Frei Otto."

How many are now involved in the team? And how many will need to travel to Adelaide to set up Amococo?

"We have five permanent and over 15 temporary staff but only two will need to come to Adelaide."

How would one become involved in Architects Of Air? And what do the team members do?

"Initially the involvement is either helping to run an exhibition or helping to build a structure."

How are the constructions conceived? Is there a 'project meeting'?

"Different factors are contributory to the design of a new structure. Usually making one structure leads to ideas for the next." What was your initial inspiration for Architects Of Air?

"Seeing a structure someone else had built in the mid-'80s and being moved by the luminosity and then wanting to create something just as beautiful but with better architecture."

What has been the most successful construction and why?

"The last one is always a bit better than

the preceding one, but all structures have featured successful elements."

How long do most patrons spend inside one of your constructions?

"An average stay will be around 20 minutes."

Do you find that some patrons come back again (and again) to refresh their experience?

"Yes, often. And we've heard comments such as, 'It was somewhere between a womb and a cathedral', and, 'It was amazing and like a worm dream'."

Someone else also said, 'It was one of the most remarkable experiences of my life. I was as blissful as a child'. And most people remark on the beauty of the light."

Amococo will be at Rymill Pk (Mullawirraburka) from 11am until 7pm (closed on Mondays) from Sat Feb 20 until Sun Mar 15 as part of Adelaide Fringe 2010. It's only \$2 entry and suitable for all-ages although those under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. It is also accessible to wheelchair users.

What Is Amococo?

Amococo is the latest luminarium from Architects Of Air with a design based on a floor plan generated by 86 'Triaxial' domes. The three-sided dome, which is inspired by the modular elements of the Iranian bazaar, makes possible the ever-turning paths that create a dense winding maze. Every now and then the paths open out into a luminous, spacious dome awash with saturated colour. The common visual motif of the domes is the 'oculus' - a high-level ovoid window that gently diffuses indirect coloured light. Amococo has 71 'pods' which are large niches where people can sit and relax out of the way of the visitors making their way around the structure. Each pod has its own coloured window arched like the windows of Gothic architecture. The colours of Amococo are calculated to generate the greatest diversity of subtle hues - using only three colours of plastic.

What Is A Luminarium?

A luminarium is a monumental inflatable installation where people are moved to a sense of wonder at the beauty of light and colour. The visitor enters to discover a landscape of columns, labyrinthine passages and soaring domes all shining with radiant colour. Since 1990 the luminaria have enchanted more than two million visitors in 37 countries. Once inside visitors are free to wander or to sit down and lie back to enjoy the unique environment of the luminarium. No two visits to a structure are quite the same. The atmosphere inside alters according to changing weather and the changing light of different times of day.

Key Amococo Facts

Length: 54 metres
Width: 30 metres
Surface: 1,000 square metres

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Two scruffy winelovers in a grape escape

LABYRINTH OF COLOUR: Acrobats from theatre company Gravity and Other Myths in the Amococo tent yesterday. Fringe report Page 6

Picture: BRENTON EDWARDS

Everything in place to start party

PATRICK McDONALD
ARTS EDITOR

AUSTRALIA'S biggest-ever arts festival begins tonight, with the 50th anniversary Adelaide Fringe opening parade and concert.

More than 80,000 people are expected at Rymill Park, with many of the 705 shows in this year's Fringe program also starting today.

A giant inflatable labyrinth called Amococo will open its doors to the public in Rymill Park from tomorrow.

Natural light filters through the fabric of 71 interconnected pods to create a kaleidoscope of colour.

The "luminarium", which measures 50m by 35m, was created by UK company Architects of Air.

Amococo exhibition manager Shanti Freed said visitors could expect to see connected domes and tunnels inside the unique creation.

"All the light and colour that you see inside is created by sunlight coming through the coloured plastic and being reflected," she said.

Entry costs \$2 and a coloured card system will be used to reduce waiting time.

The structure is child-friendly and wheelchair-accessible. Just 80 people are allowed inside at a time.

Performers from new acrobatics company Gravity and Other Myths

were yesterday the first people allowed inside Amococo.

"We all started at Cirkids circus school and we've just formed our own company," co-ordinator and performer Jascha Boyce said.

Gravity and Other Myths performs its debut show *Freefall* as part of the Fringe at Holden Street Theatres from tomorrow to Tuesday, and at the Ringbox in the Garden of Unearthly Delights from March 1-13.

Fringe director Christie Anthony urged audiences to get in place by 6pm tonight, with viewing areas in the parklands along Rundle Rd and at the intersection of Hutt St and Grenfell St.

About 1500 performers, with 25 floats, will take part in the parade, which starts from Dequetteville Tce at 7pm and heads toward the city along Rundle Rd, then south along East Tce and Hutt St.

It will be followed by a free concert from 8.30pm in Rymill Park, featuring the bands Art vs Science, Killaqueenz, The Kill Girls and Canvas Kites.

PAGE 63: Front Row



SET TO SHINE: Acrobats strut their stuff in the inflatable tent yesterday.

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Welcome to the house of fun

PATRICK MCDONALD
ARTS EDITOR

A GIANT inflatable "city" with 71 interconnected pods, illuminated by a kaleidoscope of natural light and colour, will form the centrepiece of this year's Adelaide Fringe activities in Rymill Park.

Amococo is described as a "luminarium" created by British company Architects of Air.

More than two million visitors have entered Architects of Air's various luminariums in 37 different countries since 1990.

Amococo will replace the former Fringe Family Weekend as the focus for this year's family activities, said Fringe director Christie Anthony. The 50m by 30m structure will be open between 11am and 7pm each day, except Mondays, from February 20 to March 14 and entry costs \$2.

"It is very much a light-based experience," Ms Anthony said.

"Family Weekend got to the point where we stretched it to two days. Having so many people come at once, we thought they deserved an experience which is even richer and even grander and even bigger.

"So that is now three weeks of activity, with roving artists and other entertainment every weekend for families."

Architects of Air founder Alan Parkinson said the structure's shape was inspired by buildings during a visit to Iran.

"It was just basically a modular dome which, when you put a whole lot of them together, creates a very winding path," he said.

"When you are going around inside the structure, there is a bit of a disorientation and a journey of discovery. You find all sorts of activity: people doing yoga or meditation or just finding their own way to enjoy the environment."

Amococo is accessible to wheelchairs and babies in arms are admitted free.



FREE FRINGE PROGRAM INSIDE The Advertiser TODAY



SEE THE LIGHT: The futuristic inflatable Amococo creation and, inset, how it will look from the air.