



midsumma
festival



**PARTNER
WITH US
2022**



WHAT IS MIDSUMMA?

Midsumma Festival is Australia's premier queer arts and culture festival held annually in Melbourne Victoria, for and by communities who live with shared experiences around diverse gender and sexuality (LGBTQIA+).

We champion queer cultures, conversations and events. We create powerful events that inspire, share unique stories and build meaningful connections spanning cultures, age/generations, gender/sexual identities and abilities/disability.

Although the primary festival is held in summer each year, Midsumma works nationally year-round to provide artists and culture-makers with training, support and tools to create, present and promote their work, within a local, national and international context.

We have gained artistic and community recognition for the vital role we play in the development of queer cultures across Victoria and nationally.

Over the past 18 months, Midsumma has pivoted in digital strategies alongside live events, set up support programs for our artists and continued to support, elevate and empower our communities through hard times.

Did you know Midsumma raises 70% of its total income annually through sources outside of federal, state or local government? This means we rely on the generosity of corporate and commercial businesses, patrons and donors to support us in producing this much-loved annual festival and our year-round community access

This page: Midsumma Festival Live at the Bowl
by Suzanne Balding

Cover image: MATADOR, Midsumma Festival 2021.
Image by Nikki Russian

2021 MIDSUMMA FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Our Audiences

272,947

Average attendance each year over the past three years. Midsumma Festival 2021 achieved 209,923 attendees despite impacts by COVID-19 capacity restrictions

14,055

audiences at Midsumma Festival Live at the Bowl; 57.3 % of these audiences engaged online

25,001

audiences for the 2021 Midsumma Pride March; of these audiences 5,718 were marchers, 10,483 participated in the livestream and 8,800 visited a trader in St Kilda to watch the march

71%

returning audiences; a 5.9% increase in audience retention from 2020

43,939

total ticket attendance, compared with 35,611 in 2020 and 27,247 in 2019), the second year running that we have recorded a substantial increase in this area. 23.4% increase on 2020 and 60.2% increase over the past two years.

Midsumma Pride March 2021 by J Forsyth

Our 2021 Program

163

Events

representing a 63% increase on target number of events for 2021 post COVID-19 reactivation

29%

of audiences were attending their first Midsumma Festival.

3%

of audiences attended 10 or more shows

38%

Free events

8.6% increase in free events from 2020

16%

increase in gross box office income, on 2020 results

Our Communities

85%

increase in social media engagement - 31,349 total for 2021, 2020 had a total of 16,938

28,004

audience members for Midsumma Festival online (new initiative)

234,744

visits to the Midsumma website, from 155,671 separate users, during Midsumma Festival 2021

118,550,981

reach recorded across all media platforms

WHO ARE OUR AUDIENCES?

Sexuality Diversity

Gay	32%
Heterosexual	18%
Lesbian	15%
Queer	15%
Bisexual	11%
Pansexual	4%
Asexual	<1%
Other	5%

Gender Diversity

Female	49% (up 9%)
Male	38%
Gender non-binary	7%
Transgender	1%
Intersex	1%
Agender/No gender	1%
Prefer not to say	<1%

8%

of audiences identify as Transgender / Gender Diverse

17%

of audiences identify as culturally diverse or a person of colour

26%

of audiences identify as living with disability

4%

of audiences identify as Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander

Age

31%

25-34 year olds

22%

18-24 year olds

14%

35-44 year olds

11%

45-54 year olds

Household Structure

31%

Single

29%

Couple

22%

Share house

18%

Family

Income (per annum)*

51%

\$80,000+

*14% prefer not to say

23%

\$40,000 – \$80,000

12%

Under \$40,000

Residence

89%

Melbourne

5%

Interstate

5%

Regional Victoria

1%

International

\$11.3 million

Economic impact for the state of Victoria. According to independent analysis, the festival provided a direct economic impact of \$11.3 million, with the broader gross economic impact of the 2021 festival to the State’s economy estimated at \$32.4 million.

WHO ARE WE?

- We are a **cultural connector** and **influencer**.
- We are the **intersection** between people, ideas, stories and experiences.
- We are simultaneously a **thought-leader** and a **learning** organisation.
- We are active and constantly **evolving**. **Progression** and **development** lie at our core.
- We are a focal point for **connections** and **belonging**.
- We are **globally relevant** and connected.
- We value **diversity** and embrace **difference**.

WHAT DO WE DO?

- We promote, develop and celebrate **queer arts** and **culture**.
- We create **inclusive, safe cultural** and **social spaces**.
- We **lead conversations** and **we listen**.
- We **champion collaboration**.
- We provide platforms for **shared experiences**.
- We **increase visibility** in a world that often under-represents us and **amplify voices** that might otherwise not be seen or heard.
- We imagine **positive futures**. We **challenge, inspire** and **take risks** in pursuit of these.
- We seek **new perspectives** and paradigms; yet never forget the **value of our past**.
- We offer **time, place** and **space** for our communities and allies to **engage**.

Essie Holt at POWER: Queer women and non-binary artists in music, presented by Midsumma Festival and supported by City of Stonnington. Photo by Suzanne Balding

MIDSUMMA FESTIVAL

Midsumma Festival is made up of events produced by and for broad and diverse communities, consisting of both externally produced events and events developed and produced by Midsumma. Each year artists, producers and culture-makers register their events, giving them inclusion in the Midsumma Festival program guide and website plus access to promotions and artist support services. Events include arts and cultural experiences for all ages such as theatre, music, comedy, dance, visual arts, digital arts, film and forums – alongside sporting, and social events.

Year round, Midsumma plays a significant proactive leadership role in actively developing the queer cultural footprint of Melbourne, and Australia. A focus for Midsumma Presents is making the many diverse queer communities in Victoria more effectively interconnected, and to provide a platform for cultural voices and stories that are often not otherwise heard or seen in the broader community.

Over the past four years Midsumma has significantly extended its 'Midsumma Presents' development and producing arm, from just six events in 2017, to peak at 49 Midsumma Presents events in 2021.

A clear curatorial vision underpins all of Midsumma's programming, with a focus upon defined strategic priorities, and a goal to both strengthen the creative voices of LGBTQIA+ communities and amplify our leadership position at the forefront of LGBTQIA+ artistic development for our region of the world.

Midsumma now has two clear aims:

- **To be the leadership arts organisation cultivating queer arts culture unique to Australia with local, national and international engagement; leading LGBTQIA+ cultural conversations.**
- **An artistic powerhouse investing in diverse LGBTQIA+ artistic voices to develop powerful new multi-discipline works that inspire, share unique stories, and build meaningful connections; spanning all cultures, age/generations, gender/sexual identities and abilities/disability.**

We continue to improve the depth, quality and variety of our own curated Midsumma Presents program, responding to the broad range of our artistic communities and audience demographics, and ensuring we play a leadership role in the development of queer arts and cultures.

Attendances to Midsumma Presents events have increased each year over the last four years. This complements the increased participation seen across the entire program which increased over 41% in the three years directly pre COVID, and still achieved over 209,000 attendances in the recent COVID restricted 2021 festival - demonstrating the effectiveness of positive community and artist engagement across diverse communities.

Each year the Midsumma Presents program includes collaborations with significant cultural institutions including Arts Centre Melbourne, Sidney Myer Music Bowl, ACMI, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Incinerator Gallery, Museums Victoria, Malthouse and the Australian Queer Archives (AQuA).

A highlight in 2021 was the development and delivery of the 2021 keynote project, PRISM. Diverse families rarely see themselves and their lived experiences reflected in books, TV, advertising or on stage, until now. Midsumma was successful in securing federal project funding from the Australia Council for the Arts. Projects were presented in both the core festival April - May period, as well as delivery of some key projects from PRISM focused around the June / July school holidays.

The core of this program is a partnership with ArtPlay, one of the leading arts venues for children aged 0-12 supported by City of Melbourne. The aim of this project was to build a strong foundation to cultivate significant cross-artform development for diverse rainbow families, upskill artists & expand the diversity of arts practice well into the future.

The next Midsumma Festival season will run from 23 January to 13 February 2022.

F*ck Fabulous by Suzanne Balding

A LONG HISTORY DEVELOPING, ELEVATING AND EMPOWERING QUEER CULTURES

In 2021, Midsumma celebrated 34 years of championing diversity, cultivating queer perspectives and creating experiences that challenge the status quo – all made possible through our annual open access festival, year-round development initiatives and our own curated presentations.

With such a rich and successful history, the festival celebrates our past, while at the same time strongly focusing on a contemporary dynamic vision for the future.

Connection, Community and Culture

Midsumma engaged external research services by Culture Counts to survey Midsumma audiences. The Midsumma audience survey included a series of questions focused on the impact that Midsumma has on individuals and communities.

Culture Counts reported that for 2021, 94% said the festival helped them feel safe and 94% said the festival made them feel more connected to community. 89% said that attending Midsumma had a positive impact on their wellbeing.

These scores indicate that the festival events had a strong impact for attendees, including vulnerable communities, across a range of important areas. This impact has never been as important as it is today.

Zelia Rose performing in The Cocoa
Butter Club: Midsumma Special 2018.
Photo: Alexis D. Lea Photography



ELEVATING CREATIVE VISIBILITY

Midsumma attracts wide-ranging attendances across a broad age range and demographics; truly representing inclusion and diversity in all its forms. For this reason, we are ideally placed to make the many diverse queer communities in Victoria more visible by providing a platform for creative voices and stories that are often not heard or seen otherwise in the broader community.

Midsumma is a festival that intrinsically creates safe and inclusive places for communities, with diversity at its very core. We know that when our communities feel safe and supported, they are able to build stronger connections within their own groups and then with other groups they interact with.

Success in this area was particularly evident in 2021 in these nine ways:

1. Increased Engagement with First Nation Communities

Midsumma continued to build upon the strong and meaningful engagement with LGBTQIA+ Aboriginal and First Nations communities for the 2021 festival and throughout the year. This was further amplified with strong representation of First Nations artists engaged through a collaboration with YIRRMABOI Festival to present Miss First Nation across three performance nights, plus the development and presentation of a new contemporary classical music work with composer Diimpa and Forest Collective, which focused on Diimpa's compositions linked to his identity as a Gubbi Gubbi man.

Craig Holloway and Rebecca Hunt were both engaged in the joint role of Aboriginal Engagement Coordinators for Midsumma Festival 2021. This was the fifth year Midsumma funded this role, which is responsible for vital work in engaging Aboriginal communities, organising the Rainbow Aboriginal contingent at Midsumma Pride March and arranging cultural ceremonies for our major events.

2. Increased Engagement with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Audiences and Artists

Midsumma continues to increase participation with Victoria's LGBTQIA+ multicultural communities through our curated arm of the program, Midsumma Presents. Attendance surveys show that Midsumma Festival attracts broad attendances across age ranges and demographics; truly representing inclusion and diversion in all its forms. In the 2021 festival, 17% of 2021 audiences identified as culturally diverse or a person of colour.



3. Increased Focus on Multigenerational Engagement

As an arts and culture festival, Midsumma is committed to the exchange of potent stories. LGBTQIA+ communities often don't have places where our elders and emerging members can interact to share history, knowledge and experiences. Midsumma believes creating space for this is an integral part of our mission. As well as ensuring this approach sits across all our curated and produced activities, in 2021 Midsumma supported the specific development and presentation of the beautiful and moving intergenerational project The Dinosaur Squad.

4. Sharing the stories of Young People

Over the past three years Midsumma has worked with youth organisation, Minus18, to create a strong presence of young people at Midsumma Pride March each year. As part of Midsumma's core values, this sends a clear message to young people that they have a safe space for creativity, connection, artistic collaboration, and that they are not alone. This was amplified even further in 2021 by partnering with Immigration Museum (Museums Victoria), Minus18 and Signal to present Becoming Us – a program for LGBTQIA+ teenagers and their parents / guardians, celebrating the idea of becoming an adult and uplifting the new LGBTQIA+ generation.

5. Enriching Engagement with Older Audiences

In 2021 Midsumma created a guide category specifically for older audiences. The category was established to encourage older audiences to participate in Midsumma Festival and to feel safe and connected to their local and broader communities. Engagement and attendances by our senior communities at Midsumma events have increased in recent years and in 2021, 12% of audiences attending Midsumma were 55 years or older, half of which were over 65 years of age.

6. Deeper Relationships with Queer Female Artists

Midsumma initiated a strong and more meaningful engagement with LGBTQIA+ women for the 2021 festival and throughout the year. Midsumma was able to deepen our connection with female identifying artists, producers and audiences through a range of initiatives with a focus on queer women in music.

According to a 2017 SBS sexuality article, "Australian music has long been a domain of straight white men, with minority voices fighting for their spot to be recognised. Overtly queer female identifying music is still overlooked by the mainstream or met with baffled response."

The centrepiece of this strategy this year was a collaboration with The Pier Festival presented by Midsumma Festival, Girls at Sea & AH Entertainment. This event was designed to create a safe space for queer women to come together and celebrate female artists and their work. Other projects presented by Midsumma Presents in this area in 2021 were A Celebration of the Teaches of Peaches, Goddess Grooves @ Chapel Presents Love Rewind and Goddess of Jazz @ Chapel off Chapel.

Increased female attendance has been a goal in the current four-year planning period. This year, Midsumma achieved an increase of 8.8% in female identifying audiences and has achieved increases in female attendances of 15% in the past four years since seeking to address this in both programming and marketing.

Kee'ahn performing at POWER: Queer women and non-binary artists in music, presented by Midsumma Festival and supported by City of Stonnington. Photo by Tanya McCulloch



7. Increased Engagement with Disability Cultures

Midsumma is proud to be a national leader in disability access and engagement initiatives.

Our Midsumma Festival program guide is made accessible through multiple formats with plain text, audio described and screen readable versions and Auslan video.

In the last four years Midsumma has achieved a 112% increase in Auslan interpreted and audio described events within the festival program; this has been attained alongside an overall increase in deepening the engagement of key strategies across all areas of disability culture initiatives, maximising real outcomes. This year Midsumma initiated for the first-time dedicated audio described live streamed performances across two of our major events.

Disability identifying audiences made up 26% of attendees this year with a further 4% of audiences identifying as carers for people with a disability. This represents a 51% increase over the past two years.

Midsumma partners with Description Victoria and Auslan Stage Left to deliver multiple multi layered access and engagement initiatives.

For a third year, Relaxed Performances were included, shows intended specifically to be sensitive to and accepting of audience members who may benefit from a more relaxed environment, including (but not limited to) those with autistic spectrum conditions, anyone with sensory and communication disorders or learning-disabled people.

Extending our work in this area year round, Midsumma is proud to be in year two of a new three year skill development mentorship program, Midsumma Pathways, working each year with up to ten creative LGBTQIA+ members of the community who also identify as living with disability (see pages 20-21).

8. Increased Engagement with the Transgender and Gender Diverse Communities

As a direct result of increased engagement, we have seen an increase in audience attendance from our transgender / gender diverse communities and an increase in our volunteer workforce identifying as transgender and gender diverse.

8% of audiences in 2021 identify as Transgender and /or Gender Diverse.

9. Developing Increased Engagement With Diverse Families

A new focus area for Midsumma. Professional arts events for diverse rainbow families are visibly lacking in Australia. Such works are even rarer for those families with young children or with children with disability.

Diverse families rarely see themselves and their lived experiences reflected in books, TV, advertising or on stage. Building upon Midsumma's role as a leader in queer arts and culture development, and starting as an initial conversation around one work, The Rainbow Tree, by Sarah Ward and Bec Mathews, the extended PRISM program was curated and commissioned by Midsumma to provide increased diverse content for children that currently have very little specific engagement that reflects their family's experiences.



BUT THAT'S NOT ALL WE'VE DONE

Midsumma Futures

Midsumma Futures, our biennial nine-month mentoring developmental program designed for LGBTQIA+ early-career artists and future community leaders, has already achieved real outcomes in career development over past years. Returning in 2022, Midsumma Futures will further invest in the next generation of LGBTQIA+ creative leaders, advancing participants' careers, deepening creative practice, amplifying artistic voices, increasing networks and profile, and leading the future of queer arts and culture in our region of the world.

Midsumma Futures brings together a diverse range of artists from across disciplines as well as producers, practitioners, community leaders, creative thinkers and culture-makers. Once connections are made between early-career and established professional practitioners, participants attend a series of group workshops in professional skill and career development as well as their one-on-one sessions with an experienced mentor who best suits their individual needs. All participants receive VIP passes to attend the following Midsumma Festival, with increased support for those who may also register an event as part of the festival.

Previous Futures programs have included young creatives representing diverse areas including music, programming, cabaret performance, theatre performance and direction, set design, contemporary performance, visual arts, film making, literature, sound design and playwriting.

Midsumma Pathways

After a previous successful pilot program that achieved outstanding results and measured longer term outcomes, Midsumma was proud to commence in 2020/21 the first of a new comprehensive three-year skill development mentorship project.

Each year, up to ten creative LGBTQIA+ members of the community who also identify as living with disability, Deaf /hearing impaired or living with chronic pain/illness, will undertake this nine-month program. Midsumma Pathways is a companion project to our Midsumma Futures program and aims not only to develop practical arts industry skills but also to build capacity for participants in a broader context through introducing and interacting with LGBTQIA+ creative communities, venues and networks.

Queerantime

When the pandemic hit our communities in 2020, Midsumma Festival created a hub for queer arts and cultural assistance information on the Midsumma website, and sent this directly to assist artists. In the absence of financial support and arts work the lockdowns specifically, Midsumma commissioned ten artists to create digital work to express how they felt throughout this time. These commissions, and knowledge sharing was exhibited on the Midsumma website. This became the basis of the new venture "Queerantime", that became an exhibition "Queerantime in the Flesh" for Midsumma Festival 2021.

Midsumma New Commissions

As part of our commitment to developing new creative artists and important creative voices, Midsumma has commenced plans for commissioning of new projects that ensure increased content for audiences currently underrepresented. Midsumma continues to invest in LGBTQIA+ artists year-round to ensure that artists remain at the very forefront of the development of queer cultures now and into the future.

MATADOR, Midsumma Festival 2021.
Image by Nikki Russian

Midsumma and Australia Post Art Award

Since its inauguration in 2016 the Midsumma and Australia Post Art Award has quickly established itself as the nation's leading queer art award and exhibition. Applications for this annual award come from the finest LGBTQIA+ visual artists all over Australia. With cash, public exhibition and future development/residency opportunities, the Midsumma and Australia Post Art Award is a survey that reflects artists' potent personal and political perspectives on the world.

This is a nation-wide annual award featuring both early-career and established artists working in any visual arts medium including 2D, 3D (Sculpture/crafts) and digital/film.

Finalists selected from across the country each year are exhibited publicly and showcased online.

Corporate and Community Group Engagement

Midsumma has developed capacity in-house that enables us to actively support community and employee diversity groups, including specific pride committees. We help to implement innovative ways in which to develop policies and procedures, and to bring these policies to life in engaging ways. Midsumma works positively across diverse areas of intersectionality in supporting both community and corporate organisations with external and internal LGBTQIA+ and broader diversity and inclusion strategies that have meaning. Such strategies have never been as important as they have been and continue to be as our diverse communities deal with ongoing impacts of COVID with an increasing need to express their PRIDE in all aspects of their lives.

These important year-round initiatives are just the beginning of our exciting future.



Our Leadership Position

Midsumma has successfully positioned itself as a globally relevant cultural influencer with art, leadership, learning and diversity at its heart.

We have experienced rapid growth in audiences, breadth and scope of artists and community engagement, and depth of artistic partnerships and new work developed, and responded to the impacts of COVID across our diverse communities in numerous vital online and in-person ways to ensure increased community connections, engagement and employment.

It is the aim of Midsumma that the activities we undertake and events we produce have long-term cultural, community, and industry impact beyond just immediate KPIs and outcomes. Through our many varied activities we continue to develop our leadership position at the very forefront of LGBTQIA+ artistic and community development.

Your support can help us further realise the potential of Midsumma in and beyond our festival each year, while opening up exciting new opportunities.

We are just at the beginning of an exciting future – come join us!

This page: Miss First Nation, Midsumma Festival 2021.
Image by Tiffany Garvie and Yirramboi Festival

Back cover image:
Sheldon Riley at Midsumma Festival Live at the Bowl
by Suzanne Balding



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