



## CONTEMPLATING COMMUNITY: NOTES FROM A SINGER ON THE ROAD: Opening Keynote Address

### Robyn Archer

Singer, artistic director, and public advocate for the arts

**Abstract:** *In her opening keynote, Robyn Archer offers some tasty morsels on which delegates can chew while contemplating the basics before embarking on the main course of the conference. Using her own past and current work as examples, she ponders both the complex connotations of 'community' as well as the continuing systemic divisions between the 'main program' for the Arts versus Arts-in-community. From the heart of Federation Square to parched Mildura, from France to Vanuatu, from North-Eastern Arnhem Land to Canberra, Robyn's sweeping view and broad reach of projects ushers in the conference with a personal voice.*

**Keywords:** *community, Arts-in-community, regeneration*

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I begin by thanking Auntie Joy Murphy for her welcome and pay my respects to the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung peoples, the traditional owners of this great meeting place where we gather, and to their elders past and present.

Well, as you can imagine, it's a daunting prospect trying to find the right pitch to open a conference like this – filled as it is with genuine expertise and experience of working in and with community. What can I possibly offer?

While most of you are considering and drawing from quite specific examples which each make clear what is meant by thinking of it as a particular community (and I find these are mostly quite specifically geographically defined – towns, cities, regions, suburbs), I found myself thinking about the notion of community and how we still need to be en garde about the term itself and would like to sit with that for a moment.

For a gypsy who is not Romany, that is, not surrounded by fellow travellers, the notion of community is strange. For more than thirty years, rarely spending more than five consecutive nights in any one place, I have very little personal sense of community in a geographical sense – and things that come easy to many members of a community like that, are often quite hard for me. Trying to rent a DVD anywhere, or give a reliable street address without seeming like a criminal, pretty much puts me in refugee status – even finding where to find nearby after-hours groceries can be challenging on a day to day basis – and as for doctors, forget it. I'm glad I so rarely need one.

It's no surprise I suppose that I am starting to think and speak more and more about valuing the ephemeral, championing the transitory. I am a gypsy traveller without a home as most of you know it, and I am, by trade, a singer – I have learned without tuition to fashion the air

coming from my lungs to create sound waves which resonate on your skulls and reach your ears — the actual thing I make is gone the minute it leaves me. Its efficacy relies on memory – believe me, having the recording is not the same thing, just what is left over, as much as we might enjoy those remains for many years after.

I suppose if I craved a sense of belonging, a need for community, I could try a number of communal avenues – the gay and lesbian community or indeed women (though I have never ever been a club or party go-er or liner so that's not on) – that is, community through gender; or Australians anywhere – that is, community through race. These are both globally connected communities with fairly high levels of shared interests, histories, views and values. But I don't crave these connections. Why? Well, firstly I enjoy being alone, adventuring alone, letting my nose lead without having to consult anyone.

But the real reason is that I belong to a community so widespread and evident that it's actually quite hard to escape – anywhere in the world. This is the community of art and artists. Wherever I am there is evidence of that community – my joy, my solace, my sadness, my intellectual engagement on every level. Of course it has been my particular privilege also to connect with individual members of that community all over the world and there are few cities and towns, far and wide, where I would not have a few or many friends and colleagues which that community has yielded me. It is a community of nothing tangible, yet it saturates the world and provides billions of entry points. And it is surely why artists, art and its processes have such a role to play within more geographically defined communities – precisely because they can be, and are, everywhere.

In that context it's always interesting to encounter again the view that in continental Europe there is no sense of community as we know it. It has been explained to me more than once that in France, for instance, the very notion of community would upset the notion of *egalite*; one cannot properly speak of 'gay' rights or 'ethnic' rights, because, of course, the theory there is that everyone has exactly the same rights. Therefore you will not find a department of community arts anywhere in France.

What you will find, however, is the survival of de Gaulle's decentralised model of the arts: throughout France all citizens have access to the very best of dance, theatre and visual arts and attendant programs of education and participation through the Maisons de la Culture liberally spread throughout the country – this works brilliantly for audiences outside the major cities and also for artists whose audiences are vast and who have an appetite for new work.

This doesn't mean that art in community doesn't exist in the way you will consider it in the next few days – it just doesn't go by that name, and it has been largely stimulated by patterns of migration which are familiar throughout Europe (including Britain). As empires have struck back, European countries have experienced the influx of large numbers of citizens who, because of the colonized experience, speak the same language but whose cultures, ethnicities and personal histories have been vastly different from the French citizen born and raised in France. Thus in a city like Marseilles there are many projects through the arts which seek pro-actively to engage the numbers of North Africans who now live there – the same in Berlin for Turkish guest-workers and now their children born there, and in Brussels for those from Arab countries.

There is nothing accidental in the appointment of the actor and activist Jacques Martial as the first black man ever to head up one of the major cultural institutions in France – he is President of Parc La Villette, which is situated in the 19<sup>th</sup> arrondissement – just inside the walls and very close to one of the main sites of racial explosion. This has been perhaps less a case of a community needing regeneration, than neighbourhoods needing recognition and reconciliation.

While his stature as an artist and brilliant advocate would be qualification enough, one sees in this year's massive exposition on the Outres-Mers (that is France in its outlying dominions) Jacques' intent to reach out to the people who live nearby in an effort to bring them inside the cultural activities that the Park produces, rather than just leaving them to use its grounds for strolling and playing with the kids in, while the cultural institutions (Cite de la Musique, Cite de la Science, the Grand Halle etc.) are visited only by those from the white European majority. This is a major institution taking as the central theme of its major annual exhibition, the histories and culture of the people who now live closest to that institution - histories and culture that have been and are still often in conflict with mainstream France. In 2011 the intention is to make a season focus on disability – most unusual for Paris.

But all this is done without overt art and community programs. In France it seems that those who would statistically fall outside what might be considered the norm – by age, race, ethnicity, language, ability etc. – are enticed through particular manipulations of the main programs, rather than through the creation of special programs outside the main, specially created to target special groups. Whether it works or not on a practical level, you can spot the difference in perspective. For a start, geography is not such a consideration – art is everywhere and funded to be everywhere with extremely healthy touring circuits to guarantee a good mix wherever you are.

Since the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights' Article 27 reads:

'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits,'

the theory is that a community program is not necessary because everyone must have access to art – and so the main program must take care of it; not a main program for those who have the location, education, time and money to enjoy it and another one for those who don't have those things. Significantly, art is also thoroughly integrated into education in such a country. Kids grow up to expect that art will be a natural part of their lives.

Now I don't want you to think that I make the mistake of thinking taking arts to community, just using them as passive audience receptors, is what you are on about here. I don't think I need to say too much to you here about the value of active arts participation in the lives of those who may feel marginalised, or disenfranchised, or despairing, or simply excluded. I would normally come out here and do the rallying cry to kick the conference off – but the whole conference program so bespeaks your faith in the efficacy of artists, art and its processes and their potential for participation in the rebuilding of communities, that I think the last thing you need from me is another list of heart-warming and inspirational case-studies: you have them in bucketfuls, superbly at this conference. Hearts get ready. And I'm sure that you all have excellent statistics and trustworthy anecdotal evidence to show how communities have come alive again through various programs, including the arts.

Rather I think my initial line of comparison is worth pursuing a while longer with you here, at the start – just questioning basics. I don't want to hold up any particular government policy as heroic because I know that putting that European ideal into practice has actually taken a lot of individual courage, for example, Jacques Martial as both actor/director and administrator in Paris, Frie Leysen as artistic director in Antwerp and Brussels and Alain Platel as creator in Belgium and many others like them. It has fallen somewhat to individual conscience there to ensure what we call inclusion.

But we in Australia have had to argue long and hard for the support of those special programs, I suspect because the feeling was that the main programs were not including them. It was and is still felt, despite many improvements through formal touring programs, that those who are not in big cities simply 'miss out' on most of the artistic output of our

artists. Our small population, vast country and the often equally remote outer suburbs of big cities clearly make decentralisation much more difficult and more expensive. Nor had there been for a long time much hard thought about how what are considered to be the main programs might relate, include and invite the participation of audiences or artists from the outside (in any way you want to define that).

We do have categories in the arts such as Major Performing Arts Companies or major institutions – but to what extent do any of these companies even *now* take stories, perspectives, artists and ideas, from the edge (geographical, racial, ethnic, philosophical etc)? Well, more than they used to I guess, and film and music more than the visual arts and the visual arts more than theatre and dance, and all of them more than opera or ballet.

It's a kind of inverse financial proportion – the greater the resource, the more remote from those already excluded, while smaller operations manage it better; for example, the excellent work of outfits like Urban Theatre Projects or BighArt or Back-to Back. But there are still not enough for any of us to feel comfortable about ceasing our pleas for the kind of resources which will allow the outsiders and the outlanders to use art as one of the tools for empowering themselves and their 'communities' (that is, those who surround them either geographically, racially, politically, spiritually or any other way they define community).

I think Australia has done extremely well. These special programs and perspectives and the remarkable projects they encourage (from the local to the remote in Australia to the kind of serious rebuilding/regeneration projects that the Globalism Institute is part of in places like PNG) are the envy of the world, as we were when the Australia Council, at its inception, became the first ever national cultural institution to include a whole unit dedicated to art in community.

But from the arts perspective, I still have that gnawing feeling of still wishing there were fewer divisions. I wish there still wasn't the elephant in the room, for us, for audiences, for artists, for communities and for politicians and corporations etc. – that we have the utmost endeavour of jaw-dropping creativity, innovation, hard-won skills and finesse on the one hand, and art in community on the other.

The more we argue the utilitarian benefits of the processes of art – either for the profitability of creative industries or the wellbeing and confidence of special sectors, the harder it becomes to argue the case of art for art's sake. Championing the right to an elite stream of artists and companies – (just as we foster in all people in Australia a passion for elite sportspersons; just look at that gal throwin' the discus in Berlin last week!) - always seems to weaken the case, and certainly the resourcing, of art in community. Yet it is because they are all part of one river which is rendered less healthy because of the frequent damming or silting up, that this kind of binary thinking causes.

One of the best aspects of the Australia Council's Community Partnerships, for instance, is that it insists on genuine community cultural development as well as excellent art. One of the saddest aspects is that we still have to 'insist' on spelling it out like that.

From a personal perspective, I'm not sure that I can even yet claim genuine CCD (as officially defined) in any of the things where art has taken me. I know that a kind of holistic approach has always governed my choices from the inside rather than through the pursuit of any official currency.

Clearly, in my twenties, writing and recording songs like *The Menstruation Blues* and *Old Soft Screw*, came not from a need to have a Top 40 hit but from a need to express those things – and while the motivation was both personal and political I can't be sure that even

that may not have been a great contributor to cultural development. You can't imagine how many young men approach me saying 'I grew up listening to those songs all the time ....my mum never stopped playing them'.

I realise that my songs were always trying to foster different understandings in the community that surrounded me – albeit unconsciously, not militantly - yet in a very bold and as it happens, totally fearless manner.

But I know the instinct was right. Devising commercial successes as vehicles for political comment worked very well in shows like *Pack of Women* or *A Star is Torn*. At the same time the height of my most disciplined achievement in singing, that is the repertoire of Brecht/Eisler/ Weill/Dessau and occasionally Muldowney and Zobl, was also imbued with a strong political view from the past which always resonated, and still resonates to this minute, every time I sing it. While it's a passive audience form, its content can often inspire or reinforce activism. This seems to have come naturally.

So, too, into my artistic direction of festivals. While these were all events with a brief to bring major international arts into each of the cities I worked in- bringing community arts projects in, activating them in the cities and reaching the festivals out for participation in regional areas of each state, enabling and bringing in all manner of Australian Indigenous Art to centre stage – quite literally: these things were all a very natural part of my curatorial process, and remain so. I didn't need cultural policy to order me to do it, though perhaps it may have been my experience as Chair of the Community Cultural Development Board (CCDB) at the Australian Council that influenced me (that is the great benefit of peer participation in the Australian Council for the Arts).

But maybe some still do require the push and the special program in exactly the same way as some local governments still need a push to value the work their community produces just as highly as the desperately longed for once in a lifetime unimaginable visit to the local oval of Andre Rieu and plastic Vienna. And I do know for sure that they're by no means all like that.

When Kate Brennan, the CEO of Federation Square here, asked me to think about something which would use Federation Square as a showplace for innovation, it didn't take us long to come to agreement about how that would also interface with diverse communities in Melbourne. For Kate too it is a natural part of the way she thinks about the arts. After three years, and no federal or state arts funding (though with a small much appreciated amount of cash and heaps of genuine support from the City of Melbourne), we started to see this year something like the activity we are aiming for.

*The Light in Winter* hosted United Visual Artists' state of the art interactive light installation VOLUME. Apart from those who just saw or stood and watched, we clicked those who walked in to play with it: 50,000 people in four weeks. The event also incorporates *The Gift of Light* in which thirteen communities in and around Melbourne participated and this has led to instances of genuine CCD on which we long to build. The point to make is that the event aims for the very best achievement in the art of 21<sup>st</sup> century lighting and digital interactivity, and at the same time very naturally allows all kinds of communities, some very fragile, to have their say, have their presence, and have the kind of experiences and contacts with a wide range of artists and other professionals which would be otherwise highly unlikely through any other avenue.

In the cases of the most fragile new networks (Afghan, sub-Sudanese, Ethiopian for instance), I might still not use the word regeneration since these are groups actively engaged in establishing new communities, relocated into the sophisticated urban fabric of 21<sup>st</sup> century

Melbourne. While the building blocks in each case are shared cultural traditions, values and histories, this is more like the generation of a community rather than a re-generation.

And I'd like to go on to consider that notion of **re-generation**. It is a word fairly thoroughly abused these days and has been the developer's catchphrase, certainly in Britain. It first applied in the UK and in Canada to degraded parts of the urban environment. These were most often places of formerly dense concentrations of industrial activity rendered obsolete through more recent technological change. The mid-century surge of demolition was halted in favour of breathing new life into these areas – and the most effective means of this was gradually found to be through design and the arts. Now old wrecked buildings responded appealingly to a contemporary design makeover and new usage for arts and creative industries. There's a lot to say for this and in the old once deserted wharf area of Quebec you find a genuinely stimulating mix of artistic endeavour and student activity.

But on the back of the many genuine results are also cultural banners which disguise the simple thrust for new development – much of which leaves very little room for art or community in amongst rhetoric that sounds as if art and community is what it is going to deliver. It is taking Docklands here in Melbourne a long time trying to 'create' community and new development areas in East Perth, Port Adelaide and London's Eastern corridor might have to use that term 'regeneration' with a bit more care unless people start to see through what is a thinly disguised developer's paradise.

Anna Minton's excellent new book *Ground Control* goes back to the origins of more recent notions of Regeneration ...

*a word which came into use during the 1980s, and means 'rebirth' in Latin. Rather than the more prosaic 'redevelopment', it conjures up the image of the phoenix of Canary Wharf and the new economy rising from the ashes of Docklands and Britain's industrial past. Yet despite the pioneering zeal of their supporters, when they were built Boadgate and Canary Wharf were controversial, perceived as high-security enclaves of wealth surrounded by some of the poorest communities in Britain.*

*They were also exceptional places – areas where business modelled the area in its own image in what are, after all, financial districts. Now, a generation later, what began specifically to serve the needs of business has become the standard model for the creation of every new place in towns and cities across the country. Previously the government and local councils 'owned' the city on behalf of us, the people. Now more and more of the city is owned by investors, and its central purpose is profit. The credit crunch may have slowed the sell-off, but every former inner-city industrial area is trying to emulate this model, from the waterfronts of Salford Quays and Cardiff to the controversial demolition programmes of the old industrial northern cities. This is the architecture of post-industrial New Labour, a government which witnessed the largest amount of construction in Britain since the post-war period. But just as the tower blocks and arterial roads of the industrial 1950s and 1960s sliced through cities and communities and failed to stand the test of time, the consequences of many of these grand schemes are disturbing. (2009, p. 5)*

Now I also know that this is not the kind of project that most of you connote when you talk about regenerating community. You are thinking more of small fragile systems in danger or under threat – on the fringes of cities or in remote areas – communities which have undergone profound change because of larger movements in cities themselves, in economic fortunes, or through things like climate change or even government priorities. You see, perhaps, that once there was a geographical community in which the word community meant so much more than just that geographical cohesion. There may once have been a complex

ecosystem of dialogue, decision-making, shared values and quality of life and dignity which that community had the power to articulate and defend. It has those things no more and your goal has been to bring back – to regenerate for a new era, some of those things which have been lost – to rectify the sense of failure and isolation, even injustice and exclusion from a fair share of what the majority believes is their country's 21<sup>st</sup> century birthright.

But Minton is very much on about this too (East End) and I have no doubt that in your various ways many of you also encounter the doublespeak of regeneration which in the end may only mean profit for developers and entrepreneurs and very little for the very communities whose health you wish to aid in restoring. I think each time we hit the big banners of Community and Regeneration it is always worth being picky about what they really mean in any context.

Minton came to Liverpool in 2006 when we ran a program called *City in Transition* in the lead up to the Capital of Culture – she gave some fairly alarming warnings then about the construction of Liverpool One, the biggest of all the private gated shopping/office and residential complexes in the UK: it covers what used to be 34 streets of old Liverpool, but is now controlled (including policing) by the corporation.

She writes about Claire Curtis' (MP for Crosby's) pleas to save Quiggins – 'an indoor market which had been a cultural icon in the city for a generation, launching the careers of musicians, designers and playwrights'. She also fought against privatization of streets, saying, 'we view with very real misgiving the associated proposals to privatise the thoroughfares of the new area and police them with so-called 'quartermasters' in what appears to be a bid to sanitize the area'. The pleas went unheard, the site was forcibly purchased and Quiggins was demolished to make way for Liverpool One. [It] opened to coincide with the year of Capital of Culture, with the shopping complex the symbol of Liverpool's contemporary culture and reality, shrunk down to a monoculture of shopping and spending'.

At the same time, Minton says that Liverpool *remains* the most deprived district in the country according to the government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation. So, we do need to be alert to some claims that 'culture' unequivocally serves processes of 'regeneration'. Your examples here will be important positive evidence that arts and culture do work, and they can indeed bring about the rebirth of communities.

The rhetoric of regeneration, according to Minton, is empty in the examples her research draws on, and she is already looking into similar claims for the regeneration of the Eastern Corridor as the 'legacy' project of the 2012 Olympics. She claims it is common knowledge that that event will be the largest security operation ever undertaken in the UK and that the new development, Stratford City (a Westfield project) will be one of the highest-security private places yet built.

*It has already been announced that Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, or UAVs, also known as drones, will be used during the Olympics. The drones, which are used by the military in Iraq or Afghanistan, are fitted with electronic eavesdropping equipment and high-definition cameras and were adapted for civilian use in Los Angeles in 2006. Dr Kirstie Ball, who is a specialist in surveillance, predicts that after the Olympics, drones, which are already in use in parts of Liverpool, will become a permanent fixture in London.*

So, I guess we must all just be aware of what the word has come to mean in some spheres, and beware these expanding scenarios. And sometimes, regeneration is not what we actually mean at all.

I'm currently involved in a pitch for a program about a theatre company from **Vanuatu**. Won Smolbag has its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and while its origins, in two white animators from Zimbabwe, might strike the uninformed as colonial, those two people have worked in exemplary ways to allow the company to develop on its own terms.

It still uses drama as its medium, and is so popular that it has its own TV drama series, but its reach from Vanuatu now extends widely to other islands in the Pacific and it dares to touch on the most dangerous taboos – HIV and health, for instance, and issues such as domestic violence which is largely advocated by some church and state as a legitimate avenue of domestic stability. Clearly this is art working in communities but not for re-generation: it is clearly about development.

In **Mildura**, where I have spent time over the last few years, I could scarcely call it re-generation either. Mildura is changing rapidly. It is a genuine candidate to be one of the first major generators of drought refugees. The dream of Chifley and the Deakins for Los Angeles in the desert lasted about 80 years – long enough for some families to feel as if they had always been there, always been on that land – before poor up-river management and climate change turned the dream to a nightmare. People walk off the land into mental health care (as long as it gets them before they take their own lives) and are officially counselled to leave the area which could become a 'ghost town'. Fortunately a new solar farm might take the edge off burgeoning unemployment, but under any circumstances you would pick Mildura as a town in desperate need of help.

But curiously regeneration is not the word I would use there. Recently it scored extremely highly in a happiness evaluation, in comparison to other river towns starting to experience the same sense of despair about water from the Murray or as manna from heaven. They attributed this contradictory sense of wellbeing to the effectiveness of arts in their town. It seems that the arts got the jump in Mildura. Springing largely from the personal efforts of Stefano di Pieri, his wife Donatella and a small group of friends, they stimulated cultural activity (music and theatre as well as food, wine and coffee) through a personal desire that geographical isolation would not mean sentencing to a life devoid of art.

The current arts activity has grown and diversified way beyond that small circle and in the face of gloomy futures, Arts Mildura's suite of five festivals and the activity of its Arts Centre and other institutions such as the new At Vault is keeping the spirit alive out there. So my pleas are less for regeneration there than maintenance and sustenance. That which has worked so far should be generously enabled to continue to work its magic and allow Mildura to serve as a terrific model for how city and land under duress can keep its chin up.

In **North East Arnhem Land** the plea could never be for regeneration precisely because the culture of the Yolgnu people is incredibly strong and proud. The word regeneration doesn't describe what they need – it's more like cultural maintenance. What they need is respect and acknowledgment for that. They are already strong through art and culture, what they now need is the ability to maintain that in their own lands, on their own terms.

And finally, **Canberra**, my latest project: is regeneration really the word? Well, surprisingly, perhaps yes.

I recently learned of Nehru's comments at the opening of Chandigar, the northern capital which Le Corbusier designed. Nehru said that this new planned city 'expressed the nation's faith in its future'.

It seems to me that, the decision having been made to have a new capital, for this newly Federated nation, and the land having been surveyed by Scrivener, those responsible for posting the competition to design this new city had that kind of faith in the nation's future: and I imagine that Australia largely shared the view that the new capital would embody that faith.

For all kinds of reasons, I think that faith needs rebuilding. We need to re-generate pride in the national capital. Of course its establishment was not without the pain of displacement, but there is now a community in which many people have lived all their lives. These people work hard to make a city run so that government can happen there on our behalf, so that our remarkable collecting institutions can hold treasures on our behalf. So while Canberra may not be the place we would automatically put on a list of those in need of regeneration, there is certainly a need for recognition that there are 330,000 who make the seat of national government run, and a further 100,000 that the city services in the region. That makes it a population equivalent to that of Tasmania.

But the 2013 project goes beyond the local, national and international dimensions, and on the national level I think this rebirth of pride in the capital is important. In many ways the work that we all do whether *in* Australia in urban and remote communities, or in the international arena *from* Australia, should have a presence in Canberra. If I use a local example, *The Light in Winter* here in Federation Square, there is no obvious reason why fragile and outlying communities of Melbourne should automatically wish to be present here at the heart of this great twenty-first century city – but they do. And they did when I offered them that presence in my Melbourne Festivals. There is something powerful about a community's statement of their resilience and cohesion if they can make their presence felt at the heart of things. It's a statement of survival.

And I suppose that brings me back to the start of the journey, and the notion of the ephemeral or the intangible.

The commissioning of a new capital was very much about the symbolism surrounding nation-building- it was about community on a large scale; the generation of a united presence across a vast landscape which, at the time of the posting of the competition had only been united as a nation for ten years. And the Burley Griffins embraced the big idea, the great symbol: they understood Canberra not only as a seat of government, but as a place that would show the very best of what Australia could be. Indeed their vision was of a cultural capital too, and it asserted the core place of culture and the arts in those things whereby a nation claims greatness.

In its international role I'm very happy that Canberra is twinned with both the ancient Japanese capital of Nara and is in a formal relationship with Dili: it means that our celebration of the centenary can extend a hand to East Timor in exactly the same way as many of your projects work. And it isn't lost on me that the people behind the Vanuatu project, that is AUSAID, are located in Canberra.

And right now regeneration is happening in Canberra in the most literal way you can possibly imagine. The slopes of the hills surrounding the city were wiped out by bushfires just a few years ago – vegetation consumed by the awesome energy of one of our country's ancient forces. Today on those hills are being planted the one hundred forests and one hundred gardens of the new National Arboretum. Preference is being given to endangered species, as representatives of countries across the world bring their precious seed to be nurtured in this land.

I like the symbolism of that. I love the vision that extends beyond terms in office or even one's own lifetime, and I hope that you too, in all your endeavours, sung and unsung, large

and small, practical and symbolic, finding favour or provoking aggravation and action, will feel that celebrating the centenary of Canberra has something to do with you, and in so many diverse ways, can express your own faith in the nation's future.

Thankyou

Robyn Archer  
Canberra, Adelaide, Sydney, September 1<sup>st</sup> 2009

**Biography:** *Robyn Archer is an internationally renowned singer, writer and Artistic Director who has performed throughout Australia and the world. Her artistic directorships include the National Festival of Australian Theatre in Canberra, the Adelaide Festival in 1998 and 2000 and Melbourne International Arts Festival in 2002, 2003 and 2004. She has been chair of the Australia Council's Community Cultural Development Board, a consultant to the new Melbourne Museum and a participant in the Prime Minister's 2020 summit in Canberra. She was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2000, and holds honorary doctorates from Flinders and Sydney Universities. In 2006 in New York she was awarded the International Citation of Merit by the International Society of Performing Arts. Robyn is also an adviser to RMIT's Global Research Institute.*