



Image: Keith Gallasch, Virginia Baxter, masks Beatrice Chew, photo Su-An Ng, art direction Graeme Smith

real time 1994-2017 tributes

In December 2017, we regretfully announced RealTime was to cease regular publishing and that we would complete and celebrate our archive in the magazine's 25th year, 2018.

The responses from readers, artists working in many forms, writers, companies, arts organisations, publicists and advertising clients from across Australia via email, post and social media and in blogs and magazines were enormous in number and deeply gratifying.

We've recorded many of these responses and thank those people who passed on their commiserations and congratulations verbally.

This collection comprises emails, letters, Facebook posts, Twitter messages, longer appreciations by RealTime contributors Ben Brooker and Matthew Lorenzon and reports in magazines.

Our thanks go to everyone for their kind words and sometimes passionate responses and for being an elemental part of RealTime's search for and support of art with a difference across Australia and beyond.

This year we've been working hard at making our archive an accessible and exciting record of an important period of innovation in Australian art, from 1994 to the present. This collection of thanks and tributes will become part of that archive.

With thanks

Virginia & Keith

Virginia Baxter, Keith Gallasch
Managing Editors, RealTime,
published by Open City Inc



Australian Government

Visual Arts and Craft Strategy

Amanda Stewart, sound artist, NSW

Oh what news! Very sad indeed to read this about RealTime but hoping this will be a wonderful release for you two. Thank you so much for the decades of self-sacrificing work you have done creating this incredible publication and so brilliantly reviewing and representing Australian culture in all its modes. The importance of what you have achieved cannot be underestimated and will continue with this invaluable archive of Australian culture. THANK YOU!

Alex Lazaridis Ferguson, artist/writer, Vancouver, Canada

Wow this is a great loss. There is nothing quite like RealTime out there. The service you guys have done for Australia and for those of us in other parts of the world is, well, I don't know if I can articulate how important it has been to me. I'm really kind of stunned. I owe you a great debt, for training me, for giving me the opportunity to develop my critical review writing, and really for providing me with this platform to learn about art and performance. RealTime will certainly be missed by me, and surely by Australia. I will have more to say, but I'm just absorbing the news right now, Alex.

Angharad Wynne-Jones, Head of Participation, Arts Centre, VIC

Dearest Keith and Virginia, Thank you for all you have done over so many years to develop contemporary and experimental art in all its forms. RealTime will be sorely missed. I wish you both a relaxing holiday season - much deserved rest and a chance to savour the approbation of the sector and artists that love and respect you. Much love, Angharad

Beth Shimmin, Adelaide Central School of Art, SA

Dear Team RealTime, I was deeply saddened to hear this news and wanted to thank you all and wish you all the very best. I first came across RealTime when I was at OzAsia Festival. We seriously appreciated the incredible coverage from you and the consistently excellent articles. Since joining Adelaide Central School of Art and working with you as an advertiser, it has been a similarly delightful experience. Thank you for your professionalism and dedication. I hope that 2018 and whatever the next chapter brings for each of you is just as challenging and rewarding.

Robyn Archer, artist, festival director

Dear Keith and Virginia, What an amazing thing you achieved - and what a remarkable archive it will be. Congratulations and thanks, Robyn



Chamber Made Opera, VIC

Dear Keith and Virginia and all the amazing RealTime contributors, past and present, We were so sorry to read that RealTime is finishing up, but glad you are taking the time to archive your considerable contribution to the Australian arts landscape over the last 25 years. Wishing you all a restorative festive season and new adventures in 2018. Love from all at Chamber Made.

“Such a loss to hear this news but wishing you both love and good health.”
Tim Stitz, outgoing Artistic Director

“Yes, devastated to hear the news. So grateful for your incredible contribution.”
Tamara Saulwick, Artistic Director

Felix Ching Ching-Ho, Carolyn Connors, Wang Zheng-Ting, Between 8 & 9, Chamber Made Opera, Asia TOPA 2017, photo Pier Carthew

Bonnie Armstrong, RealTime reader

So very sad to learn the news. I have thoroughly enjoyed the magazine. I am an Aged Pensioner on limited funds who has studied and enjoyed artistic events. I have found the breadth and depth of artistic work represented in RealTime, at times challenging but always of great interest and representative of the broadening of perceptions of art in every form. RealTime has enabled me to bridge the gap in being unable to attend these events to reading about their presentation, effect, technical advances and so much that contemporary art offers to the creators and the audiences. I feel I am losing a friend and will be hard pressed to find a replacement for your wonderful magazine. My sincere good wishes and thanks to all at RealTime.

Rosie Dennis, Artistic Director, Urban Theatre Projects, NSW

Dear Keith and Virginia. A quick note to thank you both for your incredible contribution to our industry both in Australia and overseas. I've loved RealTime and like so many others will miss it. Your partnership has been and continues to be inspiring!! Keep looking sharp together. Love Rosie D. xx

Caroline Wake, writer, lecturer (UNSW)

Hi Keith, Well, I was feeling fairly sanguine - all good things must come to an end etc - but then when I saw the last mailout I just felt incredibly sad. Happy for you, of course, that you are finally going to relax (!) but sad for the sector. It's an amazing body of work to have written, commissioned, edited, or as they say these days "curated" :)

Clare Grant, Honorary Lecturer, University of NSW, freelance theatre-maker, NSW

Oooooooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. But congratulations and thank you for all you have done for us all in these decades!! Love, Clare



Cat Jones, artist, NSW

Dearest Keith and Virginia, I made a mad dash up to QLD last week to escape the vestiges of 2017. What a rollercoaster year. Your news caught me en route - so many feelings - a bit like being winded. I very much hope that you're feeling some sense of the relief that comes after making such a difficult decision. Twenty-five years is far too small a number for the quantum tapestry of experiences and words you've woven in RealTime! I'm so grateful and proud to have made it into a few of those moments as an author and as an artist.

You know I used to loiter in your storeroom devouring editions whilst volunteering for Playworks when I first came to Sydney. Such a wonderful guide, mirror, soothing pool from which to draw, and coveted destination - a landmark seen from far and wide. International friends will feel this loss I know - print editions were a treasured gift - I was roused on with disappointment once when I failed to pack it, posted several on return to make amends!

Thank you for giving Australian arts this sparkling gift. Very much looking forward to celebrating all your achievements (so far) in a new year and can't wait to read how the special editions unfold. Sending warmth from QLD to join the love I hope you are feeling from round Australia. Much love, Cat xx

Cat Jones, Transcontinental Garden Exchange, promotional image courtesy the artist

Teik-Kim Pok, performer, writer, NSW

Oh wow, that is major! Thank you for the advance news Keith. My biggest kudos to you and Virginia for all you've done and the great example set for writers and practitioners in Oz and beyond - am so honoured to have been involved in recent times! Warmest regards, Teik-Kim

Jen Jamieson, artist, WA

I'm in shock re your goodbye ...Deep breath ...I don't want ...and I want to and don't want to ask - is this DVD (I Am Not Your Negro) still a giveaway? I don't want to ... Big love to you



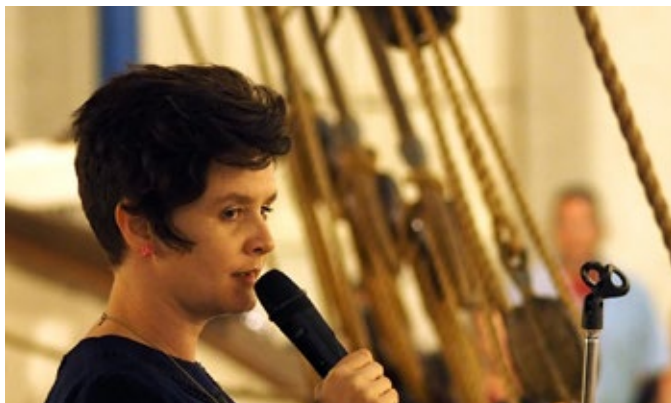
Claire Edwardes, Artistic Director, Ensemble Offspring, NSW

Very sad to read this Keith - you and Virginia have been a total force for good in Australian arts over the past 25 years and have impacted hugely on my career and personal development as an artist. I can imagine how difficult the decision must have been and I really do feel for you both/all. With extremely fond regards, Claire

Claire Edwardes, photo courtesy the artist

Lyndon Terracini, Artistic Director, Opera Australia, NSW

I'm very sad to hear this news. Keith and Virginia have contributed enormously to the cultural life of Australia over the past 25 years. RealTime was always fascinating, provocative and utterly committed to integrity in everything that it did. Thank you Keith and Virginia.



Emma Webb, Director, Vitalstatistix, SA

Hi Keith and Virginia, I just wanted to send lots of thanks and love. It's hard to know what to say - what a massive contribution! Hope you get a very well earned break before archiving and new projects. Emma Webb xx

Emma Webb opens Vitalstatistix' Climate Century, 2015, photo Tony Kearney

Andrew Fuhrmann, writer, academic, VIC

Dear Keith and Virginia, First, I wanted to reiterate what I said the other day: it is a sad thing that RealTime is closing its doors. It really does leave a big hole in arts coverage in Australia. Having said that, I completely understand why you are both pulling the plug. And I agree that something has broken in the national performing arts ecology. What would a sustainable model for arts publishing look like? I don't know... But I think you can both be incredibly proud of the hard work you've done over the last twenty years, and the quality of the product. RealTime will remain an important historical resource, providing crucial documentation for the last 25-odd year period that has seen significant transformations across contemporary art and performance practices.

Klare Lanson, writer, editor, IT Consultant, poet, artist, Castlemaine, VIC

Oh that is very sad. Thanks for all your incredible work amplifying media arts and experimental practice over the last... gosh... 25 years... All the very best, kl

Dominic Redfern, academic, media artist, VIC

Thank you RealTime, your contribution to performing and visual arts in Australia is inestimable and you will leave a gaping hole in our cultural landscape.

Very best, Dom

Ann McLean {AM:PM} Project Management, QLD

Dear V&K, Thank you for all the words. The truth. Your advocacy and smarts. Thank you so much for your human connection, the timeliness of every piece. The work, so many long hours of seeing work and telling us about it. Thank you for bringing it to people outside the inner zones. Thank you so much for being with us all. For so long. For years we have found so much to love in RealTime. Incredible insights. A vibe. The pulse of those inner worlds. Australia's weird mob all proud and strong. And beautiful. RealTime is the viewpoint we all need so much. Present. Critic. Commentary and company as we all contemplate a landscape in constant motion. I'm sending you both my deepest appreciation. You both rock, AM



James Hullick Artistic Director, JOLT, VIC

Dear Keith, I am so saddened to hear that RealTime is winding down operations. RealTime has been a crucial bedrock on Australian contemporary art... I know things might be winding up - and I feel the sadness of that deeply - but perhaps with dialogue there will be new light that arises. Anyway my door is always open, and open to solutions that bring people together and give them access to creativity. Best of thoughts to you at these troubling times, and thank you for your kindness and support over the years , James

Helena Grehan, writer, academic, WA

Dear Keith and Virginia, This is very sad. You have been there as our guides, chroniclers and wise readers for so many years that your absence will leave a huge hole in all of our lives and in the cultural fabric of the nation (and beyond). Thank you both for your wonderful, wonderful work over the years. For championing the arts, for speaking back to the desire to flatten out complexity and for nurturing and guiding a whole generation of scholars, artists and thinkers about art practice. Do take care and I look forward to whatever 2018 brings for you in the archival processes. Best, Helena Grehan

Hollis Taylor, composer, writer, NSW

Virginia and Keith, You had made such a huge contribution that will continue to be with us. Bravo and brava! It's very sad to see you close it down. Warm wishes, Hollis

Ingrid Kellenbach, CEO, Adelaide Central School of Art, SA

Dear Virginia and Keith, So sorry to hear the news that you will not be publishing weekly RealTime next year. What a huge loss to the arts in Australia at a time when we need all the support we can muster to promote, present and discuss challenging work to such a wide network. Thank you for your great sustained work over the past 25 years and best wishes to you all in the future. We look forward to your occasional publishing and wish you well with the huge archiving job that you will be undertaking in 2018. Regards, Ingrid

JOLT Sonic Arts' City Topias featuring James Hullick, BOLT Ensemble and Milica ZZAA, promotional image courtesy the artists

Jo Truman, artist, performer, NSW

So sad to hear this. Thank you for your wonderful and essential support and insightful portrayal of so many artists who struggle to find a voice - you have given us one! Very best wishes, Jo Truman

Alex Wisser, Artistic Director Cementa, NSW

very sorry to hear; best of luck

Jochen Gutsch, Cultural Program Coordinator, Goethe-Institut Australia

Dear Keith & Virginia, Oh noooo! I'm sad to hear that... I hope you at least get some well-deserved rest for a moment. All the best to you for whatever you have planned, and thanks for the many years of real, informed, critical arts journalism! Warm wishes, Jochen



David Chisholm, Artistic Director, Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music [BIFEM], VIC

Keith & Virginia, I just wanted to ring and say thank you for absolutely everything. It must be such an intense, beautiful, complex experience for you guys. What an extraordinary achievement: in 25 years you have shaped a way of thinking—many ways of thinking—about art and culture in this country. Personally and professionally I am in your debt. So, I just wanted to thank you. Obviously, you'll be flat out right now but I look forward to ongoing contact with you guys beyond RealTime. Again, congratulations above all else. Lots of love, David

David Chisholm, photo courtesy Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music

Katrina Douglas, Artistic Director, PACT Centre for Emerging Artists, NSW

Hi Virginia & Keith, I was very sad to receive this email. RealTime will be missed. Thank you for all your amazing work over the years and for creating such an amazing publication and hope you're taking some time out to relax. Cheers, Katrina

Liz Lea, choreographer, ACT

Dear Keith and Virginia, Sending you both huge congratulations for the incredible body of work that is RealTime and the incalculable impact you have had - and will continue to have - on the Australian and international arts scene. Each time I returned from the UK where I was based for years I reached for RealTime to connect with what is actually happening here. You have defined, refined and challenged the way many of us think and create. thankyou.

Lucy Hawthorne, writer, TAS

Dear Keith and Virginia, I've been trying to come up with something that conveys my deepest gratitude for your mentorship and continual writing opportunities and support over the last decade. That writing workshop at 10 Days on the Island in 2007 really did start my career and I've felt like the mentorship never really ended such has been your encouragement over the last decade. It's a feeling shared by Andrew [Harper] and Jude [Abell] too - we have frequent conversations about it! I'm sad to hear that RealTime is wrapping up. It'll be a great loss to the Australian arts community. There really isn't any publication like it. I'm really glad that it's going to be archived. Let me know if I can help in any way. Thanks again, Lucy

Margaret Bradley and Arif, artists

Thank you Virginia and Keith for the amazing work you have done to document so much of our significant cultural life. We look forward to accessing the archives.

Margie Medlin, artist, arts administrator, Berlin

Dear Keith, Virginia, Lucy, Katerina, team and contributors far and wide. I am very sad to hear RealTime is about to publish its last issue. I hope the website and back issues will continue to be available. RealTime has made an extraordinary contribution to the Australian art scene! Keith and Virginia I hope you find a thread, or projects that work for you and hopefully take off some of the strain! With best wishes and many thanks ...



Jon Rose, musician, writer, NSW

Hi Keith, This is an extremely sad day. The point of RealTime is that it is a national and central reference point in a sea of uninformed opinion and bucket loads of tedious 'feelings' that say nothing. Fuck social media. We are all better informed and none the wiser. Wishing you and Virginia well.

Jon Rose, The Museum Goes Live, Liveworks 2016, Performance Space, photo Jill Steinberg

Pamela Kleemann, Photographer/Conceptual Artist/Lecturer, VIC

Dear Virginia and Keith and the RealTime team, Huge thanks for your support over the years. Congratulations on such an achievement and contribution; a great magazine and a loss to arts and culture. Pam

Penny Challen, Metro Arts, QLD

Dear Keith and Virginia, Thank you for all the wonderful coverage you have given the arts over your 25 year history. Your contribution to the Australian artistic landscape, providing quality discourse and sharing the work of so many has been invaluable to us all. We are very sad to see you close. All the best to you and everyone at RealTime as you move on to new things.



Martin Del Amo, dancer/choreographer/writer, NSW

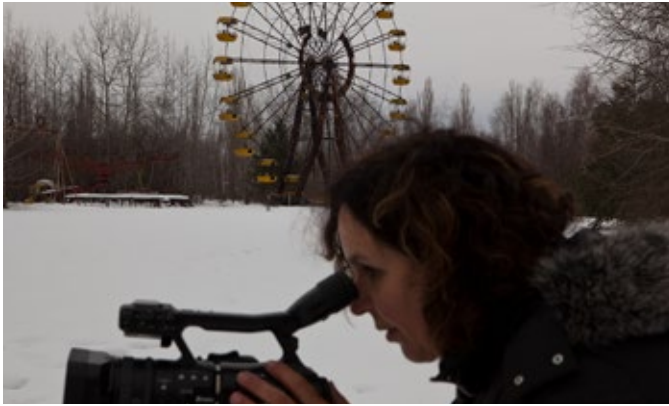
Dear Keith, I wanted to say that I'm still reeling from the news that RealTime will no longer publish regularly. My experience of the arts in Australia is so closely connected to RealTime's presence and support that I can't even imagine what the artistic landscape in Australia will look like when RealTime doesn't exist anymore, not in its current form at least. This is probably a good time to acknowledge the gargantuan achievement on your and Virginia's part to keep RealTime going at the level you did for 25 (!) years. What an incredible resource it's been and no doubt will continue to be, albeit as an archive. Congratulations and heartfelt thank you!!!

Martin del Amo, Little Black Dress Suite, 2013, photo Heidrun Löhr

Nerida Dickinson, writer, WA

I have been so privileged to have been part of this organisation and its vision, for the short time I have been asked to write for RealTime. I hope that Australian arts continue to be documented and celebrated in the future, even though it will be in a very different manner from RealTime's original folding paper magazine format, whatever it may be.

Performing art is inherently ephemeral, its beauty and triumph arising in the passing moment and creation of shared experience, the critical documentation remaining to record the development of artists, movements and society over time. An archive of RealTime's records of these events is a cultural treasure, and a celebration of local artists and the writers who appreciate their work.



Merylyn Fairskye, visual/media artist, NSW

Dear Keith and Virginia, Thank you for all your amazing, brilliant work over the past 24 years. The RealTime project has been a truly independent, inspired and inspiring platform for the work of artists across so many art forms, as well as providing a consistently rigorous commentary on the state of the arts in general. You will be missed, but your grateful readers can't possibly expect any more of you, you've already given us so much and hung in there for so long, against all odds.

Personally, it's hard to convey just how much the support you have shown my work over the years has meant. As well as communicating the work to a wider audience, insights from both of you have enriched my understandings of my work in entirely unexpected ways. This is one of the unheralded consequences of attentive commentary. Recently I came across Virginia's review of my video Plane Torque from 1997, and to my surprise, from left field it provided a pathway through a difficulty I had been having with my current project. And Keith, your generous understanding of my Aqua and Stati d'Animo works was such a great confidence booster at the time, not to mention the great piece you wrote about Precarious, which introduced the work to so many people. Looking forward to the grand retrospective, I'm sure you will go out with a bang. Very warmest wishes to you, Gail and the team, for all good things post RealTime. love, Merylyn

Ricardo Peach, festival director, arts administrator, South Africa

No... this is terribly terribly sad!!! Keith and Virginia - lots of love from Africa. It was such a pleasure working with you all those years. Good luck next year. Please come and visit! XRicardo

Richard Watts, Performing Arts Editor, Arts Hub, VIC

Hi Virginia & Keith - I just wanted to say how sad I am to hear the news about RealTime. The publication's documentation of the Australian arts sector has been invaluable over the last 24 years, and will be sorely missed. My very best wishes to you both, and to your staff. Sincerely, Richard Watts

Professor Sarah Miller, Head of School of Arts, English & Media, University of Wollongong, NSW

Dearest Keith, In terms of RealTime, I'm so proud to have been involved from the get go (even from being on the Drama Committee that awarded that first tender) and in particular my 10 years as a state-based editor. It's astonishing what you and VB have achieved. What an incredible legacy. Total legends! Love your work. Much love to you and VB, Sarah xox

Merylyn Fairskye shooting her film Precarious, in Chernobyl 2011, image courtesy the artist

Sandy Edwards, photographer, Director, ArthERE, NSW

OMG! I am so sorry to hear this but do understand. Sandy.

Sophie Travers, arts administrator

Dear Keith and Virginia, I do not know what I am going to do without RealTime. I read with such enthusiasm and engagement every word you create and will miss it immensely. It must be a wrenching decision but I feel some optimism in the thought of you enjoying more time together. Thank you so very much for everything you have so generously created.

Gail Priest, sound artist, writer, NSW

Hello K & V, As you mentioned in the e-dition, the show of love from the people at your announcement was very overwhelming! Hope you're holding up OK. I had several weeps looking at it all, and was honoured that people saw me as very much part of it all despite my departure. X Gail



Professor Rachel Fensham, author, University of Melbourne, VIC

Dear Keith and Virginia, Now that we are just into 2018 and I'm taking a moment to read through some emails, the news about RT has really sunk in! We are losing such a vital discussion platform for the arts that I'm just not sure what can begin to fill its place. It makes me reflect upon the optimism of the two of you and your vision that started way back then in the early 1990s, for a national arts magazine that would be respectful and responsive to the creation of new work.

I should also thank you both for the opportunity to write for the early RT both in WA and in Victoria when I returned, and I remember fondly working with Richard Murphet as the Victorian editors, and our crazy meetings dividing up what we would write about, as well as the first of the Adelaide Festival chronicles, written and produced overnight, and much more, such as your own performative interventions.

It seems a curious but sad thing that we haven't found an alternative really to print, as a document of record, and yet we are exhorted all the time about the internet as a space to build and create community, while its temporality functions best as immediate, fashionable, and fleeting. For myself, I missed immediately the durability of the hard copy, its life in cafes, beside my bed, lying around on someone's kitchen table, and the fact that I could keep them and refer back to some artist's work or a piece of writing whenever I wanted. I believe I have an almost complete set of the hard copies, except for those years when I was in the UK, and so will continue to treasure them in my own archive. And the online version never held me, since it arrived in my work inbox, always waiting for that moment when I might want to open it up again, which never came.

So for now, can I congratulate you once again on this magnificent legacy, and wish you all the best for the well-earned rest from the publishing cycle as well as a splendid 2018! Kind regards, Rachel

Professor Rachel Fensham (centre), RealTime in real time forum, Liveworks 2018, Performance Space, photo Heidrun Löhr

Briony Kidd, writer, film festival director, TAS

Hi Keith and Virginia, I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you. I have really enjoyed writing for RealTime and it has been a great opportunity for me in a lot of ways. To have editors who actually edit, being one (I have written for publications where there's very little discussion or attempts to improve work), which helped me to develop my skills...and also to see some great work that I might not have otherwise encountered and to meet many interesting artists.

For my own projects it's also been very valuable. We suffer from obscurity here in Tasmania, so to have something go national is a great thing. And of course you must know it has been a huge boon for Stranger With My Face [film festival] to get some decent coverage in the past few years. I'm sure it made a big difference in terms of being taken seriously in the arts world and by some of the other festivals, and Katerina [Sakkas, RT staff member and writer] had such an enthusiasm for it as well, it was encouraging.

Briony also wrote online: "Terrible news! As a reader of RealTime, a contributor, an artist/producer whose work has been covered, and even as an advertiser (on occasion)... I honestly don't know what other publication is filling this niche... I do not at all blame Keith and Virginia for calling it a day, their efforts over 25 years have been incredible, influential and very much appreciated by artists across the country. But I am concerned about the gap this will leave. What other publication is regularly reviewing hybrid art, live art, experimental art? Where are the opportunities for new and emerging arts writers? Where is the critical discussion that goes beyond "famous" names and click-bait headlines? I know new models will have to be found for critical culture to continue at all, let alone thrive...My concern right now is that the powers that be in the arts industry maybe don't understand just what an important piece of the puzzle it is...."



Phillip Adams, choreographer, Artistic Director, BalletLab, VIC

I want to say Keith and Virginia that I think you guys are the bomb. You provided me with so much inspiration into Australian and International arts culture over 2 decades. You are both brilliant minds and, may I say, have an eye for cultural style like no one else. I thank you for keeping me motivated as an artist through RealTime reading. Mr P x

Amplification, BalletLab, 2011,
photo Jeff Busby

Emmaly Langridge, Marketing and Development Manager, Performance Space, NSW

Hi Keith and Virginia, I wanted to reach out to you and thank you for everything that you have done for Performance Space (and also my old work Metro Arts, Brisbane). RealTime is such an important publication and it's been incredible to have your support over the years. It's very sad to see the regular publication finish up but we'll be looking out for your archive! The entire PSpace family is sending lots of love your way!

Jill Cook, reader, SA

Very sorry to hear of the - hopefully - just time-out of Real Time. You have been a valuable reference. Thanks.

Tess de Quincey, artist, NSW

Hey Keith and Virginia, This is very big news... and I'm so sorry to hear it... Too many thoughts and feelings to say anything coherent... instead will look forward to seeing you next time.

TURA New Music, WA

Tura is sad to hear the news that this issue of experimental arts magazine RealTime will be the last regular edition. As the magazine approaches its 25th year, 2018 will be spent archiving the huge back catalogue of reviews and articles which will in turn provide an exceptional insight into contemporary and experimental arts culture in Australia from the past 25 years. This archive will be freely available to artists, audiences, students and researchers with a plan to house it within a major arts institution.

Managing Editors Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch and all journalistic contributors must be credited for their vision and drive to continuously produce content with such rigorous insight and providing a conduit to connect the national experimental arts sector in one place.



Nikki Heywood performer, writer, NSW

WOW!! That's a whammy! Bit hard to believe. It will truly be the end of an extraordinary era. What a project it has been. A marathon effort on your parts Keith and Virginia. An absolute tribute to your powers of perseverance. Thank you for letting me know, and for inviting me to play a small part. It's been a privilege. Hugs, Nikki xx

Nikki Heywood, Tony Osborne, Sound & Its Double, Happy Hour, 2018, photo Martin Fox

Theron Schmidt, writer, lecturer, UNSW

Dear friends – I'm so sorry to read your announcement, especially as I have been enjoying the richness of the online format, and I can't imagine how difficult a decision it must have been for you. And so I just want to acknowledge the tremendous contribution you have made – to me personally, as an opportunity to publish (and get editorial feedback) (and get paid!) as a developing writer; and to the field, with the uniquely global perspective that RT brought; and now that I have seen it firsthand, in your tireless commitment as individuals to being present and engaged in such a diverse range of events, discussions, performances, and cultural experimentation, at so many different scales. You inspire me. ...gratefully Theron

Marla Read, reader

Terrible news but appreciate all your work & so grateful for the forthcoming archives.



Vicki Van Hout, dance artist/writer, NSW

I would be honoured to work/contribute, in any capacity, to any forthcoming venture, voluntarily. I believe that your vision to write about and for the arts gave me the courage to pursue projects outside my comfort zone. Any capacity, any time. Vik

Vicki Van Hout, Behind the ZigZag, 2013, photo Marian Abboud

Emma Saunders, dance artist, NSW

Well this is totally gutting. An end of an era. Will read all about it I'm sure. Xx

Caron Krauth, reader, QLD

Oh how sad I am to read this news. Thanks for all the amazing years of RealTime K&V. Xx

Miranda Brown, publicist, VIC

I feel very sad about RealTime's closure. It played a really important role on Australian arts culture and I imagine this may never be replaced. I too have greatly enjoyed working with you over the years. I imagine a big rest is what's next on the agenda but hopefully our paths will cross again in the future. Please keep in touch regarding your future plans and send my absolute best regards to Virginia. Cheers, Miranda

Di Rolle, publicist, VIC

Dear Virginia & Keith, Sad to hear your news about closing magazine. Thank you for all your support of Melbourne Recital Centre and all during the time I have been dealing with you. Have a great break and a wonderful reflection on a job well done. Regards, Di

Chris Reid, RT writer, SA

Keith, thanks again for the opportunity to write for RT. It has been wonderful working with you and Virginia. If I can help out next year, please let me know. With very best wishes for the future. Chris

Anne Thompson, writer, director, SA/VIC

Dear Keith and Virginia and the many others making RealTime happen. Thank you for this sustained and sustaining enterprise. I have deeply appreciated reading, writing and thinking about contemporary art through this forum. I am glad it will be archived and exist as a record of important conversations about contemporary art practice. With heartfelt thanks, Anne

Samara Mitchell, artist, writer, SA

Wow. Sad to see such a trailblazer leaving the print universe. Thanks RealTime. It's been wonderful.

Carolyn Connors, artist, VIC

Very sad news. Xxx

Elsbeth McIntosh, reader

How sad to hear! All the best xo



Cat Hope, artist, academic, Monash University, VIC

Keith and Virginia, Thank you so much for the contribution you have made over all these years. I am so sad to see this publication go, but i can imagine you must also be feeling a mix of sad/glad/tired/relieved/excited. I think what you have done will live on beyond this end point. I for one am very grateful for all the effort and work you put into the arts community through this publication and all the conversations around it, in it and from it. We are all so much better for it, even now. Look forward to hearing about what's next for you both. Cat

Cat Hope & stage manager Susan Studham, workshop on Speechless, Hope's experimental noise opera, 2017, photo Deborah May

Ben Brooker, writer, playwright, SA

This is sad news indeed. I worry for all the art/artists that will go un- and under-covered. Needless to say as well I'm incredibly grateful for all the opportunities RT has given me over the years. Also, for yours and Virginia's support, which has been crucial to my development as a critic and arts journalist. There will be plenty more words of this kind to come I'm sure. I look forward to hearing more about the archive, which sounds like a good silver lining. Best, Ben

Ben's appreciation of RealTime can be found towards the end of this document.

Victoria Carless, writer, QLD

Hi Keith, I was so saddened by the news of the last edition of RealTime a few days ago. I just wanted to say congratulations on a stellar publication and you will certainly be missed. RealTime will provide a legacy for arts response that is in a class of its own for many years to come. I will always remember that you taught me how to review :). I hope you both have a well-deserved rest and I look forward to hearing about your new projects when the time is right. All the best, Victoria.



Kate Champion, choreographer, director, NSW

Dear Virginia and Keith, I'm a bit slow off the mark with this but I just want to thank you for your tremendous work with RealTime. What would we have done without you? For the dance community alone - imagine if we'd only had Dance Australia to represent us! Let alone the wider arts community and the incredible and in-depth coverage you achieved. It's very sad that you've ceased publishing. You leave a gaping hole that will be difficult to fill. With much gratitude, Kate Champion.

Kate Champion, photo courtesy the artist

Kriszta Doczy, Director, Contemporary Arts Media/Artfilms, VIC

Dear Both, dear All, I was and I am still speechless after reading the incredibly sad news. Part of your 25-year history was also my history and my interest, and I feel a part of me now slipped away. But of course not, because you will continue with the Archiving and hence your legacy will become cemented in Australian culture. I still wish you would be there in Sydney and your magazine in my letterbox and everywhere where culture and art matters.



Liza Lim, composer, VIC

Thank you Keith Gallasch & Virginia Baxter for the extraordinary contribution you've made to Australian arts and ideas over 25 years. Very sad news to see this close but an incredible legacy that touches everyone in the field.

Liza Lim, Art Music Awards, 2017, photo Tony Mott

Dee Cee, reader

Still shocked but I'm so grateful for the hard work and kind support you've given to the big and small over the decades. It's hard to express my gratitude in any detail. That there were more like you the world would be a better place. OAM's all round

**Jeff Khan, Artistic Director, Performance Space, NSW**

This is the saddest arts news of the year. RealTime has been the backbone of critical writing about experimental and independent practice in Australia for 25 years. Congrats Keith & Virginia on an amazing legacy.

Bec Dean, Jeff Khan, photo Nick Dorward

Bec Dean, Producer, Curator

Absolutely the end of an era. Thank you Keith and Virginia. I hardly know where to begin. It's not possible to sum up your work in a pithy statement. Love to you and all the RealTime crew xxx

Julie Dyson, former CEO Ausdance

Sorry to read this news, guys! You've been in our artistic lives for a generation, and have done a wonderful job covering just about everything that's innovative and that reflects our cultural lives and those of Australia's wonderful artists. Well done! Enjoy the archiving though - that's what I'm engaged in with Ausdance National too, and it's rewarding, funny, sad and reaffirming.

Dan Edwards, writer, former RT Assistant Editor, VIC

Very sorry to hear RT is winding up - hope everything is ok. Thanks for commissioning so much of my work over the years - it's always been a pleasure writing for RealTime, and checking out films/art/events on the magazine's behalf. I'll be sorry to see it go. Very happy to be involved in any archival/retrospective stuff next year - please keep me posted. Thanks again Keith and Virginia!

Andrew Harper, artist, writer, TAS

Wow! End of an amazing era. I'll be sorry to see it go but you don't have to do things forever, do you? Anyway, you and Virginia have been astonishing mentors for me as a writer, I learnt a tremendous amount from you both. You're clever people and I admire that. Thanks for everything, and I mean EVERYTHING, Andrew

Darren Jorgensen writer, WA

Hi Keith, wow the end of an era. Congratulations on running a publication for so long that never dropped the ball, never swung low into mediocrity. RT has been such a consistent player it's going to be sad to see it go, but like all avant-gardes everything has a life span congratulations! I hope you and Virginia are able to enjoy curating the aftermath. Darren

Robbi James, publicist, Kabuku, NSW

Hi Keith, That makes today a very sad day. My thanks and very best wishes for the future. Best, Robbi.

Cleo Mees, writer, academic, NSW

Wow, that's big news! Thanks for letting me know. I'm sorry to hear that this era is coming to a close! But your plans for next year sound exciting. Look forward to hearing more about it. Thanks again for everything over the past few years.

Cara Ann Simpson, artist, VIC

One of my proudest moments early on in my career was being interviewed by Ben Byrne for RealTime for a collaborative interactive installation with DSP engineer Eva Cheng, which was exhibited at Conical Inc. I am so very sad to see this wonderful independent media channel close its doors after 25 years. I am incredibly grateful for the information, opportunities & pleasure that RealTime has brought to me and many others. It is wonderful that an archive is being kept so many more people can continue to draw on the rich treasure trove of research and experimental arts history.

Sophie Gardiner, publicist, OzAsia Festival, SA

Hi Keith and Virginia, I was very sad to read the news today - I am sure that it was a painful and difficult decision for you both to make. I am sure you've had plenty of similar messages from amongst the industry! I just wanted to say a huge thank you for your support this year, in particular of the OzAsia Festival which of course was hugely well received by our artists. It's always been a real pleasure to work with you. I've always liked too that you've covered a lot of very cool/niche shows and artists that mainstream press may not. All my best, Sophie

Nicola Prime, Marketing Manager, WOMAD, SA

Sad to hear that Virginia - social media has a lot to answer. I so miss picking up a printed publication - online just doesn't do it for me.

Ben Strout, arts administrator, NSW

Keith, 25 years ... phenomenal. Ben S

Virginia Jane Rose, playwright, NSW

Thank you both for all the terrific arts news over the years, and all the best for the future.



Ensemble Offspring, NSW

Sad news for the arts sector. What an amazing contribution over 25 years RealTime has made. Your insightful, quality and on the pulse arts journalism will be sorely missed.

Dr Laetitia Wilson, lecturer, writer, WA

Hi Keith, I'm really sorry to hear that. RealTime has been totally rad and such a good voice on the Media Arts scene. The work that you and Virginia put into it was amazing and it will be missed. I look forward to your grand archival project and wish you two all the very best for your future adventures. Warmly, Laetitia Wilson.

Kira Rikkers, Communications Manager, PICA, WA

Hi Virginia, Thank you for letting me know, I am very sorry to hear this. All the best for the future to you and Keith. Best wishes, Kira Rikkers

James Brennan, National Sales Manager, Umbrella Entertainment, NSW

Hi Virginia, Oh that's such a shame. Thank you for all of your support. And keep in touch.

Milestone Creative, publicists, NSW

Very sad news indeed. [RealTime has been] been so supportive and informative. We wish them the very best x

Ensemble Offspring,
promotional image Ponch
Hawkes

Zane Trow, Creative Arts Manager, Redland Performing Arts Centre. QLD

Dear Virginia and Keith, What to say? How about ... thank you. And then a little sadness as I write, for many years I have said to myself, and to many others that when it comes to contemporary culture RealTime is all we've got. I know there have been and are other journals and magazines and what not, but I don't think there has been something that, through your good selves, and your stable of writers, has been so very directly in touch with what's actually going on. I will miss that deeply. RealTime has also supported my work and projects, and the organisations I've worked for ceaselessly. And you've always done it with good humour and critical thinking and an understanding of the whole body of work. So rare ... thank you. Stay well and happy and know that you've changed Australia ... and I think I know you both well enough to say I'm sure you won't stop ... so ... keep in touch ... Kindest regards, Zane Trow

Ming-Zhu Hui, writer, director, actor, VIC

It is deeply, deeply sad news that we are losing RealTime - my heart is breaking more than a little. The chaotically transforming media & commercial landscape has meant so much great, deep work is falling away; the loss to society is incalculable.

Rebecca Conroy, Inter-disciplinary Artist

The death of net neutrality and RealTime in the same week was almost too much.

AIDC [Australian International Documentary Conference], VIC

Farewell RealTime. It's been a great 25 years. Thanks for supporting AIDC 2017 earlier this year!

Australian Music Centre, NSW

End of the RealTime era - valuable online content will remain accessible, a huge legacy.

Melbourne International Arts Festival, VIC

Sad to see RealTime go. Thanks for everything.

Hinterland

Very sad to hear RealTime is ceasing regular publishing. Thanks for your hard work and critical contribution to the arts in Australia thus far Keith & Virginia!

Conor Bateman, video essayist, NSW

Very sad to hear that RealTime is shutting up shop. they were a great supporter of my video essay work (and the only current Aus publisher of video essays). Their 25-year archive, though, will be an invaluable resource.

Nikki Lam, reader

:(You will be missed RealTime

Robbi James, reader

Holy hell it's the end of RealTime - feels like strange, sparse and frugal times in the arts in oz.

Bittersweet

RealTime quietly stops publishing today after 25 years of covering Australian arts news, however their legacy will live on through their online archive project in 2018.

Julie Vulcan, performance artist, NSW

This is going to create a huge vacuum! Thank you RealTime Virginia and Keith, not only have you been responsible for comprehensively reporting on contemporary arts for Australia, you have also been a platform for many of us to develop and contribute our writing and voice

Matilda Halliday, reader

RealTime was a staple for me for many years, intelligent writing that will be truly missed but I wish Keith and Virginia very well earned breaks

Sam Gillies, composer, writer, UK/WA

RealTime gave me my first paid writing work - I'll always be appreciative of the start they gave me. It's a real loss to the Australian arts scene that it's had to close up shop.

Lucas Ihlein, artist, NSW

sorry to see you go, a huge contribution.

Kate Warren, writer

I wrote my first ever article for RealTime. Will be missed!

NORPA [Northern Rivers Performing Arts], Lismore, NSW

This is a sad loss to our sector - RealTime has helped share, critique and articulate contemporary arts practice in Australia. It has been a national voice for quality theatre that takes risks.

Angus McPherson, Assistant Editor, Limelight Magazine, NSW

Was very sad to hear this news about RealTime. The first publication to pay me for my writing. Thank you Keith and Virginia!

Tura New Music, WA

Thank you for embracing experimentation in Australian art and for all your support over the years. RealTime, you will be greatly missed!

Revelation Film Festival, WA

Revelation is very sorry to hear that RealTime will no longer publish. A long-time friend and supporter of Rev, we will miss your support and contribution to the arts scene. Sending our best wishes to Virginia, Keith and team.

Kathy Hong, reader

Thank you for everything you brought and shed light on.

Theatre Network, VIC

Big big props to RealTime for all their work - it has definitely made the sector richer for it!

**Ben Brooker, writer South Australia, from his blog:
A good word for RealTime**

Last week brought the news that RealTime, Australia's preeminent, nationally focused critical guide to hybrid and experimental art, would cease regular publication. Like many, I was stunned. This year, after having shifted in 2016 to an entirely digital presence following 21 years of a bi-monthly print magazine, the website underwent a significant and welcome (and handsome) regeneration. I knew about the strain from social media's devastating impact on advertising sales, the same strain that is being felt across the breadth of the global media landscape. But, in many other respects, the magazine - I think I never really stopped thinking of RealTime in those terms - appeared in robust health. The recent appointment of Lauren Carroll Harris as Acting Assistant Editor/Online Content Development gave a sense of youthful reinvigoration. A livelier social media presence and a renewed focus on screen arts (Conor Bateman's terrific video essays being just one example of this) seemed to follow. From my perspective, there was little hint that the ship was about to go down.

I spent much of this year trying to remain hopeful about the future of arts criticism in Australia, even writing an essay on the subject titled (by my editor, natch, not me) The Golden Age. (For the record, I don't think it is anything like a good time to be an arts critic in this country, but I do feel a problem can be compounded by its incessant reiteration. I also think it's important to note that Australia, unlike the US or the UK, has never had a stout critical culture, that it has always been dominated by overstretched and underpaid freelancers and part-timers, and that the space for it has always had to be carved out with blood, sweat, and tears.) But the news of RealTime's demise has left me feeling, as I texted a friend last week, quietly devastated, for myself, and the arts and critical cultures more broadly. I am not

Ben Brooker, photo courtesy
the artist

alone. Speaking, I suspect, for many, Performance Space's Jeff Khan tweeted that 'this is the saddest arts news of the year'.

I first wrote for RealTime in 2011. It was, I'm fairly certain, my first professional credit as a reviewer, and had come about by means of a cold email to co-Managing Editor Keith Gallasch. Fresh out of my honours year, and with a track record comprising nothing much at all, I thought I wouldn't be given the time of day. Instead, I was commissioned to write about Adelaide's inaugural Festival of Unpopular Culture. I have written for RealTime consistently ever since, chalking up, by my count, 58 pieces (amounting to something like, at a very rough guess, 43,500 words), mainly reviews and interview-based features. Keith, and Virginia Baxter, co-Managing Editor, were my first real editors, but they were more than that - mentors too. Having suffered through the routine butchering of my first (unpaid) reviews for a street press magazine, I was astonished by, and grateful for, Keith and Virginias' sharp eyes, their rigour, and their depth of experience and knowledge, firmly but judiciously applied where my thinking and writing fell short. There was some tough love too, an occasionally painful but nevertheless necessary corrective for an emerging writer. I've never quite been able to forget being reproached for writing 'newspaperish hyperbole', something I had always tried, and continue to try, to rise above as a critic. In retrospect, it's the kind of editorial intervention that says a lot about what Keith and Virginia (and, it must be said, Gail Priest, their long-time Associate Editor and Online Producer) valued as editors: the avoidance of rushes to judgment; considered, carefully weighed exposition and insight over unreasoned opinion; and the ability of writers to be not uncritical but generous towards artists, open to what they are saying (or trying to say), and attentive to the tools they are using to say it - all principles I hope I have by now successfully internalised as a critic. What remains is not definitive - the irreproachable voice of authority - but space for the reader to come to her own conclusions.

This somewhat phenomenological approach, combined with a certain amount of faith on the part of Keith and Virginia, enabled me to write as well as I could (and as well as my research allowed) about forms and artists I knew little about to begin with. In this way, curiosity was rewarded as much as expertise, the attempt to transmute raw experience through space and time into artful description - a lasting record of the otherwise ephemeral - valued as much as, if not more than, the writer's capacity to wield history and theory. I ended up writing quite a bit about contemporary dance for RealTime, from works by local artists and companies like Australian Dance Theatre and Gabrielle Nankivell, to international offerings at major arts festivals - Pina Bausch, Akram Khan. I could never write about such work in the way that, say, a dance specialist like Anne Thompson can, but sometimes what counts the most is not how much knowledge a critic can bring to bear on a piece of art, but how true they can be to their experience of it. "Our gift," wrote the late theatre critic James Waites, "is to describe in words what was carved through direct experience onto our souls while seeing the show." Perhaps more than any other publication I've written for, RealTime provided a platform to attempt this, however intermittently I may have succeeded.

In that first review, I described The Festival of Unpopular Culture as "shambolic, oppositional, and coyly idealistic." It strikes me now that this is exactly the kind of outlying work RealTime has shone a light on since its inception, and that stands to lose the most from its demise. I worry about all the art and artists that will go un- and under-covered now that it will no longer be published regularly (the magazine is not entirely wrapping up, with archival work, special editions, historical overviews, and public forums promised for 2018). There is simply nowhere else I could have written so expansively about the artists, companies, and festivals that have stimulated me the most over the past half-decade or so: Vitalstatistix, Restless Dance Theatre, No Strings Attached, Version 1.0, Cat Jones, Paulo Castro, OzAsia, and the Adelaide Festival of the Arts, to name a few off the top of my head (and which is to say nothing of sound and experimental music, skilfully and tirelessly covered by my colleague Chris Reid for many years). It has been a joy to trace their evolving experimentations with form and genre; in the case of the latter two, to bear witness to their revitalisation under new artistic directorships in 2015 and 2017, respectively. But big festivals will probably always be written about somewhere. I'm not so sure about the rest.

There is a silver lining, and that is the expected completion of RealTime's online archive next year. Including digitised print editions from 1994 to 2000, the archive, chronicling a transformative period in Australian performance, will no doubt form an invaluable resource for artists, researchers, and curious audience members. But it is also these groups - in addition to the writers who will no longer, in the words of the editors, be '[commissioned] to review new work by emerging and established innovators that warrants serious attention at a time when arts journalism is seriously threatened' - that will have the most reason to lament the end of the magazine's regular publication. The British theatre critic Irving Wardle wrote that, "There is something incomplete about a work, written, rehearsed and opened to the theatre-going public until its existence also extends to the reading public." As much as anything else, criticism worthy of the name offers another way for artists to know themselves, and for audiences to see their work. The loss of RealTime is a loss to the culture. That it is so is a testament to Keith and Virginia's industriousness, their care, and their sustained and impassioned commitment to artists, writers, and readers. It's a legacy to be proud of.



Matthew Lorenzon, from his blog, *Partial Durations: Elegy for RealTime*

For over 20 years RealTime has been a dedicated space for the documentation, appreciation, and criticism of new music in Australia. Throughout my seven years writing for the magazine and the RealTime-supported blog *Partial Durations*, I have had the privilege of following the work of many musicians as they grow, drop out, drop back in, move overseas, and create the most thrilling music I have ever heard.

RealTime editors Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter's contributions to new music in Australia cannot be overstated. One American visitor to the Tura New Music Festival was shocked to hear I had been sent there by a magazine, remarking that "nobody reviews contemporary music in the US because nobody gives a shit." Well, we do, and Keith and Virginia set the bar high for an aspiring music critic. My first review was of Chamber Made Opera's first "living room opera," *The Itch* by Alexander Garsden. Who else would send a reviewer to a living room to hear a contemporary opera by a young composer? Keith made it clear there were to be no 19th century grammatical hangovers, no awkward fluff, no unsubstantiated criticisms, but still an overall and definite point to the review. In a world of distractions, attention can be the greatest gift. Keith and Virginia wouldn't put down their fine-tooth combs for the next seven years and through their editorial support I have grown immeasurably as a writer.

I continued to write regularly for RealTime time and in 2013 proposed a side-blog dedicated to contemporary music. I believe my crazy pitch was something like "How about I write more for you for less?" Keith has not passed on his knack of thinking up catchy titles, so I proposed the obscure name of "*Partial Durations*," a term drawn from a composer's sketch that vaguely reflected the blog's ephemerality. Keith insisted that we could do better, but the next day confessed that he couldn't think of anything else, so it stuck. I think *Partial Durations* became an important source of criticism for the contemporary music scene until competing priorities caused the blog to slow almost to a stop this year. A particular highlight of this period was running writers' workshops at the Tura New Music Festival and over three years the Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music. Keith, Virginia, Alistair Noble, and I would mentor a number of emerging writers at each festival, producing reviews at a break-neck pace. Even with tight deadlines Keith and Virginia would take the time—much to the writers' surprise—of poring over each

Matthew Lorenzon (centre),
RealTime in real time forum,
Liveworks 2018, Performance
Space, photo Heidrun Löhr

review word by word. Most of the writers had never had so much attention paid to their writing, and sadly may never again. At all points the ethos of measured criticism (describe, explain, and then if you must, criticise) ensured that participants left these festivals with a greater understanding and appreciation for music. I hope they all experienced the personal artistic growth that comes from suspending judgement long enough to better understand a work.

There are 273 reviews on Partial Durations, that's 273 small acts of witnessing music change and develop in Australia. These would not have been written without RealTime's support and I am so glad that RealTime have offered to include them in their online archive, which they will develop throughout next year.

So what did change? I have seen a brilliant generation of musicians emerge from the VCA, burn brightly and then disperse around the world. I have seen Monash University emerge as a powerhouse of musical exploration. The Aurora Festival came and went, like the aurora itself, over Western Sydney. Tura New Music tirelessly ploughed on in the West and up the coast. In Queensland, Kupka's Piano led a resurgence in contemporary concert music with a truly ambitious series of concerts. MONA FOMA taught us all how to really enjoy contemporary music. Young composers became numb to the old aesthetic arguments propagated by their teachers at music schools. Complexist or pastoralist, who cares? They'll both be played side by side at the Cybec competition. The Metropolis Festival carved into the scene before losing its edge, but the Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music grew from strength to strength as Australia's answer to Darmstadt or Huddersfield. Even if critical discourse around this music is in decline, musicians themselves are becoming more critically aware, as testified by the explosion of action around gender equality over the past years.

There are so many lessons to take away from this experiment in music journalism, but a rather pessimistic one is that the internet is an inhospitable medium for careful and considered writing. We have an unhealthy relationship to online content, wanting to read quickly and shallowly. The resulting churn means less time to revise and deepen opinions. As advertisers and government funders crave ever more traffic, the writing must become thinner and cheaper. As the cost of reviewing falls to those who need it most—the musicians—the lines between advertising and honest reviews blur.

That said, the internet has transformed our access to new music for the better. Writers and musicians are now better connected and informed about each others' work than ever before. Online streaming makes premieres across the world instantly accessible to all. How can we make use of the good while avoiding the bad in this situation? I propose a radical model for "slow criticism" in music writing, one with anonymous authors and subscribers, which is only available in print, and which has an international scope. Anonymity may seem counter-intuitive given that it leads people to unleash their worst natures online, but in a controlled, edited print environment it ensures honesty and collaboration. An anonymous subscriber base, perhaps facilitated by way of crypto-currency, ensures that readership exerts no influence upon the authors. A quarterly print-only publishing schedule is a necessary impediment to fast-food criticism. To research, to explore new ideas, and to think carefully and critically, authors deserve to be paid a decent rate for their work. The content will therefore be dictated in a large part by the subscribers willing to forego speed for quality.

But that's just a crazy idea. Who would start such a thing? Why reject the immediacy and reach of online content? It is truly devastating to see RealTime fold right as they had designed a new website that seemed to speak to the best side of online publishing. The new site casts such a breadth of content immediately before the reader's eyes, but in its simplicity and elegance encourages them to settle in with an article or two. But why advertise on such a site when you can cast another tile into the infinite advertising soup of a Facebook feed or junk mailbox? Why support an independent, critical publication when a few dollars will buy a string of ingratiating adjectives elsewhere? Ah, RealTime, I'm gonna miss ya.

ArtsHub: RealTime publishes its last edition

Richard Watts

After 25 years, RealTime is calling it a day, but not before celebrating its significant archive of reviews, interviews and other documentation of the sector.

Nationally significant and focused on experimentation in performance - including live art, contemporary performance, interactive media and hybrid arts - the online arts magazine RealTime has published its final issue.

The news was announced by founders and Managing Editors, Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch, in their editorial on Wednesday.

'This is the last edition of RealTime. It's been an extremely difficult and a very sad decision to make to draw the magazine to a close - to cease weekly publishing at the end of 2017. In 2018, the magazine's 25th year, we will complete the archiving of the deeply personal, totally consuming project that the magazine has been for us. It'll be a year of reflection and celebration for RealTime's many contributors, readers and supporters and, we hope, provide an enduring legacy - a unique record of a period in which the arts have radically transformed,' Baxter and Gallasch wrote.

Established in 1994, RealTime's first 21 years were as a bi-monthly print magazine, distributed nationally. It first appeared online in 1996, eventually becoming an exclusively online publication in 2016.

Baxter and Gallasch, together with the Board of Management of Open City, which publishes RealTime, said the decision to cease publication was a direct result of the ongoing impact of social media on advertising.

'This decision, made by the Board of Management of Open City and the Managing Editors and in close consultation with the Australia Council for the Arts, the association's key funder since the magazine's inception, was not an easy one. But it was a necessary one. Despite considerable creative and technical effort - and achievement - in 2016-17, it was clear the operation would soon become unsustainable, a result of the widely felt negative impact of social media on advertising sales,' their editorial stated.

In 2018, RealTime's 25th year, the magazine will be published informally but no longer on a weekly basis. Staff will focus on completing and making publicly accessible the vast and expansive RealTime archive, which documents Australia's arts sector from 1994 to the present.

'We'll forage around and dig into the treasure chest, bring out rare gems - we did a bit of this in the current year, the Deep Archive, which was very popular - going back to 1994. Some of the artists we wrote about then are quite prominent now. There's some fascinating stuff in the archives,' Gallasch told ArtsHub.

Providing access to the archives would also allow for greater understanding of past art world trends, he continued.

'There was the hypertext revolution from 96-97 to the early 2000s ... online, new media creative writing work which then kind of disappeared from view. There was also internet art, which didn't come to much in the long run, but there was some great work there. Things like that, where people invested a lot of time and space and which are regarded as curios now.

'On the other hand, you can see the trajectory of young artists evolving - getting some of their first reviews in RealTime in the 90s and who are now quite, quite prominent. And other artists from that time who are not famous but remain mid-career innovators, and who deserve great respect as well,' he said.

The last year of RealTime through 2018 will become a celebration of the magazine, and a chance to meditate on the history it has honoured.

'When we make an interesting find we'll alert people through social media - ironically - and put out some special editions, but by the middle of the year we'll be building up overviews of the period so that we can publish a much deeper reflection rather than just issuing bits and pieces,' Gallasch said.

The opportunity to end the 25-year project which was RealTime was a bittersweet experience for Baxter and himself, despite the opportunity it had presented them to document art trends over the years, Gallasch added.

'Finishing this is like finishing a project. It's been very personal for Virginia and I ... For us it's been living the arts life. So while leaving it is sad, on the other hand, the opportunity to wrap this up in a decent way, to wrap it up properly and leave a really cogent archive which people can use for research and artists can use to look back on their own work, is a fabulous way to end a 25 year trajectory,' he said.

The sector pays tribute

Arts sector representatives responded to the news RealTime had ceased publication with shock and sadness.

Jeff Khan, Artistic Director and CEO of Performance Space, said it would be hard to imagine the Australian arts landscape without RealTime. 'They have been the backbone of critical conversation about experimental, independent and contemporary arts practices in Australia for 25 years, and they've done much of the heavy lifting when it comes to in-depth, deeply informed discussion about what our artists are doing, and what it all means in a wider cultural arena,' he told ArtsHub.

'They have also supported the careers and development of hundreds of writers in Australia. Fifteen years ago Keith and Virginia gave me my first ever writing gig, reviewing pvi collective's TTS: Australia in Perth. I'm sure my writing was pretty bad at that point, but Keith's generous and rigorous editorial hand helped me find my voice and I know that many writers owe them the same debt of gratitude,' Khan said.

Executive Director of the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), Esther Anatolitis said: 'We need to recognise and celebrate just how very much Keith and Virginia's leadership has meant to the arts in Australia. RealTime has meant so much to me personally, as a writer as well as a reader - but more importantly, it's given the arts a dedicated space for deep exploration, meaningful critique and rigorous thinking. And in Australia's public discussions, nothing is needed more right now than exactly these approaches. RealTime's deep commitment to experimentation invites new leaders to step forward - now is the time.'

Emma Webb, Director, Vitalstatistix added: 'It's impossible to overstate the contribution this publication has made to critical discussion of contemporary performance, nurturing dialogue and a community for and of artists - and nurturing writers; and being a platform for a truly national picture of incredible art made or presented in Australia. Being based in Port Adelaide, South Australia, I have absolutely relied on RealTime to get a really rich sense of what is happening around the country.'

'I have to be honest, I kind of feel like we all should feel some shame around this. Certainly Federal and State funding decisions are to blame but also that we as a sector have somehow not managed to help RealTime to stay buoyant. It really is such a huge loss and feels like a real marker in time, post-Brandis, and more broadly where arts media and criticism are at,' she concluded.

First published on Wednesday 13 December

Limelight

Arts magazine RealTime to cease regular publishing

Angus McPherson

Tributes are flowing for Managing Editors Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch as they bring to a close 25 years covering innovative Australian art.

The Managing Editors of experimental arts magazine RealTime have announced that the magazine will cease regular publishing in 2018, focusing instead on completing its online archive and publicly celebrating its legacy of 25 years covering innovative Australian art.

'It's been an extremely difficult and a very sad decision to make to draw the magazine to a close - to cease weekly publishing this year,' wrote Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch. 'In 2018, the magazine's 25th year, we will complete the archiving of the deeply personal, totally consuming project that the magazine has been for us,' they said. 'It'll be a year of reflection and celebration for RealTime's

many contributors, readers and supporters and, we hope, provide an enduring legacy – a unique record of a period in which the arts have radically transformed.”

Founded in 1994, RealTime, which focused on experimentation in performance-live art, contemporary performance, adventurous theatre, dance, music, sound, photomedia, film, video, interactive media and hybrid arts, was distributed across Australia for 21 years as a bi-monthly print magazine, and has been available online since 1996. The last print edition was published at the end of 2015 and since then RealTime has appeared exclusively online, launching a new website in May this year.

The decision by RealTime to discontinue regular publishing is yet another sign of the increasingly challenging environment faced by arts journalism. Earlier this year artists, theatre companies and arts organisations including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Musica Viva spoke out over cuts to arts coverage by Fairfax Media. Michael Shmith, opera critic for The Age, resigned in protest of shrinking space for arts coverage.

“This decision, made by the Board of Management of Open City and the Managing Editors and in close consultation with the Australia Council for the Arts, the association’s key funder since the magazine’s inception, was not an easy one,” RealTime explained in the announcement on its website. “But it was a necessary one. Despite considerable creative and technical effort – and achievement – in 2016-17, it was clear the operation would soon become unsustainable, a result of the widely felt negative impact of social media on advertising sales.”

The announcement of the end of RealTime’s regular publishing has been met with sadness by the arts industry, with artists taking to Twitter to express their gratitude to Baxter and Gallasch for their contribution to the industry:

“Australian Music Centre: End of the RealTime era – valuable online content will remain accessible, a huge legacy.”

“I’m very sad to hear this news,” Opera Australia’s Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini tweeted. “Keith and Virginia have contributed enormously to the cultural life of Australia over the past 25 years. RealTime was always fascinating, provocative and utterly committed to integrity in everything that it did. Thank you Keith and Virginia.”

“Thank you Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter for the extraordinary contribution you’ve made to Australian arts and ideas over 25 years,” tweeted composer Liza Lim. “Very sad news to see this close but an incredible legacy that touches everyone in the field.”

In 2018 Baxter and Gallasch will complete the magazine’s online archive as well as issuing a number of special editions. They plan to commission historical overviews and conduct public forums surveying the changes to the arts over the period coinciding with RealTime’s coverage.

“The Open City Board, Keith and Virginia proudly welcome the opportunity to complete the RealTime project in 2018,” RealTime said in its announcement, “and look forward to engaging with artists, writers and supporters in our grand retrospective of 25 years of transformed and transformational art.”

“We’ve had a huge, loving response via email and social media from readers, artists and arts organisations saying they’ll desperately miss the magazine but celebrate its legacy,” Baxter and Gallasch told Limelight. “Which is how we feel, sad, but happy to be able to spend 2018 wrapping up the project so that the archive is an accessible, cogent legacy with commissioned overviews of individual artform developments and the overall thrust of the mid-90s to the present, an astonishing time. We’re looking forward to making sense of it ourselves! It’s rare to be able to reflect on anything these days, let alone the art of recent decades, often poorly documented in Australia, especially the art of innovators and outliers and the young and emerging.”