

---

## ROBYN ARCHER

### BIOGRAPHY



**Robyn Archer AO is a singer, writer, artistic director and public advocate for the arts. She is currently Artistic Director of The Light in Winter (which she created for Federation Square, Melbourne) and Strategic Advisor, Arts and Culture, for the Gold Coast (Queensland) which hosts the Commonwealth Games in 2018. She recently completed 5 years as Creative Director of the Centenary of Canberra 2013 ([canberra100.com.au](http://canberra100.com.au)).**

#### SEE ALSO:

*Lowering the Tone* – Don Featherstone's TV biopic of Robyn is available for sale at ABC online: <https://shop.abc.net.au/products/lowering-the-tone-robyn-archer>

*Robyn Archer* – by Meredith Costain in the Movers and Shakers series for students: [trove.nla.gov.au/work/14177631](http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/14177631)

*Big Ideas* – Robyn Archer in discussion with Julianne Schultz: [iview.abc.net.au/programs/big-ideas-arts/AR1308H010S00](http://iview.abc.net.au/programs/big-ideas-arts/AR1308H010S00)

*Yakety Yak* – Robyn Archer interviewed by Peter Thompson: [youtube.com/watch?v=3mUh8rip1i0](http://youtube.com/watch?v=3mUh8rip1i0)

*One Plus One* – Robyn Archer interviewed by Virginia Hausegger: [abc.net.au/news/2013-03-15/one-plus-one-robyn-archer/4575614](http://abc.net.au/news/2013-03-15/one-plus-one-robyn-archer/4575614)

Check YouTube for interviews, speeches and songs

An acknowledged exponent of classic European cabaret, including early French cabaret songs, and specialising in the works of Brecht, Weill and Eisler, which she recorded with the London Sinfonietta, Robyn won the prestigious Helpmann Award as Australia's *Best Cabaret Performer of 2013*. In 2014 she performs in Australia, and Hong Kong.

Robyn is Deputy Chair of the Australia Council, a member of the Council for Australian and Latin American Relations and of the European House of Culture.

A collection of earlier addresses is published under *Detritus* (UWA Press), and, in constant demand as speaker and writer on the arts, she was recently published in the Griffith Review, and has spoken this year at the Powerhouse (Brisbane – serach ABC Big Ideas), the Wheeler Centre (Melbourne) and the Sydney Writers Festival. In the second half of 2014, she speaks at the Edinburgh Festival's Culture Summit, The Peking University, and the EFA Atelier in Poznan.

Robyn is the former Artistic Director of the National Festival of Australian Theatre (Canberra), the Adelaide and Melbourne Festivals, and Ten Days on the Island (which she created for Tasmania). She has received many awards including The Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Cultural Leadership Award, the International Society of Performing Arts International Citation of Merit and the Premier's Lifetime Achievement Award (SA).

She is the patron of numerous arts organizations across Australia, and mentor for the European Festivals' Association *Ateliers* (Varna, Singapore, Izmir, Ljubliana and Poznan 2014). Robyn is an Officer of the Order of Australia, Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France) and Officer of the Crown (Belgium), and holds honorary doctorates from Flinders University (South Australia) and the Universities of Sydney and Canberra.

---

## EDUCATION

B.A. (Hons Eng), Dip. Ed. (Adelaide University)

**Honours:** Doctor of the University (Flinders University); Honorary Doctor of Letters (University of Sydney); Doctor of the University (University of Canberra); Officer of the Order of Australia (Australia); Chevalier du l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France); Officer of the Order of the Crown (Belgium); Federation Medal .

**Awards:** Helpmann Award - Best Cabaret Performer 2013; Premier's Lifetime Achievement Award 2012; International Citation of Merit 2006 (International Society of Performing Arts); SA Great's Arts and Culture Award (1998 and 2000); Australian Women's Network Executive Woman of the Year (1998); Australian Creative Fellowship(1991-93); ARIA Awards (Best Soundtrack - Pack of Women 1986; Best Children's Album - Mrs Bottle 1989); The Sydney Critics' Circle Award (1980); The Henry Lawson Award (1980); AFI nomination for Lowering the Tone (Don Featherstone's TV biog); AWGIE nomination for best children's play (Mrs Bottle).

---

## ROLES

**Current:** Strategic Advisor, Arts and Culture, Gold Coast; Artistic Director and founder, The Light in Winter (Federation Square, Melbourne); Mentor , European Festivals' Association Atelier; Deputy Chair, Australia Council; Member, Council for Australia-Latin America Relations (DFAT); Member, European House of Culture; Ambassador - the Adelaide Football Club International Women's Development Agency; Patron of Brink Productions (Adelaide), The National Script Centre (Tasmania), The Australian Art Orchestra (Melbourne), Arts-Law Society (Sydney), Centre for Postcolonial Studies (Melbourne).

**Former:** Creative Director, Centenary of Canberra (2009–14); Artistic Director of Liverpool European Capital of Culture (2004–2006), Melbourne International Arts Festival (2002–2005), Adelaide Festival (1998 and 2000), National Festival of Australian Theatre (2003–2005); Creator and Advisor to the Artistic Program of Ten Days on the Island (2001–2005); Artistic Advisor Australia Day, Hannover EXPO 2000; Member of Australian International Cultural Council, Anzac Centenary Advisory Committee (2012–2013), The Board of Directors - International Society of Performing Arts (2000–2006), Council - Victorian College of the Arts (2002–2004); Inaugural Ambassador - Adelaide Festival Centre; Trustee - The Don Dunstan Foundation; Patron - RMIT Global Sustainability Leader; Chair Community Cultural Development Board, Australia Council (1993–2005); Commonwealth Appointee to the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee (1994); Artistic Counsel Belvoir Street Theatre (1986); Patron - National Affiliation of Arts Educators; Member of the Board - Helpmann Academy.

## P E R F O R M A N C E

**Roles:** Annie I, The Seven Deadly Sins (Adelaide 1974, 1993 and Sydney Opera House 93); Jenny, The Threepenny Opera (1976); Brecht Compilations, Never The Twain (Adelaide Festival Centre, Sydney Opera House); To Those Born Later & Sung and Unsung (National Theatre of Great Britain); Brecht & Co (Sydney Opera House, Hong Kong Arts Centre); Pierrot Lunaire (Sydney); Out of the East (Paris, London, New York); Mrs Peachum, The Threepenny Opera (1999); One woman shows - Tonight Lola Blau (Australian Tour), A Star is Torn (2 Australian tours, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Wyndham's Theatre London West End), Five Nights in the Monsoon (Mount Gambier); Theatrical Caberets - The Pack of Women (London), Kold Komfort Kaffee and Scandals (Australian tours), Cabaret Passe (London's Live Radio Show and Paris Theatre, London), Cafe Fledermaus (to open the Merlyn Theatre for Playbox, Melbourne, Sydney), Le Chat Noir (Inaugural Brisbane International Music Biennial, Australian Theatre Festival Canberra, Adelaide Cabaret Festival), See Ya Next Century! (Festivals of Sydney, Perth, Performing Lines Melbourne), Whispering (Adelaide 2004).

**National Concert Tours:** The Ladies Choice (1977); Rough as Guts (1980); Robyn Archer Sings Brecht / At Large (1982); Robyn Archer National Tour (1985); Robyn Archer and The Mambologists (1988/89); Ancient Wonders (1993/94); Concerts for Melbourne Music Festival (94); Composing Women's Festival (Melbourne 94); Keep Up Your Standards (1995–2000, Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra); Songs of the Weimar period (96/97/98); The New York Gig (Brisbane, Adelaide 2002); iprotest! (Adelaide, Melbourne 2005); Que Reste t'll (Canberra, Adelaide, Port Fairy, Hobart 2010–14); Berlin Between the Wars (Canberra, Port Fairy, Adelaide 2011); The Other American Songbook (Canberra, Adelaide 2010).

**International Concert Tours:** South East Asia - Rangoon, Dhaka, Singapore, Bangkok, Chiang Mai (Dept of Foreign Affairs); Vienna (with composer Wilhelm Zobl); Holland - Hertigen Bosch (1989); Mexico - Guanajuato, Mexico City (Department of Foreign Affairs); UK - Warwick Arts Centre, Donmar Warehouse London, 1989; Canada - Halifax (with Symphony Nova Scotia, 1991); South America-Bogota (1996); Netherlands/UK - Amsterdam, Hertigen Bosch, London (1998); New York City, Guggenheim Museum (1998), The New York Gig (with Paul Grabowsky), New York (October 2001), Zurich, Berlin (2002), Slovenia (2003), Oxford (2005); Que Reste t'll, Hong Kong (2014).

---

PERFORMANCE  
CONTINUED

**Television Performance:** Songs For Bad Times (Channel 4, UK); Cabaret (BBC2 UK); The Pack of Women (ABC, Australia); The Great Debate (ABC) (Respect Men) (Arts End); commentator inaugural broadcast Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (ABC, Australia); Once in a Blue Moon (ABC, Australia); Lowering the Tone - 45 Years of Robyn Archer (one hour documentary, Don Featherstone Productions, ABC, nominated for an AFI award); Three of a Kind (ABC), Solidarity Song - a biography of Hanns Eisler (Rhombus Media / ZDF Berlin); The One That Got Away (ABC); Frequent guest appearances including The Michael Parkinson Show, Clive James at Home Good News Week (ABC), Adelaide Festival 1998 (ABC national 3 part series), David Frost New Year Special, The Midday Show, Tonight Live, Review, Dateline, Denton, Express, Big Ideas, multiple YouTube content.

---

RECORDING

The Ladies Choice (Larrikin, LRF 023); The Wild Girl in the Heart (Larrikin, LRF 027); Rough as Guts (Powderworks, RCA, ARM 5003/4); Tonight Lola Blau (Powderworks, RCA, ARM 5002); A Star is Torn [soundtrack] (Powderworks), [e.p.] (Cube, London); Robyn Archer Sings Brecht (EMI OASD 4166), [Volume 2] (EMI OASD 270049), [CD Compliation] (EMI CDC 7 47576); Ancient Wonders (Larrikin LRF 276) The Pack of Women (ABC Records, L38639) - *won the ARIA soundtrack of the year 1986*, 0-9 (ABC Records for kids); Mrs Bottle's Absolutely Blurtingly Beautiful World-Beating Burp (ABC Records 846 218 1/4/2) - *won Children's Record of the year 1990 ARIA awards*; Boojum (Sounds Australian); Once in a Blue Moon (ABC records); Keep Up Your Standards (Walkabout Larrikin LRF 483); Old Songs New Century (unreleased); Songs For Bad Times Vols 1 & 2 (Festival Records).

## WRITING

**Theatre:** Kold Komfort Kaffee (Sydney, Adelaide); The Pack of Women (London, Australia, Auckland); Cut and Thrust Cabaret (London); Scandals (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide); A Star is Torn (Australia, London, Sweden, Norway); Songs From Sideshow Alley (Adelaide, Sydney, Perth); The Conquest of Carmen Miranda (Adelaide, Sydney, Perth, Brisbane); Il Magnifico (Sydney); The Three Legends of Kra (Adelaide Festival commission, Opening Festival for Queensland Arts Centre); Akwanso Fly South (Adelaide Festival & tour); Cafe Fledermaus (Opening production Merlyn Theatre, Malthouse - Melbourne, Belvoir Street - Sydney); Comes a Cropper (commission Monstrous Regiment - London, UK tour); Mrs Bottle's Absolutely Blurtingly Beautiful World-Beating Burp (Adelaide, AWGIE nomination for Best Stageplay 1990), Poor Johanna (with Judith Rodriguez, Adelaide 1994); The Hanging of Minnie Thwaites (with Judith Rodriguez, unproduced); Club Nocturne (commission for Understudies, Aust, unproduced); Le Chat Noir (for The Seymour Group, premiere Brisbane Biennale May 1991, Australian Theatre Festival, Canberra ); Cuisine Africaine (for Dorinda Hafner, Adelaide); Winter in Paris, Summer in Nohant (unproduced); The Bridge (Perth); See Ya Next Century! (Sydney, Melbourne, Perth); Ningali (Fremantle, Canberra, Melbourne, Vic Country tour, Berlin, Bonn, Edinburgh, London, UK regional tour, Sydney, Wellington); Sappho Sings the Blues (Fremantle and WA tour); Architektin (Sate Theatre Company SA 2007).

**Books:** The Robyn Archer Songbook (McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1980); Mrs Bottle Burps (Nelson, Melbourne, 1983); The Pack of Women (Penguin Australia, Melbourne 1986); A Star is Torn (with Diana Simmonds, Virago London 1986, Dutton, USA 1987, Japan 1990).

**Contributor to:** Australia Fair (ed. Braddon, Methuen, London 1984); The All Australian HaHa Book (Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1983); Mrs Bottle's Absolutely Blurtingly Beautiful World-Beating Burp (ABC Books, Sydney 1990); various journals, magazines, newspapers; Cafe Fledermaus (Currency Press, Sydney 1990); Poor Johanna in The Penguin Anthology of Contemporary Australian Women's Writing (Penguin, Melbourne, 1991); Loaves and Wishes (Virago 1992); Hope and Fear (Flinders University Press 1995); Fortnightly column for Advertiser newspaper(1999); The Myth of the Mainstream (Currency House 2005); Reflecting Identity: the inevitable role of culture (Menzies Lecture 2006 - King's College London); Detritus (UWA Press 2009); the Schumann Lecture - Culture and Contact, Australia, Europe and the Arts (ANU Centre for European Studies); Senate Occasional Lecture (2013).

---

**WRITING  
CONTINUED**

**Lyrics & Libretti:** Mambo opera in one act (music Javier Alvarez); Sahara Dust song cycle (music Lindsay Cooper); The Last Decade cabaret song cycle (music Allan John); The Big Picture (music Agostin Fernandez); approx 150 APRA registered songs.

**Television:** Songs For Bad Times (assistant writer, Channel Four, UK); The Conquest of Carmen Miranda (SBS, Australia); The Pack of Women (ABC, Australia); Songs From Sideshow Alley (ESTV unprod); New Theatre For a New Australia (SBS); The One That Got Away (ABC).

**Radio:** A Colonial Cabaret and Cabaret Passe (Both BBC); Cafe Fledermaus (ABC); Livewire (ABC).

---

**DIRECTING**

**Theatre:** The Pack of Women (Australian tour); Cut & Thrust Cabaret (London); Scandals (Australian tour); On Parliament Hill by Noel Greig (Sydney); ABC by David Holman (Sydney); Akwanso Fly South (Adelaide Festival, Australian tour); Mayday & Labour of Love (large-scale community projects, Darwin, for NTTLC and Hobart for TTLC); Le Chat Noir (Brisbane, Canberra); The Bridge (Perth); Accidental Death of an Anarchist by Dario Fo (Adelaide, Sydney); Boy Hamlet (Brisbane).