

Victorian College of the Arts  
**Media Release 2008**  
Thursday 7 February

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM, FRIDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2008**

## **Kristy Edmunds to take up new post of Head, VCA Performing Arts – Melbourne, Australia**

***Professor Andrea Hull AO, Director and Dean of the Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts at The University of Melbourne today announced the appointment of Kristy Edmunds to the important new position of Head, VCA Performing Arts.***

**Artistic Director of the Melbourne International Arts Festival** since 2005, Kristy Edmunds will take on this new role at the VCA – Australia's premier tertiary training and education institution for the performing and visual arts – in late November 2008, on completion of her Artistic Directorship at the Melbourne International Arts Festival.

Professor Hull says that the search for the new Head of VCA Performing Arts was extensive and international: "This is exciting news for VCA students, staff, the Victorian community and beyond. It is a coup for us all."

"As an internationally-respected artist, curator and artistic director Kristy Edmunds is widely recognised as an original and leading advocate for furthering innovative and contemporary art and arts practice across solo, collaborative and cross-disciplinary work. She is well-known for her infectious energy, generosity and unbridled encouragement of artistic expression and experimentation. Her international reputation and close links with major international and local performers, artists and cutting-edge creators, opens the door to a myriad of opportunities for the VCA community and vice-versa. In addition she has relevant executive and academic experience, making her a perfect fit for the position."

Professor Hull says the role of Head, VCA Performing Arts – embracing the disciplines of Dance, Drama and Production (including Puppetry) - was created to meet an increasing need to support the creative vision and dedicated performance output delivered by VCA staff and students.

"As Festival Director, Kristy has worked with many artistic staff and recent graduates and there is a genuine excitement amongst the VCA body about the appointment and the possibilities it presents. The Heads of Dance, Drama and Production were closely engaged in the search and selection process and this appointment has fulfilled their wildest dreams."

"The VCA recognised the need for a forward-thinking, visionary leader to guide and consolidate the activities of these three disciplines, providing the heads with the time and energy to focus on the 'making' and performance component of the courses. In this role, Kristy Edmunds will guide and support the artistic curriculum offering strategic direction, and create new possibilities and connections, through the promotion of artistic practice, research and teaching partnerships and collaboration with the broader national and international arts community."

"In addition, she will help shape and build upon the teaching, research and knowledge transfer programs in these disciplines which have a total of around 200 students comprising undergraduate and graduate participants plus over 40 staff, housed in discipline-specific buildings at the VCA in Southbank."

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**Kristy Edmunds** graduated from Western Washington University in 1990 with a Master of Arts – Theatre; Directing/Playwriting emphasis, after completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Film and Television Production at Montana State University in 1987. Her Film and Television Production course studies concluded in the former West Berlin and both degrees were completed with honours. She has worked as an artist, filmmaker, theatre maker & performer, dance choreographer, writer, teacher and artist-in-residence.

In 1995 she founded the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), an international arts organisation in Portland, Oregon, dedicated to the advancement of contemporary arts practice across all performing, visual and media disciplines. She served as Artistic Director of PICA for 10 years and still serves as an Advisor. In 2003 she launched the TBA (Time-Based Art) Festival at PICA, critically acclaimed as a global contribution for arts programming. Edmunds has been and continues to be a leader and member of numerous professional bodies, advisory boards and other relevant organisations.

Edmunds has experience in teaching and advisory roles in the higher education sector, most recently at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland. She also contributed to the creation of the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, in Washington – a nationally recognised and award-winning model for education reform in the United States.

Throughout her life Edmunds has sought avenues for creative, generative or collaborative possibilities. With a bird's eye view of global trends in arts practice, alongside established links with some of the world's most renowned artists and arts companies, this appointment creates many exciting opportunities for all concerned. Her 'front-line' approach with performers, artists, theatre makers, designers and the like is legendary and will synergise perfectly with the VCA community. This new role will see her working 'hands on' with future generations of emerging contemporary artists, consolidating the VCA's international standing as a leading arts education organisation.

**Kristy Edmunds** is excited by the possibilities and opportunities this new role presents.

"I look forward to joining the leadership of an institution where the pursuit of artistic potential and the rigour of professional contemporary arts practice are at the forefront of institutional endeavour and purpose. This is a time of real change at the VCA which introduces tremendous possibilities for the future. It is also a position that makes for exceptional engagement with the entirety of the VCA's departments and centres, but and also with The University of Melbourne. Importantly it also makes room for some truly aspirational connections between the VCA and the arts sectors nationally and internationally." ***A copy of the full statement by Kristy Edmunds is available on request.***

**Richard Murphet**, Acting Head, VCA Drama says: "The appointment of Kristy Edmunds as the Head of Performing Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts is an exhilarating prospect."

"Ms Edmunds decision to take up the appointment is an acknowledgment that the VCA is at the forefront of arts training for the new millennium and it challenges us to look forward to chart new and exciting paths for arts training, based upon the depth and quality that already exist here. She will bring to us the breadth of her international experience and will guide us in making our training relevant for the performing arts that are emerging now."

"The vast array of connections she has built through her years at the Melbourne Festival and during her previous work in the States will open our doors more fully to international guests and practitioners. She is a great listener, an inspiring talker, a superb Artistic Director and will energise the students with her passion for fresh artistic work and for the place of art within society. This is the best of all possible appointments. It is a vote of supreme confidence in the work that we do."

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The VCA became a faculty of The University of Melbourne in January 2007.

The VCA consists of six academic disciplines – Art, Dance, Drama, Music, Film & Television and Production plus Community Cultural Development and two centres – The Centre for Ideas and The Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development.

The VCA mission is to provide excellent education, specialist training and practice for talented artists and practitioners in all the performing and visual arts disciplines and film and television. Learning comes from doing and tuition is focused on the individual and small groups. Educational programs are studio and performance based and underpinned by a common curriculum which examines the interaction between artistic practice and wider social, political and cultural contexts.

The VCA presents a prolific, year-round public performance program and hosts master-classes and artist-in-residence programs by key national and international artists. Within VCA Dance, Drama and Production, performance and 'behind the scenes' roles are a critical component of student assessment and regularly involve cross-disciplinary work.

Alumni of the VCA include some of the world's leading filmmakers, musicians, writers, choreographers, theatre and costume designers, composers, conductors, dancers, actors, directors, visual artists, arts administrators, managers and teachers. VCA graduates include Bill Henson, Patricia Piccinnini & Ricky Swallow (Art), Shaun Parker, Kate Denborough and Rebecca Hilton (Dance); Vince Colosimo, Sibylla Budd, Andrew Upton and Alison Whyte (Drama), Adam Elliot, Robert Luketic, Ana Kokkinos and Sarah Watt (Film & TV); Shannon Burchill, Liza Lim and Aaron Chou Lai (Music) and Lucy Robertson, Andrew Bell Chambers and Ben Cobham (Production).

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For further information please contact Lisa Montague on 03 9685 9371 / 0412 002 544 or  
[montague@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:montague@unimelb.edu.au)