

Lake George is one of the oldest lakes in the world and the largest expanse of fresh water in Australia. In February 1999 the inaugural Festival of Lake George was heralded as one of the most successful regional festivals ever presented in Australia. The second **It is a place of myth, mystery and magic ...** respect for its original Indigenous name **an ancient place,** – is planned for April 2002. **a sacred Aboriginal space** Elizabeth Cameron Dalman talks about **which speaks to people** how the first festival came out and what **from all cultures and all** is planned for this year. **walks of life.**

18

THE FIRST FESTIVAL OF LAKE GEORGE AIMED TO RAISE AWARENESS of the global significance of the lake and the need to conserve its fragile eco-systems. The festival had a unique focus on place: it incorporated arts, culture and the environment and it generated a some powerful cultural and artistic exchange between artists, academics, Indigenous and other local communities.

In 1994, as a recent resident to the area, I attended a public forum in Bungendore about the future management of Lake George. I was horrified by the cold blooded discussions of the 'parcels of land' that made up the lake area, and the vested interests of people and groups of people who used the lake for various activities. With heart pounding, I rose to express my concern that no one had spoken of Weereewa/Lake George as one entity and as a place of great beauty and inspiration.

Returning home to Mirramu which is situated on the shores of the lake, out of despair I burst into tears. What could I do to help give a voice to the lake and how could we begin to make a difference in people's attitude to this land and the lake? Certainly not by talking in such meetings. I decided to create a site-specific production and bring people to the lake itself. In 1996 I invited four of my artistic friends – two choreographers and performers and a musician – to come to Mirramu to brainstorm ideas for a site-specific dance theatre production. They discussed the idea of ritual theatre and decided to create a modern day myth that would address our current unsustainable relationship to the environment. *The Universal Lake* was born.

March – April

March 28 - April 1

🎵 The 13th Annual East Coast International Blues & Root Music Festival, Red Devil Park, **BYRON BAY**. The world's greatest blues and roots artists come together in idyllic Byron Bay! Wicked music. Sinful food. Heavenly location. Tickets Tel 02 6685 8310 www.bluesfest.com.au

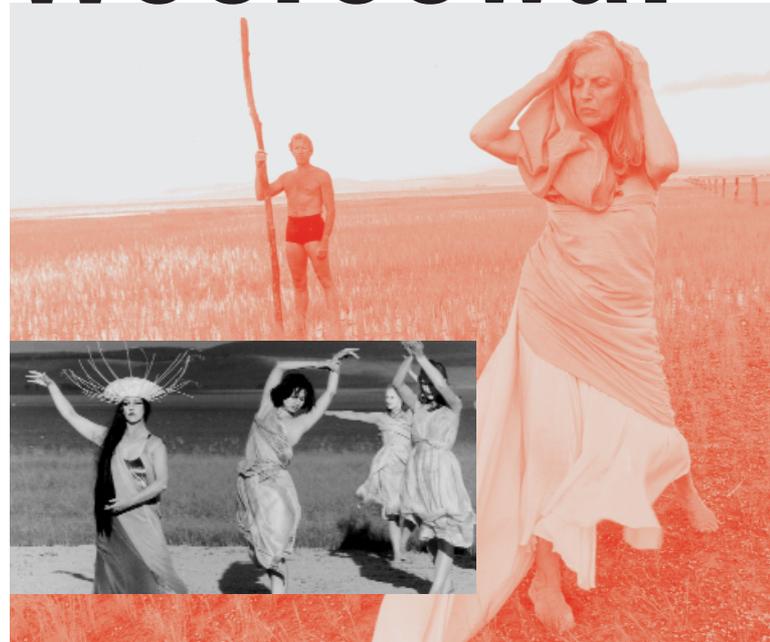
March 28 - April 1

👁️ Deniliquin Rotary Easter Art Exhibition at **DENILQUIN** Town Hall - featuring entries from five states. Opens daily 10-5pm. Nationally acclaimed sculptor, Kevin Free, will be guest artist.

Two years later, funds were received from the NSW Ministry for the Arts for the production of *The Universal Lake*. Thirty six performers including the CanBelto choir, dancers, actors and musicians lived together at Mirramu Centre for a rehearsal period working on the lake bed and in the studio. My role was as Artistic Director and choreographer. After several weeks of development and rehearsal it all finally came together – a mammoth exercise in coordination and planning.

Each of the seven performances was an awe-inspiring experience for performers and audiences alike. Beginning at the Mirramu Creative Arts Centre's amphitheatre (an unused dam site) the performers presented the prologue to this epic work. The musicians then led the audience in procession on to the lake bed where they witnessed various scenes, walking from site to site and finishing at a stone and bone circle. From here they watched spellbound, the two protagonists walk out into the water at the close of the work. Responses to *The Universal Lake* were overwhelmingly positive.

Weereewa:



As well as my own production I had dreamed of a festival to run concurrently for the Bungendore and ACT communities. It seemed just a small idea in the beginning, but clearly the time was right, and suddenly it became a reality. Through the work of a committed and dedicated Festival Committee and the involvement of local artists, Weereewa – a Festival of Lake George blossomed into a major regional arts festival. Many artists from all over Australia

March 28 - April 1

🎵 2002 National Folk Festival - One of the most heart-warming, mind-expanding, life-affirming experiences you'll ever have. Traditional and contemporary folk, Indigenous music, blues, jazz, bluegrass, bush, cajun and zydeco. **CANBERRA** www.folkfestival.asn.au Tel 02 6249 7755.

March 29

Deadline for stories for the next edition of *ArtReach*. Please contact the editor to discuss your story first. Tel 02 9247 8577 Email rachael@regionalartsnsw.com.au.

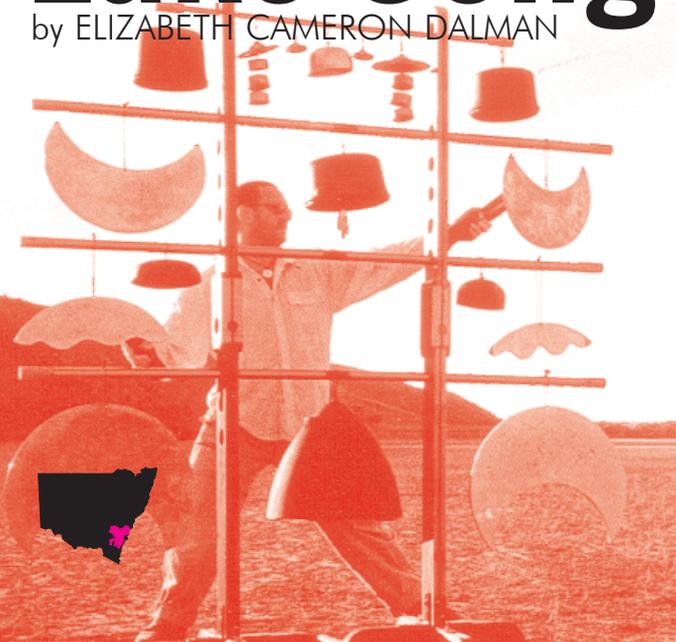
offered their works for exhibition or presentation and local residents responded very favourably to the event. *The Universal Lake* became one of the main feature performances of the festival.

The second Weereewa festival this April promises to be another exciting one, with a wide range of events including opportunities for community participation. The lake at the moment is dry – a huge yellow brown paddock some 30 kilometres long. (There are a number of theories about Weereewa's mysterious ebb and flow, with scientists suggesting that it simply fills when it rains then evaporates.) It makes an amazing theatre space and so there will be several productions presented on the lake-bed again.

WWW – Water, Water, Water, a dance installation presentation featuring Bernadette Walong, Colin Offord, Vivienne Rogis and myself will take place at the Mirramu Creative Arts Centre. With the theme of landscape as a mirror of us and us as a reflection of the landscape, the performers will create dream-like cameos exploring water and mirror themes.

Lake Song

by ELIZABETH CAMERON DALMAN



Japanese Week, involving performances, workshops and exhibitions featuring local and visiting Japanese artists will conclude with some site-specific performances called *Silk Lake* featuring Kyoko Sato, movement artist from the Mobius Kiryuho Institute in Japan.

Lake George lends itself to the feeling of a desert, the Gobi desert of Mongolia, perhaps, with a buzzing bazaar as in the times of the

ancient silk road. Community dancers, musicians and singers will create the colour and movement of a bazaar on route to the performance ground where performers will present dynamic dances, poignant drama and sensuous silk landscapes on April 20-21. The Goulburn Lieder Theatre company will present **Lost on the Lake**, a three day roving site-specific work on the lake, directed by Chrisjohn Hancock, which will be viewable from the Federal Highway from April 12-14.

The lake draws artists to it and the reactions are as varied as the artists themselves. Kathy Kituai, who has been coming to the lake for six years, and writes continually about it, is working on a cross-art exhibition with visual artist Deborah Faeryglenn for the festival. A reprint and launch of award winning anthology she has edited, *There is No Mystery!* will also coincide with the festival, as will the publication of *Longtime Stories*, based on local oral stories collected by John Shortis for the Yarrowlumla Longtime project 2001. Bungendore artists, including singer/songwriter John Shortis and sculptor/visual artist Theo Tremblay, are also involved, as well as several visual and movement artists are from Japan.

There are many events for the whole community including visual art exhibitions in Goulburn, Bungendore, Queanbeyan and Canberra; a film night and several concerts in Bungendore featuring well known musical artists including Margaret Roadknight, Colin Offord and Australysis.

Youth Ground, a day for youth of the region to share their artistic expressions in music, dance and visual art has been planned for April 14, based on the themes of earth and water. Included in the day's program is a concert by **Tambacounda**, a Senegalese band from Sydney.

The other important side of the festival is the focus on the environment. A forum called **Deep Time** will bring scientists, historians, archeologists and artists together in a series of lectures and discussions at Silver Wattler Conference Centre on April 6. One of the main aims of the festival is the preservation and conservation of the Lake George area and its precious eco-systems. There are many ways to preserve it, however it is through artistic expressions that we can reach the hearts of people. This is where real changes take place. ■

Weereewa – A Festival of Lake George runs from April 6-21 2002.

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Elizabeth Cameron Dalman is a Director of the Mirramu Creative Arts Centre and is the Artistic Director and Chair of Weereewa. A pioneer in contemporary dance in Australia, in 1965 she founded Australian Dance Theatre, Australia's first professional modern dance company. She continues to practice as a performer, choreographer, director and teacher both in Australia and overseas. In 1995 Elizabeth was awarded an Order of Australian Merit for her contribution to contemporary dance in Australia.

The Universal Lake featured Patrick Harding-Irmer + Elizabeth Cameron Dalman (left); inset: Cheryl Heaglewood, Fiona Watson, Hezar Blue + Vivienne Rogis; and (right) Colin Offord who will be performing in WWW Water Water Water at the festival this April.

March – April

March 29 - 31

The Blessing of the Fleet, **ULLADULLA**. Festival developed around the centuries old Italian religious ceremony over 45 years. Contact Elizabeth Abood Tel 02 4454 1975 www.blessingfleet.asn.au.

March 29 - April 29

Autumn Offering - works by selected artists in all mediums and genres. The Bowerhouse Contemporary Art Gallery, **MILTON**. Opens March 28, 6-8pm. Tel 4455 7003

March 29 - April 1

Deniliquin Jazz Festival. **DENILIKUIN**

March 29 - April 1

Muster together your family and friends for the **NYNGAN** Shearers' Festival. Highlights include a shearing competition, a film on the big screen at the Palais, a woolshed boogie with bush band "November Shorn", and an art exhibition. Contact Outback Arts Tel 02 6822 2484.