

Murray Arts'
Wild on the Border
music program began
in April 2006
with 11 emerging
border musicians with
disabilities.



by KAREN ROBEN

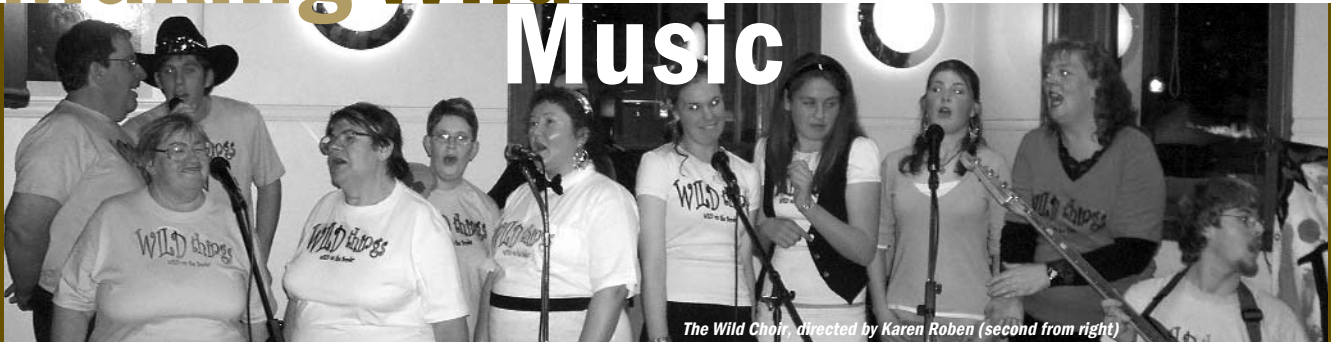
sessions at Wodonga Brass rehearsal rooms where they are involved in rhythm and vocal exercises, songwriting and band rehearsals. The band's debut performance was at an all abilities party in August in front of a jam-packed crowd at the Albury City Retro Youth Café. Months of hard work paid off as the crowd went wild and cheered for more. The musicians were elated with the realisation that they were 'rock stars' and the spirit in the room was soaring. A subsequent performance at The Festival of Learning was once again a big hit.

There has been much interest from other musicians with a disability in the program, many of whom have joined The Wild Choir which meets for weekly sessions at a church hall in Albury. We sing songs that are popular, fun and easy to learn.

The Wild Things and Wild Choir have begun collaborating with other border musicians for more performances including a spot at the Celebrate Ability Expo and an All Abilities dance party in December. Preparation for this gig will include event management training for some of the participants.

Recently, Club Wild's mentor, musician, composer, Akash returned to the border for the 'Plugged In Turned On' project

Making Wild Music



The Wild Choir, directed by Karen Roben (second from right)

THEY WERE INSPIRED BY A SERIES OF WORKSHOPS PRESENTED by Club Wild in 2005 where they learned how to make video art, how to write songs and play in a band, how to be a DJ and how to organize a dance party.

Phil Heuzenroeder, artistic director of Club Wild realized the potential in expanding the concept into a more sustainable regional program and so grew a partnership with Murray Arts managing the Wild on the Border Music Program. They were supported by was a steering committee including local government and disability service providers. Funding from Club Wild, City of Wodonga and the Regional Arts NSW Country Arts Support Program (CASP) enabled us to employ a local musician, Meg Smith, as leader and coordinator for the program.

Meg has been using her skills and enthusiasm to inspire and develop the Wild Things band. Members attend weekly 2-hour

where he facilitated a 3 day intensive workshop with The Wild Things. The group enjoyed the songwriting elements and wrote two more original songs. They plan to record the songs in a professional studio and make a video clip.

The Wild Things band now has several great rock songs in their repertoire and The Wild Choir can perform a joyful 20 minute set. Aspiring musicians with a disability are becoming aware that they do have the ability, access and encouragement to get involved in many aspects of music making and other elements of the music and events industry.

As well as having lots of fun and raising self esteem, the Wild on the Border program provides opportunities for people with disabilities to establish and celebrate their cultural identities and to be involved in the culture of wider society. ■

Karen Roben is the Project Officer at Murray Arts

February – March

23 – 25 February

Cobargo Folk Festival
 Celebrating a rich range of music, poetry and dance. **COBARGO** showground.
 Web www.cobargofolkfestival.com

24 – 25 February

Tumbafest **TUMBARUMBA's** celebration of food, wine and music will feature a distinctly Latin American feel, including shoe-shuffling in Rumba, Samba and Salsa. Web www.tumbafest.com

1 – 4 March

Experience some of Australia's top bush poets in the great surrounds of **DUNEDOO** as part of the Poetry Festival National Championships. Tel 02 6375 1975

2 – 3 March

Eyes to the Floor: Playwright Alana Valentine collects stories of the survivors of the **HAY** Girls' Home to create a drama performed by professional actors and young people from Outback Theatre (see p.8)