



POETRY IN UNUSUAL AND USEFUL WAYS

MUGWORT AND MYRRH IN A MORNING OF BIRDS

Annual Report 2014

TREES KNOWING NOTHING OF POETRY OR MUSIC
BROKEN
TWINERS

WATER
LIVER
ST
BLOOD
ORANGES
FRAMED BY

AND
THE FACT
THAT THE MOON IS
NOT YOUR FACE

GLASS
I HEAR YOU CROW... AND CROW... AND CROW

UNDER
THE BLEEDING FRUIT OF WEeping

WINGS
DETERMINED
THE BROW'S

Eclipse

Here on the hill / under a lunate sliver / blood oranges framed by
the brow's determined wings / summon splintered glass / broken
limbs // I hear you crow... and crow... and crow / place on your
head a razor wreath / then early wake to the ancient acrid scent of
burning sage / mugwort and myrrh in a morning of birds / gorge on
young cherries // the bleeding fruit of weeping / trees knowing
nothing of poetry or music / but the humming of bees / and the fact
that the moon is not your face.

From 'Postcards 1 -6', by Margaret West,
Counterpoint, 2014

Contents

02

Eclipse by
Margaret West

04

From Our
Artistic Director

05

From our
Chairman

07

Our Story

09

Artistic
Program

14

Poetry
Education
Program

18

Education
Evaluation

22

Unlocked
Program

23

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24

Future
Opportunities

26

Financial
Statement

28

Contact Us

From our Artistic Director

In 2014 The Red Room Company set ourselves the challenge of defining, in more corporate language, our core self and future strategies, whilst staying true to poetry; its slow mystery, linguistic risk takings and unpredictable imagination. This journey resulted in a solid three-year business plan, independent evaluation of our poetry education program and a re-structure of our Company, now shepherded by Dr. Tamryn Bennett, our Executive Director.

With the generous support of our Board and tenacity of our staff and volunteers, we triumphed in delivering playful and meaningful poetry projects and a national education program in schools and Correctional Centres. We secured new funding from a range of sources that enabled us to continue delivering unusual and useful poetry projects around the country.

The diversity of poets we commissioned and new partnerships we forged celebrate the multifariousness of poetic styles and languages in Australia; spoken word and hip-hop, traditional, experimental and digital poetry, first time poets – the open minded and curious approach we take to poetry continues to make The Red Room Company relevant and renegade.

Through all our programs and publications we aim to increase people's access to poetry, to alter perceptions around what is a poem, who is a poet and why poetry and our projects can make the everyday extraordinary.

Johanna Featherstone
Founding Artistic Director

From our Chairman

The vision and special flair of The Red Room's founder, our Artistic Director Johanna Featherstone, was my introduction to The Red Room Company's exciting mission. The enduring example of early donors, especially our Patron John Fairfax AO and The Graeme Wood Foundation, showed me the inspiring power of practical support for the Company's valuable work.

The combination of poetry, personal development and social integration we see in projects for schools – Poetry Education (formerly Papercuts) – and in prisons – *Unlocked* is unique. I invite you to consider joining us by helping to fund poetry in unusual and useful ways.

Bret Walker SC
Chairman

CONDITION
ONE
WAY

WHO OWNS
HERSELF, THE
SELF SHE
CAUSED

LOOK UP
IS A
CENTRE
WITHOUT
CLOTHES

THE EYE DEEPS
MIRROR

THE

A FISHED-OUT

LAKED

WHERE THE GREAT
ITS LINE
DIVIDING
HANDLESS SEA.

SNOW OF THE HOUSE

THERE IS A
SIGNPOST
ON THE SEA
YOU CAN
CONTINUE
WITH YOUR
EYES

From 'Tooth' by
Elizabeth Campbell,
*ArtAND: Our Story
Begins, 2014*



**we are flying in the lake, swimming in sky,
there is no edge, just here.**

From 'Kati Thanda'

by Rachael Mead, *The Disappearing*

Mission

The Red Room Company is a nonprofit organisation dedicated to creating unusual and useful poetry projects that positively transform expectations of, and experiences with, poetry. Through imaginative projects and learning programs in schools and Correctional Centres we aspire to make poetry accessible to all, especially those who face the greatest barriers to creative opportunities.

History

Founded by Johanna Featherstone in 2003, The Red Room Company broadens experiences with poetry by encouraging curiosity, creation and participation across a range of forms and mediums including radio, live performance, installation and digital initiatives. We are Australia's principal poetry commissioning organisation, providing professional employment to a diversity of poets. Our public projects and education programs have provided professional employment and creative opportunities for more than 700 poets and over 10,000 students across Australia and beyond our shores.

Vision



The Red Room Company's vision is to make poetry a meaningful part of everyday life. Enriching connections with poetry, we aim to cement our position as Australia's preeminent poetry organisation, revered for its imagination, courageous collaborations and industry advocacy.

Our goal is to deepen engagement with marginalised communities and to increase global and local access and participation in poetry through interactive digital platforms and mentoring of emerging poets within our projects and programs.

Our Team

Artistic Director: **Johanna Featherstone**
Executive Director: **Dr. Tamryn Bennett**
Education Manager: **Toni Murphy**
Education Assistant: **Eunice Andrada**
Editor: **Joel Scott**

BOARD

Chairman: **Bret Walker SC**
Treasurer: **Matthew McCarron**
Secretary: **Judith Pini**
Board member: **Johanna Featherstone**
Board member: **Kiersten Fishburn**
Board member: **May Samali**

Patron **John B. Fairfax, AO**

Artistic Program

3

Projects

38

Poets
employed

46

Commissioned
poems

3623

Print
publication
distribution

Participation from

NSW, VIC, SA, WA, NT & QLD

Our projects focus on commissioning new work and collaborating with diverse communities to develop imaginative contexts in which poetry can be creatively and critically explored. Publishing and promoting poetry in unusual and useful ways has seen poets collaborating with truck drivers, translating poetry into 15 languages and developing Australia's first interactive poetry mapping app featuring over 120 commissioned poems charting disappearing sites across the country. All public projects are used to inspire learning resources for schools and Correctional Centres.

In 2014, experimentation and imagination were at the core of our artistic projects.

Led by Artistic Director Johanna Featherstone, in collaboration with a diversity of poets, artists and organisations, our three Public Arts Projects were *Counterpoint*, *ArtAND* and the *Lyrikline* collaboration.

ARTAND Poetry: Our Story Begins

**The great drain of the house
is a centre without clothes
where the eye deeps the mirror,
a fished-out lake.**

From 'Tooth',
by Elizabeth Campbell



Our first artistic project for 2014 was *ARTAND POETRY: Our Story Begins*. This partnership with ARTAND Australia magazine saw poets Elizabeth Campbell and Ken Bolton collaborating with visual artists Prudence Flint and Jenny Watson in an ekphrastic experiment. Culminating works by the artists and poets were exhibited at our sold out event at the Sydney Writers' Festival and published in a limited edition chapbook distributed by ARTAND Australia. In 2015 our story continues as we interweave and experiment with the visual arts and look to develop education resources with state and national galleries.

The project was supported by a promotions grant from The Australia Council for the Arts.

Counterpoint: Poetry Meets Music

**A cleansing pall of ants
A stone and two true sticks
Absolution in an empty pocket**

From 'Fragments towards
a lament (non troppo
affectuoso) by
Margaret West

**“I developed a great
relationship with the composer,
Melody Eötvös, and we stay
in contact - there may be
future projects we could
work on together. I also
found the project interesting
and challenging in working
alongside other poets.”**

~ Jessica Wilkinson,
Counterpoint poet

Throughout 2014 we teamed up with Musica Viva to explore the collaborative possibilities of poetry and music. Poets Luka Lesson, Jessica Wilkinson and Margaret West, were commissioned to work with composer Melody Eötvös, and leading percussionist Claire Edwardes to experiment with words, music, sounds, pictures and possibilities of these intersecting forms. The result was *Counterpoint*; a series of poems and original scores published in a limited edition booklet and presented with Musica Viva in an intimate performance. Sadly, Margaret West passed away after a long battle with cancer on the day of our event. Her contribution to the project was immense and her loss is keenly felt.

In 2015 we continue to work with Musica Viva to record the final piece for use in our education resources. Relationships between poems and music also propel our work with hip hop artists in Correctional Centres and explorations of sound poetry in our forthcoming radio series, *Rhyming the Dead*.

Creation of *Counterpoint* was made possible by support from The Australia Council for the Arts.

Lyrikline Collaboration

“Translating Herliany was probably the best job I’ve ever had, besides writing. I’m Indonesian-born who’s spent over 30 years living in Sydney, so I’m invested in bringing Australia and Indonesia closer. It’s been such a privilege to be part of The Red Room’s *Lyrikline* project, in making it possible for Australian writers and readers to have access to the work of an Indonesian poet.”

~ Mona Attamimi, *Lyrikline* translator

2014 was the final year in our three-year collaboration with the German-based *lyrikline.org*. *Lyrikline* is one of the largest hubs for poetic translation and our collaboration has seen us publish, record, translate and internationally promote 87 poems by 15 Australian poets. We also commissioned 15 Australian poets to translate 80 poems from German, French, Spanish, Turkish, Arabic, Farsi, Indonesian, Swedish, Russian, and Chinese. We’re extremely proud of this project that celebrates the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian poetry, enriching and encouraging dialogues between global literatures. Translation continues to play a vital role in the development of projects and education resources that give voice to multi-lingual poets, students and inmates.



The *Lyrikline* collaboration was supported by the CAL Cultural Fund.

IT DANGEROUS AND LIKE
RAINBOW TO US
THIS PHOTO I GOT LIKE
I GOT LIKE RAINBOW RAINBOW

IT COME
TO EARTH
FROM THE
SKY
ALL BLUR OFF A
THINNING

From 'The Snake Photo' by Harriett, Year 6, Borroloola School, NT, 2014

IT BRING RAIN AND LIFE
IT SHIMMER ON
IT RUNNING CHASING
BLACK
YOU NEVER
KILL THAT
CANT BELIEVE I GOT HIM
PHOTO OF HIM HIM

ALL YOU MOB
COME HERE
AND CHEER

Poetry Education Program

We are this generation

We make this

We shape this

We break this

Our world is our sculpture

From 'Dreams' by Lachlan,
Year 7, Dapto High School, NSW

"Even today the kids were writing their poetry on little cards and they wanted to put it on teacher's tables while they weren't looking, or just in pigeon holes, or in kids' bags and pigeon holes. They wanted to write poetry at lunchtime. That's the level to which they've inspired and motivated the kids, just fuelled their passion for writing and sharing because a lot of these kids I don't think would have shared before."

~ Teacher, 2014 Poet-in-residence program

Red Room Poetry Education

inspires students and teachers to create, perform and publish poetry. Through our poet-in-residence, *Poetry Object* competition and professional learning programs, we enliven experiences with and change perceptions of poetry, enhancing self-confidence and creative expression in classrooms across the country.

Key points of difference are our national reach, professional learning resources and interactivity, with both students and teachers noting the positive impact of creating poems rather than passively consuming them.

Poet-in-residence program

63

Workshops

43

Schools

4507

Students

185

Teachers

16247

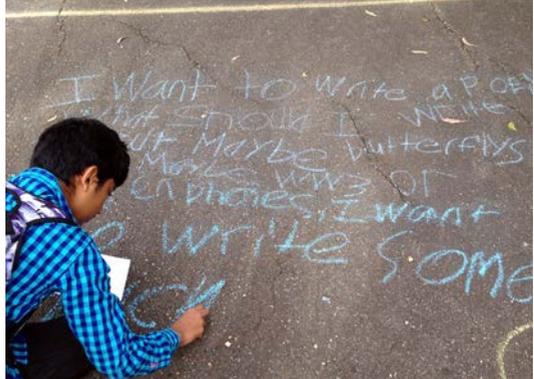
Contact hours

18

Poets

NSW, VIC, SA, WA, NT + QLD

Participation from





Red Room Poetry Object



the whole universe is in your tiny mouth

From 'Little Krishna', by Saieesha, Year 6, Methodist Ladies' College, WA

Red Room Poetry Object is a free national poetry-writing competition for students and teachers, and the only one of its kind providing professional learning resources and publishing outcomes for all participants. The project invites young writers and their teachers to submit poems about objects that are special to them.

"The children were very excited to learn today that they have been published! We really enjoyed the journey and are now planning a poetry reading for our school community. Thank you for your support along the way and for supporting the creativity of our students. They have gained so much confidence from being involved."

~ Bettina Croft, Teacher,
Kensington Public School, NSW

2014 was the *Poetry Object's* biggest year with 132 schools participating across Australia and New Zealand. ABC Radio National was our principal media partner and the competition was judged by Western Australian performance poet Scott-Patrick Mitchell.

After months of anticipation, winning poems were announced at the launch of the *Poetry Object* exhibition at Liverpool City Library in November 2014 and were also broadcast on ABC Radio National's Earshot program.



3

commissioned poems

45%

regional engagement

132

schools nationally

2552

poems created by students and teachers

Professional Development

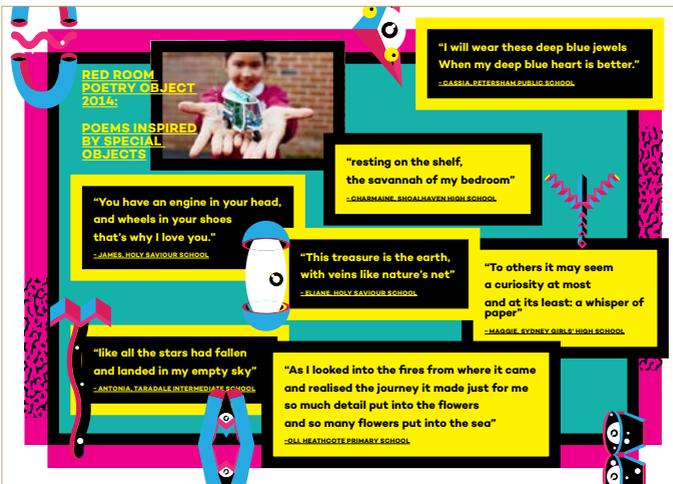
Red Room Poetry Education recognises the importance of providing teachers with training and creative resources required to engage students in the creation and critical analysis of poetry. In 2014 we delivered professional learning presentations for pre-service teachers at universities and at national and state english teacher association conferences and staff development days.

87

teachers attended professional development workshops

396

accessed free learning resources



Education Evaluation



In 2014, we commissioned an independent evaluation of Red Room Poetry Education by Bailey and Yang Consultants. Key findings of the report are informing strategies for future growth and continual improvement. The full report is available via our website.

Executive Summary

Authors: Hung-Yen Yang, Jackie Bailey and Marc Llewellyn - Bailey and Yang Consultants, 2014

The Red Room Company is changing young people's appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of poetry. Through its Poetry Education Program, students are introduced to "live" poets, who connect poetry to students' experiences.

The Poetry Education Program is developing student understanding, awareness and enjoyment of poetry. Nearly 90% of students learned more about poetry. They enjoyed the course, and were proud of what they had achieved. As a direct result of the course, almost all students wanted to find out more about poetry and writing in general.

The program got through to young people who are hard to engage in normal classes. Teachers reported that this was especially the case for boys, who would normally switch off if poetry were mentioned, and young people from marginalized backgrounds who disengage in the usual classroom setting.

The program made students think more creatively. 79% of students reported that the program had helped them think more creatively. When it came to feeling inspired, most students (69%) noted that they felt inspired to work harder in the course than they would usually do in school.

As a result of the program, teachers are changing the way they teach poetry. All teachers interviewed said they are incorporating elements of the program into their teaching, including new ideas, methods of presenting material and ways of encouraging students to write.

Teachers view Red Room as a leader in this space. Students and teachers alike would recommend the program to others, and **teachers gave the program 9 out of 10 compared to other arts education programs they had been involved in.**



Interactive and innovative exercises, “live” poets and staff’s dedication made Red Room stand out from other providers of arts education programs. Teachers and students emphasised these elements and asked for more programs. Teachers and poets talked about the Red Room’s “care” factor, which they believed was critical to the program’s success.

Through the program Red Room is supporting poets to maintain professional careers in their practice. Poets developed employable skills in workshop delivery and were paid award rates, which allowed them to continue their practice.

Red Room’s publication outcomes are the perfect way to celebrate the experience. Poets and teachers felt that the publication outcomes (eg. on stones, online and in print) were integral to students feeling acknowledged for their work and making poetry more socially accepted.

Based on this evaluation, we believe the program has room to grow. The popularity of the program amongst students, teachers and poets suggests that the program could expand. In doing so, Red Room will need to preserve the elements critical so far to its distinctive offer – the staff “care factor” and time given to relationships with schools; working with “live” poets; and innovation in interactive, fun approaches to poetry. We recommend that Red Room retain these principles in new or expanded programs.

Illustrations by
Leigh Rigozzi,
Poetry Object 2014





The Student Experience

"It was really cool to have a real poet come in and I think that was the main advantage and the main feature of the session that was really, really good. And because other sessions we do have at school they're mostly just talking or watching something, not really having our own opinions and really thinking deeply into what we actually can do."

~ Student, *Red Room Poetry Education* program

The Teacher Experience

"The biggest impact for me, and we only did it this week, [is] kids finding a new love for writing and a new love for poetry. Kids coming in wanting to write at lunchtime. Who does that? Who ever saw that coming? So the biggest impact you're seeing is that kids have this love for words and love of sharing their writing. I've had the best week ever in my whole teaching career, and I've been teaching for a hundred years. That, for me, has been the biggest impact, the love and the enthusiasm that I can see in our kids."

~ Teacher, *Red Room Poetry Education* program

The Poet Experience

"Red Room has well and truly reciprocated in giving me so many skills and given me so many attributes that I can add on to my life ... I think that's a massive key in the success of Red Room and I think that's why they do it differently and that's why they do it better."

~ Poet employed in *Red Room Poetry Education* program



Fresh the Lion



HARD LUCK
STORIES TOLD TO
THE MASSES

From an untitled poem
by Gilly, Mid-North
Coast Correctional
Centre, 2014

BEFORE ENTERING
APPROVED.

INDIAN
DREAMING OF

A NIGHT

BOUNDARIES

WELCOME

NOBODY

—

LETTER
POETRY
GANG
KNOCKING
SIT
SOFT

JOKES DEFEATED

VAN TEMPLE HIDDEN
BY TIME

ECHOS OF A
PAST NOT YET
COMPLETED

FIND ANOTHER
SAFE HOUSE
WITH A SIDE +
BACK GATE

INITIAL
MADONNA

Unlocked Program

“Validating the ‘voice,’ the inner experiences of each individual, provided an opportunity to not only express, but to understand at a deeper level, the healing needed as part of the onward journey in choosing a worthwhile life. I and colleagues across the disciplines at our Centre, were touched by the healing power of *Unlocked* poetry and would highly value any further workshops being offered as part of our rehabilitation programs.”

~ Jane Moore, Director Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre

10

Workshops

67

Students

347

Contact hours

4

Centres

MID-NORTH COAST CORRECTIONAL CENTRE, KEMPSEY, NSW
SOUTH COAST CORRECTIONAL CENTRE, NOWRA, NSW
DILLWYNIA CORRECTIONAL CENTRE, SOUTH WINDSOR, NSW
COBHAM JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE, COBHAM, NSW

Unlocked invites poets and hip-hop artists into Correctional Centres to run intensive writing workshops with inmates to enhance literacy and cultivate positive creative expression for some of the most marginalised members of our community. Piloted in Sydney in 2010, *Unlocked* is now ongoing, having delivered over 15 programs with more than 130 inmates in 10 locations across NSW.

Due to the massive over-representation of Aboriginal communities in NSW prisons, *Unlocked* has a strong Indigenous focus. Recidivism amongst young Aboriginal prisoners (18-24) is significantly higher than average, and creative literacy programs like *Unlocked* can play a key role in reducing those rates by opening possibilities for self-exploration and expression.

Unlocking Potential

Given *Unlocked's* success, our goal is to expand with the required resources to train a diversity of poets and increase access in remote locations. At present we are only resourced to deliver *Unlocked* in a limited number of Correctional Centres and are reliant on volunteer coordination of the program. New funding is critical to achieve our goals, enriching the impacts of creative education to transform lives.

Our Supporters

“It is with much pleasure I endorse The Red Room Company’s Annual Report. I have been involved with the company for several years and been witness to the progress made during that time. Poetry has been introduced to numerous people and places, bringing creative skills to children, adults and the disadvantaged. I have seen the delight it brings to many, and the enrichment provided to established poets. As a supporter, I encourage everyone to contribute to this dynamic company by whatever means possible.”

John B. Fairfax, AO
Patron, The Red Room Company

Supporters

We are proud of our achievements in 2014 and grateful for the generosity and foresight of individuals, foundations and funding bodies that made these transformative projects possible.

The Graeme Wood Foundation
The Australia Council for the Arts
Tim Fairfax Family Foundation
Creative Partnerships Australia
Anne Kantor
Geoffrey Ainsworth, AM
Bret Walker SC
Andrew and Cathy Cameron
Geoffrey and Rachel O’Conor

John Fairfax, AO
John Slade
Jane Thorn
Gartmore & Cunningham
Judith Pini
Paul Ruiz
Andrew Fitzsimmons
David Allsop
Henry Ergas
J.P Beran
Arthur Charles
Sue Jackson

Partners

AAP Media Net
ABC Radio National
Ernst & Young
KPMG
Liverpool City Council

Collaborators

Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation
ArtAND
Barkly Regional Arts
Bundanon Trust
Big Fat Smile
Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre
Corban & Blair
Department of Corrective Services NSW
English Teachers Associations
Musica Viva
Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation

Future Opportunities

The scope and depth of our programs are limited only by our funding. Looking to 2015 and beyond The Red Room Company's goal is to cement our position as Australia's preeminent poetry organisation, revered for its imagination, courageous collaborations, artistic excellence and industry advocacy. We have grand ambitions for the future, and are seeking support for individual projects as well as strategic long-term investment to ensure the company realises its greatest potential. **Your support will help us achieve our growth priorities.**

Company Capacity

The Red Room Company's vision requires investment in our resources to expand such that we are a truly national company. Secure funding over the next 3-6 years will provide the **capacity and stability for The Red Room Company to focus on developing excellence in poetic practice while embedding sustainability strategies to ensure future efficacy.**

Public Arts Projects

Our projects play a key role in creating opportunities for promotion of, and participation in, Australian poetry. In 2015 our two major projects are *Rhyming the Dead*, a radio series that investigates how death and its shadows shape us, and *The Disappearing 2.0* focusing on mapping regional NSW. **We are seeking support for these projects as well as expansion of our mentoring program and interactive digital publishing platforms to increase the numbers of poetry creators, participants, and patrons.**



Red Room Poetry Education

By 2020 we aim to expand the program to at least 260 schools across Australia (approximately twice the current schools reach), and to build our capacity to support professional development for both teachers and poets by gaining full accreditation of our learning courses. Your support will help to subsidise program costs for isolated and disadvantaged school communities as well as development of digital programs to build future program sustainability in remote locations.

Unlocked

With support we will be able to deliver the program to an increased number of remote centres and invest in a part-time Program Coordinator so we are not reliant on volunteers. **Support will also assist in the training of new poets to run the program, focusing on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander poets, and commissioning of an evaluation of *Unlocked's* impact.**

To discuss how your support can help unlock possibilities in disadvantaged communities contact:

**Executive Director, Dr. Tamryn Bennett:
tamryn@redroomcompany.org / 02 9319 5090**

The Red Room Company Public Fund is a fund listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations and has Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status. Donations of \$2 or more to The Red Room Company in Australia are tax deductible for Australian tax-payers.





POETRY IN UNUSUAL
AND USEFUL WAYS



Making poetry a meaningful part of everyday life

How your donation can help

- **\$1000 gives a full-day workshop and learning resources to an urban school in need**
- **\$3550 gives a one-week writing program to a disadvantaged urban school**
- **\$5500 contributes to a one-week writing program for a regional school with limited access to the arts**
- **\$10,000 contributes to an intensive creative literacy program in a correctional centre**

[Find out more about our work redroomcompany.org](http://redroomcompany.org)

Direct deposit into our Public Fund:

The Red Room Company Ltd
Westpac BSB 032023
ACCOUNT 291919

Mail cheque or money order to:

The Red Room Company Ltd
PO Box 1105
Surry Hills
NSW 2010

This gift comes from:

Name:

Address:

Email:

Amount:

The Red Room Company Public Fund is a fund listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations and has Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status. Donations of \$2 or more to The Red Room Company in Australia are tax deductible for Australian tax-payers. ABN 35 103 464 446

HERE ON THE HILL

PLACE ON YOUR HEAD

BUT THE A RAZOR WREATH

HUMMING OF BEES

The Red Room
Company

Annual Report
2014

redroomcompany.org

GORGE ON
YOUNG
CHERRIES

THEN EARLY

WAKE TO THE

ANCIENT

ACRID SCENT OF

BURNING SAGE

MON
SUM
SP
WINTERED