

Mia deadly serious about comedy

It takes guts to be a stand up comedian—
but perhaps even more to ask for advice.



Comedian Mia Stamford will be cracking audiences up across the country when her first one-woman show hits the road later this year.

After winning a coveted spot in a national mentoring program, Mia has been workshopping ideas with a professional comic.

Mia was one of 49 successful applicants to the 2011 JUMP National Mentoring Program for Young and Emerging Artists. The 10-month program helps boost the careers of artists aged between 18 and 30 who are in the first five years of their professional practice. In Mia's case, this means one-on-one advice from John Burgos, known on the comedy circuit for his fast-paced satirical observations and social commentary. He has been relishing his director's role in Mia's show.

Mia first hit the stage at the Melbourne Comedy Festival's *Deadly Funny* in 2007. The event is Australia's only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comedy competition and, like the JUMP program, receives Australia Council for the Arts support.

Since then, she has won three awards, written shows with the Ilbjerri Theatre Company and performed around the country.

But Mia says JUMP has pushed her career even further. 'It's extremely validating. For the last four years I have been in comedy as a collaborator. The new show is my first solo project opportunity,' she says.

'Not only do I own this work, I'm realising that I am an artist; I fit into this group of 49 mentees. These are people whose work I admire and they're telling me that they like mine too.'

Mia first met John through a comedy workshop he was running at The Comic's Lounge in Melbourne. She approached him with a script she was working on and he gave her some tips on comedy mechanics and rhythm.

'Both John and I are really excited to be working together,' says Mia. 'For John this is the first time he has directed and I think he's happy about the challenge. He has awesome ideas—the staging is bigger than Ben Hur!'

'When it came to asking John to be my mentor and help me with my JUMP application, I asked him to coffee and he thought I had another script I needed help with,' Mia laughs.

'I'm so happy to legitimately have his time now. I get this one-on-one with someone I have always enjoyed working with and whom I admire. John has been so generous with his time, even coming into town on his Sunday to watch a rehearsal and give me feedback.'

Through her work Mia hopes to connect with people, honour her ancestors and pay respect to her family.

'I have such respect for stories; for everyone's story. They are all we have at the end of the day and I am learning what story it is I want to tell.'

'Everything I do is from the heart, so my favourite moments are when people come up and tell me their story or connect with something I've said.'

JUMP is supported by the Australia Council, managed nationally by Youth Arts Queensland and delivered in collaboration with state partners.

The CEO of Youth Arts Queensland, Julie Woodward, says: 'The program champions the next generation of arts industry leaders, ensuring that geography and cultural diversity are not barriers in identifying and promoting artistic excellence.'

'Successful applicants show excellence in their artistic practice and have a clear vision of how a mentor can assist them to step up to the next stage of their career.'

The next round of JUMP applications will open in late August, 2011.

Top: Mia Stamford. Photo: Katie Harmsworth