

GOING OUT

FUNDRAISER: GET ON STAGE

Ability gets a place to shine

MUSIC, movement, dance, theatre, film, puppetry and the visual arts — it's all there. And no, it's not there at a sandstone university with a multi-million-dollar budget, but a program called Beyond The Square.

Beyond The Square is Riverside Theatres' dedicated arts program for people with a disability, run by Alison Richardson and Gerard O'Dwyer, an actor with Down syndrome who nonetheless picked up the best actor gong at TropFest 2009 in the film *Be My Brother*, which went on to win the best film award at the short film extravaganza.

And it's from that kind of achievement that the name of the program — which up until two years ago was known as Workshops In The Arts For People With A Disability — comes.

"Beyond The Square is about raising an awareness of the talents and achievement of people with a disability who are in the arts," Richardson says.

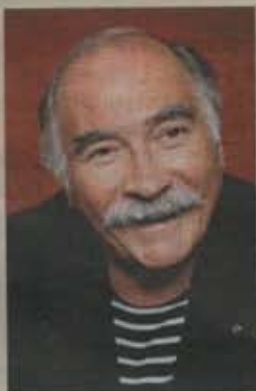
Besides the workshops, which include filmmaking

courses for people with a primary disability who have very limited movement, the program also works towards an end-of-year show performed by participants on November 21.

"We're keen to make the opportunities (for participants) as professional as possible because Riverside is a professional theatre company and so raises expectations of what people might expect people with a disability to be able to achieve," Richardson points out.

But Beyond The Square needs funds to make it all happen — and so a few years ago the Parramatta business community founded the fundraiser Get On Stage, happening again this year on Friday, June 1. It's a lunch event that includes raffles and auctions, but also entertainment in the form of veteran comedian and radio presenter Wendy Harmer as MC and the wonderful Henri Szeps as speaker. There'll also be performances from Beyond The Square participants and a short film that will be made on the day by the budding filmmakers.

"In three hours, there is a lot going on," Richardson says.



Speaker Henri Szeps.