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L-R: Penelope Arvanitakis, Samantha Levy and Claire Ruby James will be taking over the Arts Centre in Warburton. Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS 387970_08

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By Callum Ludwig

A trio of local women are set to make the Arts Centre in Warburton their own on Saturday 17 February from 7pm to 9pm.

Claire Ruby James, Samantha Levy's 'Ymma $\alpha\alpha$ Tierra' and duo Penelope & Owsley came together to hold the Valley Women's Voice performance, with hopes to establish it as an ongoing creative opportunity for women.

Ms Levy said they are all emerging artists wanting to share their voices.

"The idea came from the people in the community that write songs, of which I'm one, and the need for a space to express that," she said.

"Because it's original music, it doesn't really fit in at pubs or anything like that, so it's good to have a theatre where people are

there to listen to it, rather than having to try and slide an original in among covers or other songs.”

Ms Levy will explore her Hebrew and Spanish ancestry in her act, which translates to ‘Mother Earth’. The project incorporates acoustic singing, loop pedal, rhythm, guitar and nature sounds and dives into the spiritual connection to place, relationship and ancestors. She will be supported by Jordan Scotney on piano and djembe; and Michael Arvanitakis on cello.

Penelope Arvanitakis will be performing alongside Owlsley Burroughs after the pair reunited recently and said they produced an album last year and it’s the first time they will be performing their songs to a live audience.

“I’m on a bit of a high, I have a musical theatre background and have been writing songs for 20 years so to be able to perform in a theatre is really exciting,” she said.

“This is just a chance to show people that our work is welcome here and to encourage other women who are artists to see us and know that they can do that too.”

Claire Ruby James is the CEO of The Dreaming Space Academy and has performed with Dr Jazz, The Funky Monkey Family and Awaken Circus but for the first time will be bringing her original songs to Warburton.

Ms James said Penelope was doing some dream coaching with her husband through The Dreaming Space and told him her dream was to play at the Arts Centre so they made it happen.

“We came together, got creative and it seems to have blossomed into something that’s going to be bigger than us and I think it’ll

continue rather than just us three ladies, we'll get more and more women in and support them," she said.

"It's so important to offer a space that feels like you're welcome, you're seen and where someone can encourage you through your hard moments,"

"The voice is the hardest thing to perform, I've been a dancer, an African drummer, all these things, but when it got to my voice and singing my original music, it's taken a really long time."

Ms James has gone on to perform in various mediums and acts at The Art Centre in Melbourne, the Moomba Festival, The Spiegeltent Melbourne, Woodford Folk Festival, Peninsula Hot Springs, Werribee Zoo, Science Works and at the State Library Victoria.

Initial hopes are that the event can be held twice yearly.

"I've been writing songs for a while and haven't known where the opportunities are to share it, and I imagine there's many people I speak to and many women, who have a lot of talent but just keep it to themselves," Ms Levy said.

"It's so important to be able to encourage women through their fears, their concerns, and help them think about things that they might not think about, like staging and lighting or to help them develop stage plots and all these things, it's really lovely to be able to encourage them into the field," Ms James said.

Anyone interested can book tickets at culturetracks.info or 1300 368 333, or find out more at yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Experience/Events/Valley-Womens-Voice.