

In Repertoire



A guide to Australian performance for young people



Australian Government

Australian Council
on the Arts

Dear reader

This guide introduces you to a range of contemporary performances from around Australia for young audiences. These works are available for international touring.

You can find out much more about the works, artists and companies at Ozarts Online (<www.ozarts.com.au>), the Australia Council's website promoting the works of Australian artists.

The overview essay on pages 21–22 provides an accessible introduction to the recent history and context of performance for young people in Australia.

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DANCE puppetry
music theatre
circus
physical theatre
multi-performance

Introduction

From a very young age, Australians are blessed with the opportunity to engage with creativity through the richness and diversity of Australian performance for young people. Our younger citizens enjoy a wide range of superlative performance, including many works designed specifically for them from early childhood years through to adolescence and later as young adults. This guide is about works created by adult artists for and with young people that are available for international touring.

In Australia, contemporary performance for adult audiences takes many forms and traverses many genres, from plays to physical theatre and circus works, to music theatre, puppetry and multimedia events. This is no less the case with the range of performance options for young people. Some of Australia's leading artists offer the very best in traditional skills and the latest innovations in performance practice. Young audiences are being presented with works that both entertain and stimulate.

Film, video and digital animation, for example, have been expertly introduced into stage works for young people, reflecting the technological media-world in which they live. Exciting forays into digital animation build on a rich history and culture of puppetry realised in many different forms across the continent. Performances for young people explore the classic themes of childhood and adolescence, addressing themes of self and transformation, responsibility and conflict, but also introduce contemporary global issues of environment, technology, race, gender, the body and cultural identity with due seriousness, good humour and theatrical inventiveness. Above all, the works in this book encourage a love of performance for its own sake as well as introducing various ways of seeing and being in the world.

A large number of the artists and companies in this guide have performed internationally, on tour or at festivals for young people. The works they have created are specific to Australia, which is what makes them so attractive, but they also reach out, to engage audiences beyond our shores.

Australia is a culturally and geographically diverse nation, and so too are the works in this book – they represent the very best of Australian performance, as well as tackling issues that all young people face and experience as maturing adults. This is what makes Australian performance for young people ideal for an international audience.

Much more detail about the works, artists and companies you'll encounter on these pages can be found at OzArts Online (<www.ozarts.com.au>), the Australia Council's website promoting contemporary Australian culture internationally, with a focus on events and activities being presented overseas. The site includes specifications for touring as well as contact details. *In Repertoire* celebrates the riches of performance available to young Australian audiences and, now, their peers around the world.

Jennifer Bott
Chief Executive Officer
Australia Council



Kite Theatre

Binni's Backyard

Binni is a five-year-old girl caught up with telly, toys, fast food and computer games. Forced to turn off her TV, Binni packs her bag, takes her Teddy and runs away – to her own backyard. Musically and visually rich, *Binni's Backyard* is a celebration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous story-telling and of connection to the land. 60 minutes, 5 performers

Kite Theatre is Education Queensland's early childhood theatre-in-education company, providing innovative shows for school children and families for nearly 30 years. Music, comedy and strong visuals are vital components of the company's work, encouraging young audiences to explore ideas. Whether performing in schools or public venues, Kite provides stimulating and relevant theatre.

From the moment [the actors] leapt on stage, the cast of *Binni's Backyard* had their young audience – and their older carers – entranced. *Courier Mail*

Patch Theatre Company

Sharon, Keep Ya Hair On!

The line between performers and audience is dissolved in this funky, funny, wild and wacky trilogy of stories about adapting to change. Presented as a rock concert narrative set on floating stages, *Sharon, Keep Ya Hair On!* features a mix of interactivity, children's art, structured play, live music, songs and video projection. The audience becomes part of the performance just as they would in a live studio television broadcast. 50 minutes, 5 performers

Adelaide-based Patch Theatre Company has presented works at the Sydney Opera House, the Victorian Arts Centre and nine international children's theatre festivals in the USA, Canada, Korea, Japan and Singapore. The company's repertoire has been carefully crafted over many years by artists dedicated to developing inventive theatre for children.

Hats off to a Huge Hit...stunning musical talent and the tales of a top children's writer [Gillian Rubinstein]...what a dazzling show it is!

The Advertiser

Terrapin Puppet Theatre

My Sister is an Alien

What happens when your sister gets squashed to the size of a strawberry, caught up in your favourite yo-yo and thrown into outer space? How does the man in the moon travel around the galaxy? From the irreverent and enormously popular novel *My Sister's an Alien*, Terrapin has created a high-paced, humorous puppet theatre work, challenging and entertaining children 5-12 years. 55 minutes, 2 performers

Terrapin creates innovative contemporary puppet-based theatre productions for families and adult audiences. The company tours nationally and internationally and offers workshops, master classes and other training opportunities as well as entertainment for festivals, conferences and community events.

...a tight show with an almost Olympian juggling of puppets, worlds and costume changes by performers.

Lowdown



...adventure follows adventure but there's still time for an exploration of family relationships from a kid's eye view.

The Mercury





Linsey Pollak

Making Jam

Linsey Pollak at his wildest and most musically inventive. Hear bagpipes made from rubber gloves and flutes, panpipes and clarinets made from garden hoses. Hear music made with dental floss, carrots, satay sticks, a music stand and a camping stool. 45-60 minutes, 1 performer

Performer, musical director, instrument maker/inventor and composer Linsey Pollak is acclaimed for playing instruments he has made from all manner of found objects. His first solo show, *Bang it with a Fork*, and the acclaimed children's show *Out of the Frying Pan*, have led Pollak to develop a series of solo shows which include exciting work with digital technology. His music theatre performances have toured the world.

Snuff Puppets & Acrobat

Circus Olé

Featuring The Big Elephant, Ferocious Wild Animals, Performing Dogs, The Parade of Cows and the fabulous Farelli Family's astounding aerobic feats, *Circus Olé* is circus in the time-honoured tradition. Combining the magical creations of Snuff Puppets and the physical virtuosity of Acrobat, it's more fun than you've ever had! 60 minutes, 12 performers

Since 1992 Snuff Puppets have been delighting, disgusting, horrifying, challenging and entertaining crowds around the world. Their performances combine giant puppets, spectacular visuals, live music and physical theatre indoors and out. The award winning Acrobat is committed to traditional circus skills performed with bravery, precision and experimentation. Both companies have toured internationally.

[Snuff Puppets' *Scarey*] is altogether the most bizarrely entertaining evening I've ever spent in the theatre. *Wiltshire Times, UK*

[Acrobat is an] astonishing Aussie troupe who defy gravity and good taste... *The Guardian, UK*

Linsey Pollak is one of Australia's most brilliant... composer/ musicians. He is wildly innovative in the use of instruments but never lets his experimentation get in the way of the musicality of a work.

The Courier Mail



Kim Carpenter's Theatre of Image

The Happy Prince

A dramatisation of Oscar Wilde's beautiful tale of The Prince and The Little Swallow, a classic story about love and giving filled with tenderness, compassion and gentle humour. This widely acclaimed, award-winning production is brought to life with inventive settings, an outstanding cast and extraordinary puppetry. 60 minutes, 5 performers

Telling stories to children through virtuosic visual and musical images, as well as words, Kim Carpenter's Theatre of Image combines high production values with the expertise of the best Australian performing artists. *The Happy Prince* won the prestigious 2004 Helpmann Award for Best Presentation for Children.

Visually brilliant, a stunning production. An extraordinary, imaginative production offers some golden moments in children's theatre and it will enthrall adults too.

The Sunday Times, Perth

...injects contemporary fun into the look and tone of [this] puppet and people production.

Winnipeg Free Press





REM Theatre Company

The Kookaburra Who Stole the Moon

A greedy bird falls in love with the moon and steals it from the night sky. All the other bush animals try to make her laugh so that she will open her beak and set the moon free. Traditional clapsticks, didgeridu and Aboriginal dance combine with a classical ensemble to evoke the unique characteristics of Australian animals in a score commissioned to introduce children to the instruments of the orchestra. *Kookaburra* has been performed with major orchestras and includes post-show workshops. 50 minutes, 3 performers

Partnering leading musicians, designers and performers from across Australia and around the world in cross-cultural collaborations, REM employs an evocative, challenging and entertaining performance style to create simple yet resonant stories.

Utterly rapt attention was the order of the hour among several hundred 4 to 8 year olds watching this bewitching blend of music, mime and storytelling... Rarely have I seen so many small people so thoroughly and happily engrossed. *Scotsman, UK*



Leaping Loonies

Drawing on circus, vaudeville and silent movies, the Leaping Loonies incorporate tumbling, balancing, vaulting, unicycling, fire juggling, slapstick and group acrobatics into their highly dynamic show. With a keen sense of Australian larrikinism, these hooligan acrobats make the rehearsed look accidental and the difficult seem easy, providing an entertainment package that has wide appeal for young audiences and their families. 45 minutes, 3 performers

The Leaping Loonies (Tim Freeman, Daniel Thew and Scott Grove) have performed throughout Australia, including appearances in the Rugby World Cup Live Sites entertainment program in 2003 and major arts festivals in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane as well as in pubs, clubs and shopping centres. Their show for schools was awarded the Frater Award for excellence in school performances in 2000 and 2001. The Loonies have also performed for festivals and commercial promotions in Indonesia, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Australian Theatre of the Deaf

Take Two

A cross-cultural, gestural, romantic comedy. A deaf Australian country girl meets a deaf student from China at university. The poignancies of first contact are peppered with raucous humour as the pair slowly realise they share common ground, mutually responding to tales of their very different backgrounds. 50 minutes, 3 performers

For 25 years Australian Theatre of the Deaf has taken its unique gestural, physical and visual language into schools, with subject matter ranging from historical to political, and style from Brecht to Beckett. The company's most recent work for teenagers is *Allens*, in which an Afghani nurse and a Chinese acrobat flee their homes for the safety of Australia to find new sanctuary but new torments in a detention centre.



Morganics

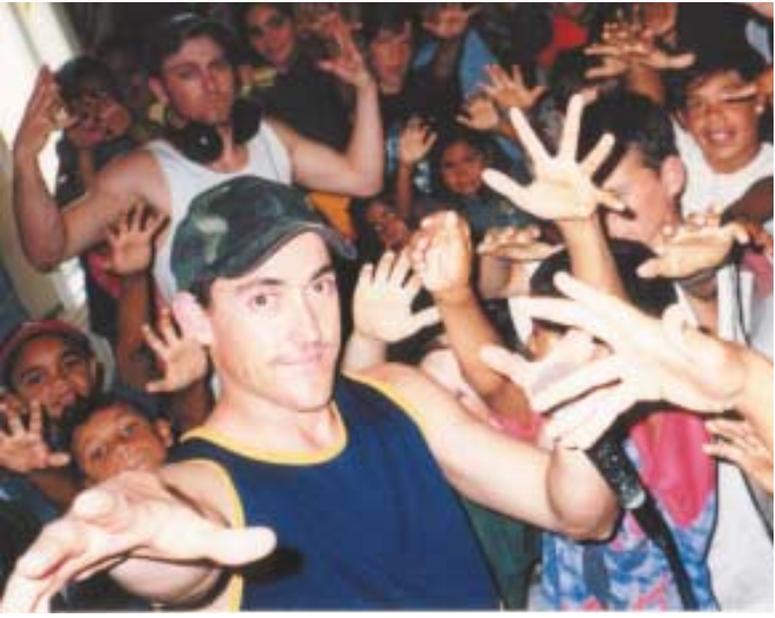
Crouching Bboy Hidden Dreadlocks

Like a DJ spinning discs, Morganics morphs between characters in this first hand account from the other side of "the lucky country". Hip hop, physical theatre and stand-up comedy merge in an autobiographical tale tracing Morganics' journey from the beginnings of Sydney's hip hop scene to a performance at the Rock Steady Crew Anniversary in New York. The audience learns to beatbox with opportunities to rap and breakdance. 70 minutes, 1 performer

Solo artist and former member of seminal Australian hip hop group MetaBass 'n' Breath, Morganics (Morgan Lewis) has toured internationally and taught hip hop in jails, community centres and isolated Aboriginal communities all around Australia. His CDs include hip hop by Aboriginal performers. In 2002 Morganics was highly commended in the Justice Awards at New South Wales Parliament House for his work with disadvantaged people in regional areas.

[Morganics] cuts together text, consciousness-raising rap, story-telling and physical theatre into a brilliantly entertaining and uplifting workshop performance. *City Hub*

He's a charming and engaging performer. His rhymes are brilliant... *Sydney Morning Herald*



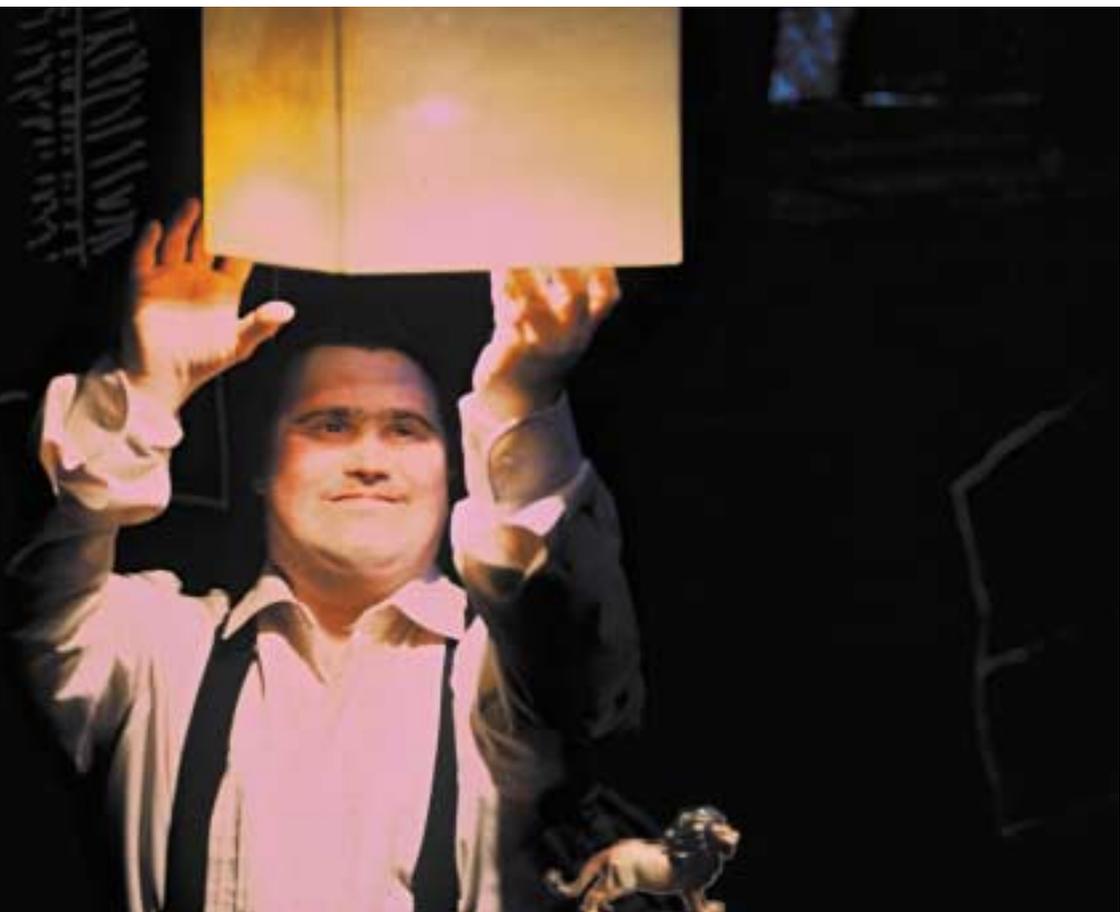
Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts Company

True

Three young people contemplate sharing a flat, bringing into question their personal and cultural identities. They attempt to understand their place in the community as influenced by the colour of their skin. If our bonds with our culture have been severed, *True* asks how we regain what has already been lost. This is unique contemporary Indigenous theatre fusing one of the world's oldest cultures with the latest in film technology. 70 minutes, 5 performers

Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts Company is dedicated to developing and producing contemporary performances that present the stories of Indigenous Australians locally and internationally. Since its incorporation in 1993, the company has maintained a strong commitment to professionalism and excellence in the arts, and has become a major contributor to the Indigenous artistic community. Kooemba Jdarra has also played a key role in the ongoing development and support of Indigenous artists and texts.





Back to Back Theatre

Cow

A surreal, one-man anti-adventure where a simple task is thwarted by a cheeky and explosive technological environment. Young and older audiences alike respond to the simplicity and unpredictable nature of the writing and craft of the performer, Mark Deans. 14 minutes, 1 performer

Back to Back is a company of actors with intellectual disabilities offering a unique perspective on what it is to be human and unconstrained by convention, logic or the imperative to be normal. Back to Back's spectacularer *Soft* shared *The Age Critics' Award for Creative Excellence* at the 2002 Melbourne International Festival and subsequently toured to Zurich and Hamburg. *Cow* has enjoyed critical acclaim across Australia and in Spain, Germany and the UK.

...a gentle parody of a magic act that may have deeper meaning...*Cow* is well done, short and sweet.

Sydney Morning Herald

[Mark Deans is] a modern day Chaplin.
The Advertiser



Queensland Theatre Company

Show

Imagine you threw a birthday party and nobody showed up – except the coolest girl in the school! And she hates you. Trapped in a rumpus room on a rainy afternoon, two radically different children come to terms with each other by putting on a show. Through showing off, they show who they really are. 43 minutes, 2 performers

Queensland Theatre Company is committed to the development of professional theatre for young people. Multi-award winning playwright and renowned director Michael Gow is the company's artistic director. *Show* has toured Queensland schools and to the Sydney Opera House. The company's *Backseat Drivers* has toured to Korea.

Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People

SPRUNG!

"I should never have done it. No...I just should never have been caught!" Fergus Kipper is a 10 year old with a dream to own the greatest, fastest bicycle in the world. His parents will surely buy it for him? But where trouble leads, Fergus follows. *SPRUNG!* is about responsibilities, learning the boundaries and the joy of being a kid. 60 minutes, 5 performers

Monkey Baa is an innovative company presenting vibrant and entertaining theatrical experiences for young people. The company's repertoire includes works based on the creations of some of Australia's most skilled writers for young people: Tim Winton's *The Bugalugs Bum Thief*, Gillian Rubinstein's *The Fairy's Wings* and Morris Gleitman's *Worry Warts*.

...a gifted ensemble that know how to entertain and engage its audience...high energy physical theatre...refreshing honesty...
The Examiner



An energetic and amusing escapade...as the boy transforms from a 'lemon chicken' – as his Popo calls him – into a confident dragon... 50 minutes of winsome family entertainment.

The West Australian

Barking Gecko

Hidden Dragons

Have you ever seen dragons in your dreams? Ever seen one in your bedroom? Billowing silk, a mystical soundscape and martial arts action transform a small boy's bedroom into a den of dragons. A young Chinese-Australian tries to come to terms with his family's culture through his fascination with dragons. He discovers the importance of his family's cultural roots as well as understanding that his own history and culture are different. 55 minutes, 3 performers

Established in 1991, Barking Gecko is Western Australia's premier professional children's theatre company, committed to creating and presenting inspirational and provocative theatre for young people aged 5–17 years. The company performs in theatre and schools and tours regionally, nationally and internationally.



Opera Australia's OzOpera

Sid the Serpent Who Wanted to Sing

A delightful children's opera about achievement, team work and having trust in yourself. Composed by Malcolm Fox, with a libretto by Jim Vilé and Sue Rider, it tells the story of a serpent who sets out to learn singing. It is written in a highly accessible style featuring a range of entertaining characters. 60 minutes, 5 performers

With its acclaimed arts education program, OzOpera performs throughout Victoria and New South Wales introducing children between the ages of 5 and 12 to the experience of opera and enhancing learning in the areas of music and drama.

Director Christine Anketell keeps the simple story moving along energetically, designer Richard Jeziorny has provided bright costumes and a handsome flexible set. *The Age*

Erth visual & physical inc

Garden

A visually powerful art installation and a live interpretation of a biological drama. Inhabited by giant stilt-walking insects and an aerial redback spider, the performance takes place in a unique environment inspired by Australia's pre-historical Gondwana period. With a modular structure, the show can be adapted to suit a variety of performance requirements. With live music from purpose-built instruments and no verbal language, *Garden* is highly accessible and especially enjoyed by children. 30 minutes, 7 performers

Erth's work is based on a fantastical visual aesthetic using giant puppets, stilts, pyrotechnics, inflatables, abseiling and aerial rigging equipment in large-scale site-specific outdoor theatre and roving street performances. The company collaborates with major museums and galleries in Australia and New Zealand.

...fiery performers...innovative Australians. *South China Morning Post*



Zeal Theatre

The Stones

Two boys are charged with manslaughter after throwing rocks from a freeway overpass and killing a passing motorist. This is a powerful, fast-paced, physical re-telling of a true story. 60 minutes, 2 performers

Formed in 1989 by Stefo Nantsou, Zeal Theatre specialises in creating original productions for teenagers and adults. The company has created 35 shows for schools, theatres and festivals around the world, including *The Stones*, *Joyride* and *Tatau* (a joint production with New Zealand's Pacific Underground). *The Stones* has been translated into more than fifteen languages and performed throughout Australia, Asia, North America and Europe.

...a stunningly good piece of theatre, brilliantly conceived and superbly performed... *Eureka Street*



...youth theatre doesn't get better than this award-winning two-hander. *Adelaide Advertiser*



Bizircus

Boyzircus

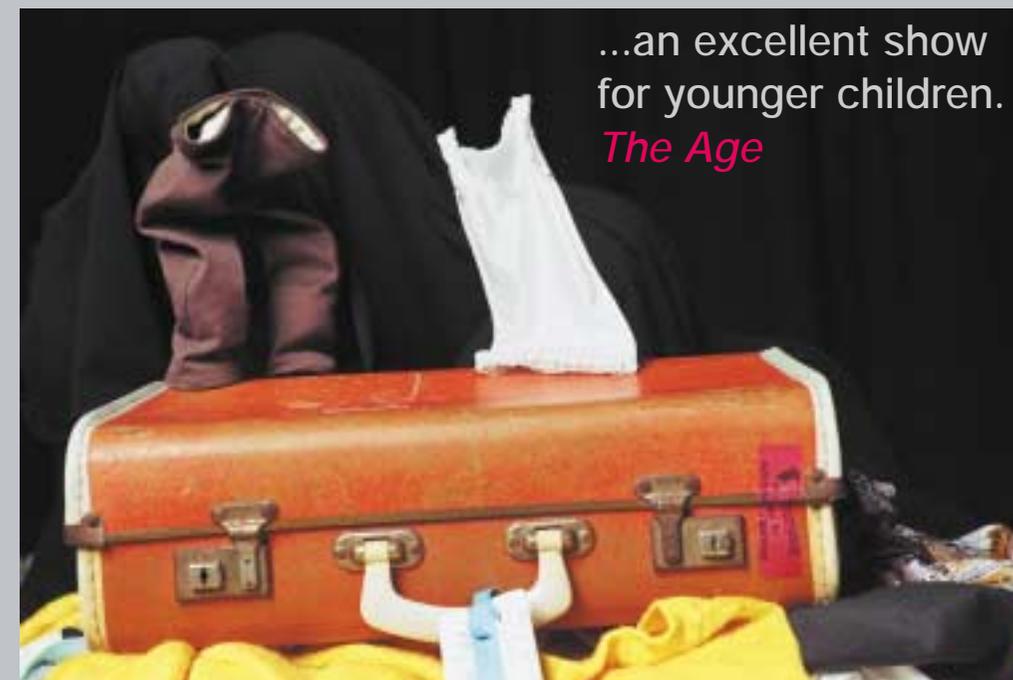
Three fly gangsta dope home boys hit the pavement in a typhoon of spectacular acrobatics, funky rhymes, live electronic music, DJ-ing, juggling, slapstick comedy and some pretty ordinary breakdancing. 45 minutes, 4 performers

For over 12 years Bizircus has thrilled audiences with their comedy and explosive acrobatic stunts. Drawing on Chinese and European circus traditions, street theatre, modern dance and slapstick, the troupe synthesises diverse traditions into its own unique Australian style. Bizircus creates performances that hurdle language and cultural barriers.

Bizarre and brilliant! Bizircus are a parody of a circus troupe, thriving on eccentric gags rather than Moscow-style perfection.

Xpress

...an excellent show for younger children. *The Age*



Polyglot Puppet Theatre

Baggy Pants

A fantastic adventure set in a strange world of clothing, suitable for ages 5 and up. *Baggy Pants* is an intriguing combination of puppetry, dance and music given rich and satisfying life through an evocative soundtrack inspired by the voices and thoughts of children who were involved in the show's development. 55 minutes, 4 performers

Polyglot Puppet Theatre is one of the oldest puppetry companies in Australia, with a reputation for excellence, innovation and groundbreaking work in community participation. Responding to a changing cultural climate, Polyglot enriches its creativity by consulting and collaborating with children.

...[the children] are riveted from the beginning... *The Herald Sun*



Queensland Ballet

The Little Mermaid

One of Hans Christian Andersen's best loved stories is brought imaginatively to life in this full-length ballet by choreographer François Klaus. Set to music by Grieg and other Scandinavian composers, the ballet moves between the realms of sea and earth. More than just a fairy tale, this is a ballet that appeals to all ages.

90 minutes, 23 performers

As the state ballet company, Queensland Ballet annually undertakes extensive regional and interstate tours. Under Artistic Director and Chief Choreographer, François Klaus, the company has built a strong and varied repertoire, ranging from classical and modern works to short ballets and pieces devised especially for children.

...charming mermaid movement vocabulary and imagery that vividly depicts the ocean and its underwater world.

The Courier Mail

Dance North

Alice in Downunderland

Follow Alice and the Mad Hatter on a tropical adventure as the wonderfully bizarre characters of *Alice in Wonderland* are transposed to the forests and beaches of North Queensland. This magical dance work explores issues of difference, identity and belonging.

60 minutes, 7 performers

Dance North's work reflects the rapid changes occurring in the world today from a North Queensland perspective. The company produces contemporary dance theatre of the highest calibre for regional, national and international audiences, touring extensively in Australia and to Vietnam, Japan, Laos, China and Korea.

...magnificent costumes, detailed choreography and brilliant dancing.

Townsville Bulletin



TasDance

Fair Game

Inspired by imagery from Australian author Carmel Bird and an 1832 lithograph by Alfred Ducote in which women are depicted as butterflies, leading Australian choreographers Phillip Adams and Natalie Weir explore themes of entrapment and release.

80 minutes, 8 performers

TasDance is a dynamic regionally-based company developing innovative, challenging and accessible contemporary dance. The diverse stylistic range of the company's work makes it an ideal vehicle for promoting contemporary dance to young people. The company also develops and tours an annual production featuring talented young dance students from around Tasmania.

TasDance can't put a foot wrong.
The Examiner

Christine Johnston

Fluff

The story of two strange but caring women who rescue the world's lost toys. This imaginative and visually inventive production uses music, movement, design and a bizarre collection of toys to explore the crossover between traditional playthings and digital technologies. Commissioned for Out of the Box, the Brisbane festival for children, *Fluff* has since toured to the Adelaide Festival Centre and the Sydney Opera House.

60 minutes, 3 performers

Christine Johnston is one of Australia's most innovative performance artists. Since 1988 she has created work for theatre, cabaret and film around the country. Her other productions include the highly acclaimed *Decent Spinster*, *Planissimo*, *Kransky Sisters* and *Madame Lark*. She is partnered in *Fluff* by award-winning dancer Lisa O'Neill and musician Peter Nelson.

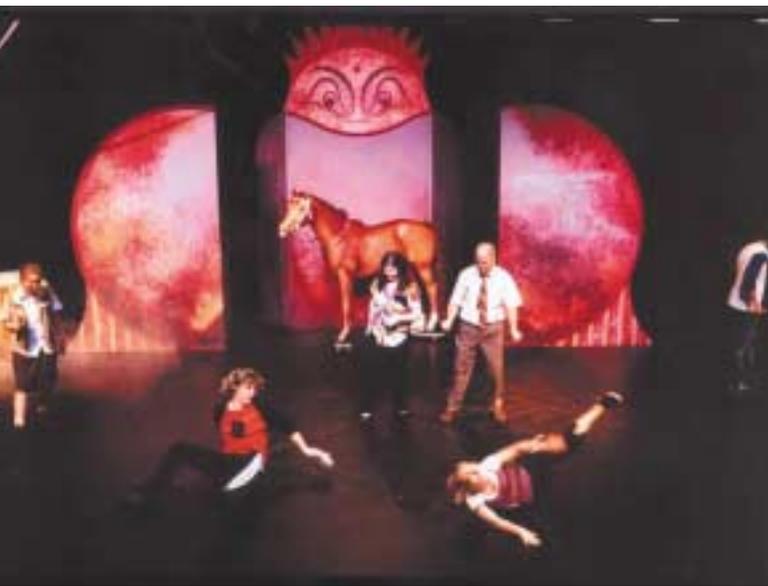
One of the most imaginative shows for the young you will find. Highly sophisticated and great fun...The children – and the adults – loved it.

The Advertiser

Juxtaposing new technology with handmade toys, this performance was inspired, funny, theatrically clever and sophisticated.

Lowdown





HotHouse Theatre & Melbourne Theatre Company

Second Childhood

Five kids new to high school discover they are reincarnations of famous historical characters. In a comic story that includes physical theatre, they set out to try and save the planet from its social and environmental problems. 70 minutes, 6 performers

Based in Albury-Wodonga, HotHouse Theatre is at the vanguard of regional theatre practice in Australia. It presents quality contemporary theatre to regional audiences. *Second Childhood* co-producer, Melbourne Theatre Company, is Australia's longest running professional theatre company producing a range of outstanding shows for their yearly subscription season, as well as their touring and education programs.

...a high spirited, contemporary Australian work, showcasing a multi-talented creative team...
The Border Mail

Expressions Dance Company

Virtually Richard³

Thrilling dance theatre for secondary school dance and drama students. Richard is an attractive but wicked rogue, with no need for love or pity. Completely self-centred, he lusts only after danger, excitement and personal power. Choreographed by Maggi Sietsma, this innovative multimedia show is inspired by Shakespeare's *Richard III*. 80 minutes, 8 performers

Radical yet accessible, Expressions pushes the boundaries of dance and theatre, creating works in which speech, dance and visual media combine and confront each other. Founded in 1985 under the artistic direction of Maggi Sietsma, Expressions is acclaimed for its compelling brand of dance theatre. The company has toured throughout Australia, Asia, Europe and North America.

An audacious, original, aurally and visually gripping performance...
El Universal/The Herald, Mexico



Arena Theatre Company

Gamegirl

Featuring monsters, mayhem, a modern day heroine and Arena's internationally acclaimed use of multimedia technology, *Gamegirl* is a sophisticated live performance for children. In a thrilling *Alice in Wonderland* adventure, Lila encounters strange but somehow familiar landscapes on her quest to crack the newly released *Gamegirl* computer game and meet the Stranger Within. 70 minutes, 5 performers

The multi-award winning Arena produces adrenaline-pumping performances for young audiences aged 5 to 25. The company tours nationally and internationally with works varying from small in-schools

shows to large-scale site-specific multimedia productions that seamlessly combine cinema, theatre, animation and surround sound. Arena won the 2002 Drama Victoria Award for Best Performance by a Theatre Company for Young People for *Play Dirty* and the 1999 ASSITEJ International Honorary President's Award for "inspiring, provocative and experimental ways of expressing a new theatrical language..."

Drama that fulfils the underlying promise of what live theatre is supposed to be - namely alive.
Vancouver Sun, Canada

For this theatre company at least, technology has genuinely liberated extraordinary creative energies.
The Age

...their circus skills are right up there with the best. What's more, The Flying Fruit Flies bring a priceless quality of sheer joy and youthfulness to their performances.

The Age



The Flying Fruit Fly Circus

Skipping on Stars

Tightwire, trapeze, cloud swing and web are just some of the high-flying techniques incorporated in the circus magic of *Skipping on Stars*, celebrating the life of Australian Con Colleano, the world's greatest tightwire performer. 90 minutes, 15 to 17 performers

Albury-Wodonga's Flying Fruit Fly Circus produces contemporary circus performances that have toured nationally and internationally. Founded during the International Year of the Child in 1979, the company promotes and enhances the education and cultural development of young people by providing high quality circus training.



Explosive dance theatre...

Stuttgarter Zeitung, Germany





Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

Grendel and the Gladiator

An action packed adventure story that leaps from the dark ages to futuristic cybergames. Drawing inspiration from the tale of Beowulf, the show employs shadow and digital puppetry and marionettes in its depiction of a quest to make things right. Perfect for 5-12 year olds and their families. 50 minutes, 3 performers

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre bring together traditional and contemporary influences to create invigorating, unique and ground breaking Australian puppetry theatre for young people. Recent works include: *H2O*, set in an Olympic swimming pool; *Spellbound*, an adaptation of



Petrushka; The Deep; Hare Brain; and Out of the Blue.

...astoundingly inventive, funny and a novel way to learn about old English literature and the curse of computer game addiction. *The Australian*



Jigsaw Theatre Company

Vin

Friends Joey and Podge are looking for a way to make money and newcomer Vincent has the answer – grow a drug crop in the back shed while their parents are away. But Vin brings more to the lives of Joey and Podge than anticipated. The expectations of friends and family, the ambiguity of sexuality and the desire to live a great life inform the complex relationships in *Vin*. 55 minutes, 3 performers

Drawing on the creative talents of artists from around Australia, Jigsaw Theatre Company creates professional theatre for audiences aged 4-26 years old, aiming to empower young people by expanding their perceptions and understanding of theatre and supporting the professional practice of young and emerging artists.



Opera Queensland

The Song Bird

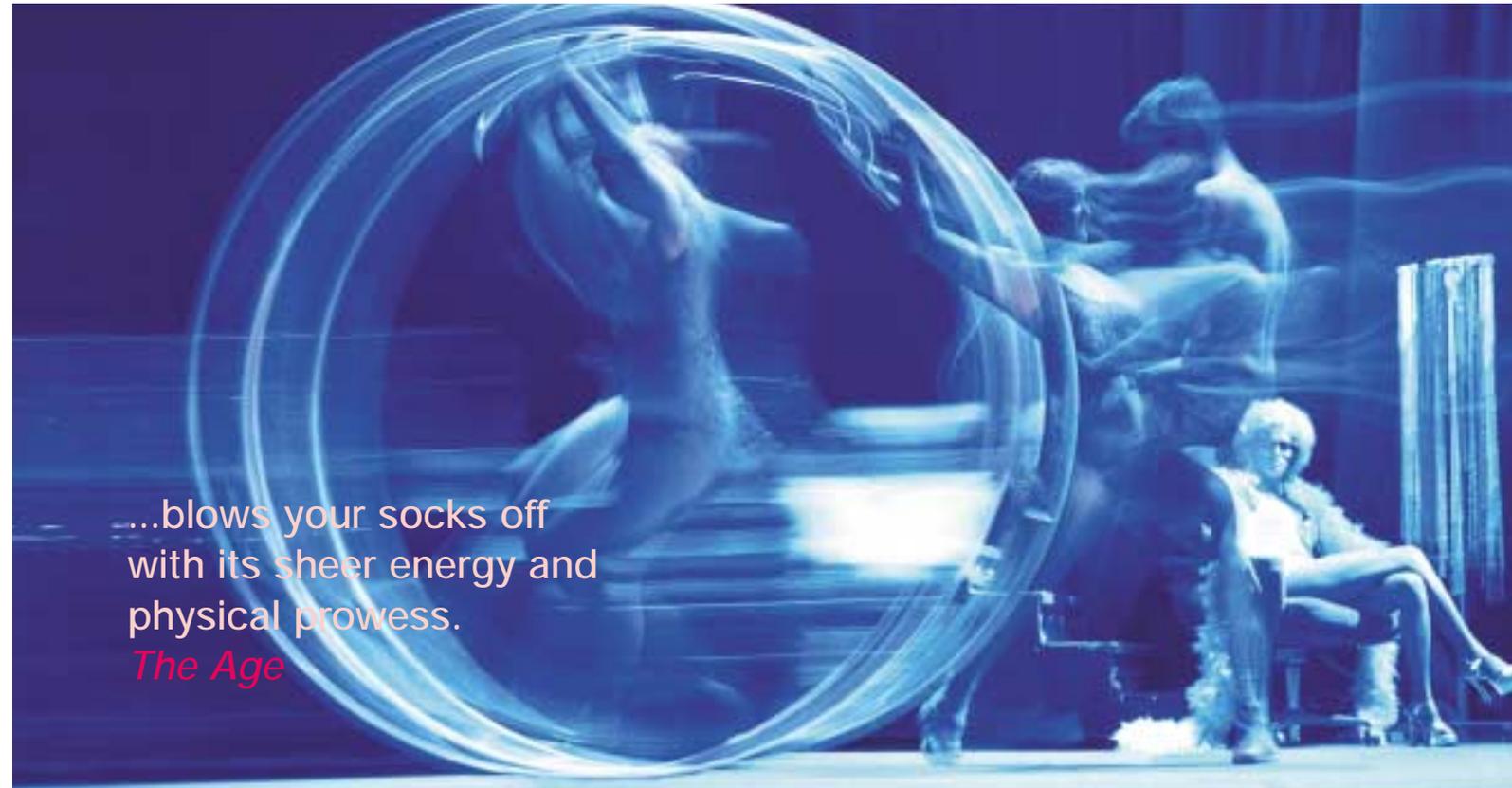
A brave girl fights to free the last remaining Song Bird from the Curiosity Shop of the sinister Mr Twister. This wonderful introduction to opera for children aged 5 to 12

years encourages them to think about issues such as bullying, animal rights and the extinction of species. 60 minutes, 4 performers

The company takes opera and music theatre to primary and secondary school students

throughout the state with its *Moving Opera!* program (designed for secondary schools) and *The Song Bird* (designed for primary schools). Opera Queensland also fosters new artists through its Young and Developing Artist Programs.

...a thoughtfully created little production which, if used to advantage by the schools, can be a meaningful door to even greater experiences. *Opera Opera*



...blows your socks off with its sheer energy and physical prowess. *The Age*

Circus Oz

With masses of energy, the physical artistry of ballet and the excitement of a rock concert, Circus Oz, Australia's premier contemporary circus company, sets pulses racing and adrenaline pumping. World renowned for amazing physical skills and larrikin humour, Circus Oz is spontaneous, hand crafted and totally bent. 120 minutes, 12-13 performers

Circus Oz has presented seasons in twenty-four countries on five continents. Their looting of high and low culture has completely transformed the traditional art of circus. From a glass opera house in the Brazilian rainforest to a 42nd Street theatre in New York, Circus Oz celebrates the strength of the group over the individual.

...a roller-coaster experience which is simultaneously comic, graceful, thrilling and therapeutic. *The Guardian, UK*

Buzz Dance Theatre

Beat Cake

Filled with crazy chefs, cooking experiments and ridiculous recipes, *Beat Cake* juxtaposes popular and contemporary dance forms to create a highly accessible dance theatre work. The original score by Jo19 combines elements of funk, jazz, jive, reggae and electronica. Using the music and movement of our times, Buzz produces a show that truly cooks. 50 minutes, 6 performers

Buzz Dance Theatre has presented quality contemporary dance theatre to young audiences since 1985, commissioning innovative, original music, conducting creative movement workshops and producing resources for teachers to complement performances.

If the reaction from the young ones is a reliable indication, *Beat Cake* is a fully baked, satisfying show with all the ingredients necessary to amuse and divert while educating at the same time. *The West Australian*



Windmill Performing Arts

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge

A theatrical translation of a contemporary classic by Australian writer Mem Fox. Guided by the beautiful illustrations of Julie Vivas, a talented team of designers and puppeteers bring Wilfrid's youthful perspective to the stage through a magical combination of acrobatics and giant puppetry. 60 minutes, 7 performers

Windmill Performing Arts has performed to children and families in Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, New York and Montreal. The company provides children and family audiences with a range of high quality experiences that enrich children's participation in cultural life, education and learning. Windmill's touring repertoire also includes *Riverland*, a collaboration with leading Indigenous artists, and the award-winning *Twinkle Twinkle Little Fish*.

A sheer delight for audiences of any age...irresistible in both its accomplishment and its charm. It deserves to become a classic all over again.

The Australian

...a lovely story about caring and valuing the past, present and future...its physical nature and minimal dialogue mean it could have an international future.

Adelaide Review



Australian performance for young people: an introduction

From innovative puppetry and dance to ground breaking circus, from clever literary adaptations and intimate solo shows to large-scale multimedia extravaganzas, Australian performance for young audiences resonates with the uniqueness of the country's landscape, Indigenous cultures, multicultural and urban realities along with quirky views of the everyday. Diverging from the traditions of European fairytale, the conventions of didactic educational theatre and the floss of 'kids' holiday entertainment', the work places children and young people at its centre – as intelligent, creative and critical audiences and co-creators. Initially developing as an Antipodean response to British educational theatre models in the 1960s and 1970s, the artists in this field are driven by the desire to provide young audiences with exceptional aesthetic experiences that engage and inspire.

Background

From the 1960s on, UK practitioners like Barbara Manning, Roger Chapman and David Holman brought theatre-in-education practices to Australia through pioneering work with companies such as Salamanca Theatre Company in Hobart and Magpie Theatre in Adelaide. These companies and their school tours were synonymous with progressive, high quality educational theatre. But, Australian theatre for young people never fully adopted the British model of labour-intensive, group-devised performance programs based on periods of immersion in school classrooms. Instead, Australian practitioners took up the challenge of meagre resources and vast geographic distances to develop a 'writers' theatre' for young people: a model

of performance-making that relied on extensive research into youth experience along with the shaping of scripts by professional writers often associated with mainstage companies, such as Jack Davis, Dorothy Hewett, Nick Enright and Peta Murray. Some like Richard Tulloch have maintained a firm commitment to writing solely for young audiences. Managing to suit the progressive educational imperatives of the time, this approach placed one foot of Australian performance for young people in the professional theatre industry and one foot in education.

Over the years, this development, alongside the growth of sophisticated arts education curricula in schools, has resulted in a contemporary view of children and young people as artists and critics in their own right, as aesthetically curious and innovative adventurers, and as discoverers of new ways of knowing the world. In the words of Patch Theatre's artistic director Dave Brown, 'Children are not little adults, they are evolving beings passing through the most complex and rapid developmental phases of their lives'. As a result, performance for young people in Australia over the past 30 years has grown in sophistication and innovation.

An engaged audience

Many companies, such as the long-established Arena Theatre Company and Polyglot Puppet Theatre, actively seek the involvement of children and young people in the development and evaluation of their work. This approach, now standard practice, bypasses token participation in favour of creative dialogue. Whether through workshops, interactive websites or school visits, young people's contribution to the developmental phases of new work has had a positive impact on its

quality, relevance and range. In the case of Arena, it has laid the foundation for award-winning work, including innovative multimedia productions which meaningfully merge young people's own cultural practices (such as dirt-biking, DJ-ing and use of electronic media) with contemporary performance forms.

In recent years, these opportunities for aesthetic engagement have influenced the educational programs and 'youth arms' of various arts organisations in Australia. Major companies, such as the Queensland Ballet draw on popular children's narratives to introduce traditional art forms to their audiences, while others create new stories and vernaculars to purposefully integrate the contemporary and the traditional. For instance, Dance North draws on the contemporary dance forms of its regional Indigenous and multicultural communities to respond to North Queensland's unique social and natural environment. REM Theatre Company creates cross-cultural collaborations here and overseas – most recently bringing together a classical music ensemble and Aboriginal dance and music artists. Opera Queensland introduces opera through stories about everyday issues and Expressions Dance Company, whose explosive brand of dance theatre is especially popular with young adults, uses electronic media to recast the body and stories like Shakespeare's *Richard III* in new and exciting ways. Kim Carpenter's Theatre of Image magically merges performance, puppetry and digital projection in classic and contemporary adaptations.

Growing alongside the bold physicality of the country's contemporary circus, dance and performance communities,

Australian performance for young people crosses disciplines, blends genres, and immerses and challenges its audiences. Australia is renowned for its innovative circus arts which, in celebrating the ordinary human body achieving extraordinary feats, never fail to delight children and adults alike. The renowned Circus Oz regularly tours internationally with its unique genre-bending work and the Albury-Wodonga region boasts the famous Flying Fruit Fly Circus, formed in 1979 as a contemporary training ground for young artists. But most evident in the last 15 years has been the proliferation of multi-form works inspired by young people's own preferred cultural activities. As well as Arena's engagement with new media art and music, there's the hip hop of Morganic's *Crouching Bboy Hidden Dreadlocks*, film technology in Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts Company's *True*, and DJ-ing and breakdancing in Bizircus' *Boyzircus*.

This incorporation of popular street-based cultures into conventional performance has grown out of a strong Australian focus on using young people's own stories to develop narrative. For some time, this approach, often accompanied by minimalist staging, has enabled direct communication between performer and audience in works about young people's everyday experiences. Stefo Nantsou's work with Zeal Theatre, for example, results in strong and edgy theatre which speaks to young people through compelling narrative without resorting to pat answers or certainties.

Complex engagement with issues, emotions, and states of being can also be found in less realist ventures. A recent performance produced and premiered by the 2004 Out of the Box Festival

engaged an audience of five to eight year olds in an extraordinary large-scale puppetry adaptation of Shaun Tan's picture book, *The Red Tree*. Directed by esteemed puppet master, Peter Wilson, the performance was a visual interpretation of one girl's 'bad day', exploring loneliness, sadness and the sense of failing to feel at one with the world. In such works, children and young people are invited to explore connections and find pathways for themselves in imaginative and multi-sensory ways. Other Australian literary adaptations have also enabled this with companies like Monkey Baa, Patch, Windmill and Kim Carpenter's Theatre of Image drawing on the works of popular children's authors such as Gillian Rubinstein, Mem Fox and Morris Gleitzman to create multi-layered performance experiences. Even when tackling the most sensitive topics, Australian performance for young people generally, and genuinely, deals with hope: a hope premised on the belief that children and young people are resilient and positive forces for change when respected as active decision-makers and cultural participants.

Festivals

Currently, the field of performance for young people is well served by an invigorating diversity of festivals. Through visionary commissioning, major new works have been supported to realise their full potential. Festival opportunities have also assisted in the development of a wide range of innovative physical and puppetry performance styles. These include the small and quirky, such as Bizircus' parody of traditional circus, Back to Back Theatre's unique one man anti-adventures in *Cow* with its challenge to perceptions of disability and normalcy, and Linsey Pollak's and Christine Johnston's unique

cabaret-inflected performances that intrigue by transforming the ordinary (such as toys or kitchen utensils) into the extraordinary. The large scale fantasias of Snuff Puppets and Erth utilise giant puppets, pyrotechnics and abseiling to create awe-inspiring open air works. Puppetry in general holds a special place in performance for young audiences in Australia, in festivals and beyond, through the innovative creations of puppet theatre companies Polyglot, Spare Parts and Terrapin.

The long-running Come Out Festival in Adelaide, Brisbane's Out of the Box Festival of Early Childhood, Perth's Awesome and Melbourne's Next Wave all provide the stimulus for creative professional development of the sector via opportunities for networking, collaboration, partnership and critiquing new work. In similar ways, the sector has also been well served by the magazine, *Lowdown*, which, alongside national and state-based organisations such as Young People's Arts Australia, provides an invaluable forum for the professional community's communication and growth. *Lowdown's* editor, Tony Mack, is the Vice-President of ASSITEJ International.

Such is the innovative quality and broad appeal of new performance work for young people that it often appears in mainstream festivals as well. Windmill Performing Arts' recent family show, *RiverlanD*, premiered at the 2004 Adelaide Festival before touring to other festivals. Inspired by the paintings of visual artist Ian W. Abdulla and based on a concept by director Wesley Enoch, *RiverlanD* explores issues surrounding the environment and Aboriginal culture. Like many family shows, it provides both a good story and a quality aesthetic

experience for young people and families, facilitating intergenerational communication, here through an Aboriginal perspective. The establishment of Adelaide-based Windmill Performing Arts is a significant development in providing professional performance for young people. It brings together significant artists from across Australia and from the realms of both adult and young people's performance practices.

Intercultural connections

In a country as culturally rich as Australia, intercultural communication is facilitated by companies developing work for young audiences. This has taken the form of partnership projects in which cultural knowledge is shared with the audience, celebrating diversity of background and experience. Kite Theatre's partnership with Kooemba Jdarra in the initial development of *Binni's Backyard* created a performance in which Indigenous relationships and respect for the environment are celebrated through a girl's newfound love of her suburban backyard. The Australian Theatre of the Deaf also investigates cross-cultural issues in its work, encompassing the experience of those in the deaf community as well as, in a recent show called *Aliens*, the experience of asylum seekers. Barking Gecko and Patch Theatre have a number of works in their repertoire which explore young Australians' cultural connections with Asia. There have also been many Australian performances for young people which have incorporated culturally-specific artforms, such as water puppets, gamelan orchestras and regional dance forms providing an experience of cultural exchange.

Australian performance for young people is diverse and experimental, often merging traditional forms and

new technologies and expressing Australia's unique intercultural character. A highly specialised field of practice, it refines, clarifies and extends children's and young people's experiences, delivering to this most discerning of audiences innovative works which inspire and delight.

Mary Ann Hunter

Mary Ann Hunter is a writer, consultant, creative producer and dramaturg whose Ph.D. thesis focused on performance for young people in Australia.

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Principal funding credits

Arena Theatre Company – Australia Council, Arts Victoria; Australian Theatre of the Deaf – Australia Council, NSW Ministry for the Arts; Back to Back Theatre – Australia Council, Arts Victoria, Department of Family and Community Services (Australian Government); Barking Gecko – Australia Council, ArtsWA; Bizircus – Australia Council, ArtsWA; Buzz Dance Theatre – Australia Council, ArtsWA; Christine Johnston – Out of the Box Festival of Early Childhood (QPAC), Queensland Arts Council, Arts Queensland; Circus Oz – Australia Council, Arts Victoria; Dance North – Australia Council, Arts

Queensland, Townsville City Council; Erth – Australia Council, NSW Ministry for the Arts; Expressions Dance Company – Australia Council, Arts Queensland; Flying Fruit Fly Circus – Australia Council, NSW Ministry for the Arts, Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts (Australian Government), NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, NSW Department of Education, Arts Victoria; Hothouse Theatre/Melbourne Theatre Company – Australia Council, Arts Victoria; Hothouse Theatre – Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, NSW Ministry for the Arts; Jigsaw Theatre Company – Australia

Council, Arts ACT; Kim Carpenter's Theatre of Image – Australia Council, NSW Ministry for the Arts; Kite Theatre – Australia Council, Education Queensland, Playing Australia, Arts Queensland; Kooemba Jdarra – Australia Council, Arts Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services; Linsey Pollak – Australia Council; Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People – NSW Ministry for the Arts, Playing Australia; Opera Australia's OzOpera – Australian Government, NSW Ministry for the Arts, Arts Victoria; Opera Queensland – Australia Council, Arts Queensland; Patch Theatre Company – Australia Council, South Australian Youth Arts Board;

Polyglot Puppet Theatre – Australia Council, Arts Victoria; Queensland Ballet – Australia Council, Arts Queensland; Queensland Theatre Company – Australia Council, Arts Queensland; Snuff Puppets – Australia Council, Arts Victoria; Spare Parts Puppet Theatre – Australia Council, ArtsWA; TasDance – Australia Council, Arts Tasmania; Terrapin Puppet Theatre – Australia Council, Arts Tasmania; Windmill Performing Arts – Australia Council, Arts SA

Photography credits

Page	Work	Photographer			
4	Binni's Backyard	Rob Maccoll	12	Garden	Gavin Wild
4	My Sister is an Alien	Glen Dickson	13	The Stones	Frank Razmowski
5	Sharon, Keep Ya Hair On!	Amy Dowd	13	Baggy Pants	Peter Marshall
6	Making Jam	Jessica Ainsworth	14	The Little Mermaid	David Kelly
7	The Happy Prince	Branco Gaica	14	Fair Game	Paul Scrambler
8	The Kookaburra Who Stole the Moon	Kate Bradstreet	15	Fluff	Adam Craven
8	Leaping Loonies	Keith Saunders	16	Second Childhood	Jeff Busby
8	Take Two	Corrie Ancone	16	Virtually Richard ³	Aaron Tait Photography
9	Crouching Bboy, Hidden Dreadlocks	William Jarrett	17	Gamegirl	Jeff Busby, graphic design Peter Brundle
9	True	Justin Nicholas	17	Skipping on Stars	Jerry Galea
10	Cow	Jeff Busby	18	Grendel and the Gladiator	Ashley de Prazer
10	SPRUNG!	Heidrun Lohr	19	Circus Oz	Ponch Hawkes
10	Show	Rob Maccoll	19	Beat Cake	Danielle Micich,
11	Hidden Dragons	James Rogers			Ashley de Prazer
12	Sid the Serpent Who Wanted to Sing	Jeff Busby	20	Wilfrid Gordon MacDonald Partridge	Alex Makeyev
12	Boyzircus	Chris Gosfield	23	Circus Oz	Ponch Hawkes



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