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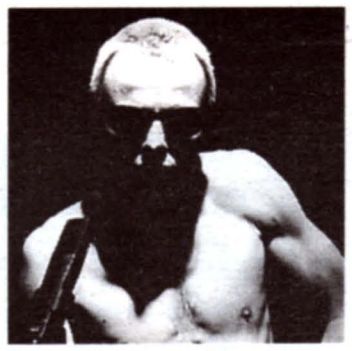


10

Festivals

Adelaide Sydney Melbourne
Perth Canberra Byron Bay

Philip Glass

Nuyorican Poets

Bang on a Can

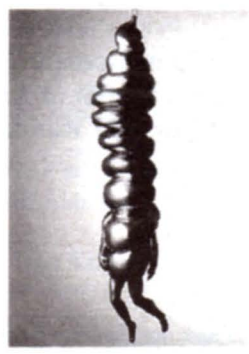
Isea '95

Orientalism

Oz Film @ MOMA

Internet

Tasdance



skadada

Robert Lepage

Techno-arts

Small books

The Dark

Performance and the national arts Dec'95–Jan'96

Real Time

It's almost the end of 1995, but with the large number of unresolved arts issues and a looming election, the festival season begun in Melbourne in October and finishing in Adelaide in March 1996, you get the feeling that we're in the middle of something big, not the end.

The debate over the re-structuring of the Australia Council occupies many artists' minds. There's been a surge of articles in the press and some TV coverage. A 260 signature protest from the Campaign for a Democratic Australia over the feared dismantling of Peer Assessment received considerable attention. The Australian Society of Author's argued vigorously against the re-shaping of funding strategies. The Literature Board's announcement that it would continue to operate as it has, with the new one-off Fellowships as additional funding, calmed the waters. The appointment of Ed Campion as the new Chair of the Literature Board reassured many. CDAC met with the executive of the Australia Council to press for the retaining of the principles of peer assessment and arm's length funding. Hilary McPhee and Michael Lynch were explicit in their support of both. CDAC however, has proposed tighter definition of 'peer' after its dilution by Council earlier this year. It's still the weaker definition that appears in the national advertisement for the Register of Peers: "Anyone who by virtue of their knowledge or experience, is equipped to make a fair and informed assessment of artistic work and grant applications". CDAC has proposed that "A peer should be defined primarily as a professional artist and secondarily as a person with specialist knowledge gained from publishing, production, administration or teaching of the arts. At least 70% of the appointments to Council, to Funds and one-off committees or working parties should be professional artists and 30% to be made up of persons with specialist knowledge of the arts." The same definition would apply to the Register of Peers. It's vital that artists attending the Australia Council forums look to two issues—the first is peer assessment and representation at all levels of Council. Hilary McPhee has stated that artists will be in a majority on Council and the Funds. This must be held to. The second is that while Council should develop policy with the Funds, it is up to the Funds to interpret policy into funding strategies—as the Literature Board has done in response to Council's apparently controversial fellowship scheme. While the current mood is conciliatory, and the public forums will offer the chance to have the proposed changes explained and debated, the rush by Council to announce funding programs early in 1996 might prevent reasonable consultation with each art form about what is appropriate. The new schemes cannot be applied willy nilly to all art forms. If you can't get to the forums, they're on very soon and in the Xmas party season, write to Council and the Chairs of the Funds, keep the issues and the strategies open to debate. There are a lot of big issues to engage with yet - marketing, funding of young artists and, given the current emphasis on individual artists, the future programs for infrastructure funding of performance, visual arts and crafts. And what about the fate of the Hybrid Arts. Public attacks on the concept and the funding of it from Stephen Sewell, Maggie Sietsma, Barrie Kosky and others reveal a pressing need for the Australia Council and artists working in emerging forms to define the work and its relationship with established forms. KG

The editors of *RealTime* across Australia wish you the season's best and look forward to writing for you in 1996.

Australia Council Forums: Sydney, Fri Dec 8. 6-7.30pm, Domain Theatre, Art Gallery NSW; Canberra, Sat Dec 9, 12.30-2pm, Olim's; Brisbane, Wed Dec 13, 6-7.30pm, Metro Arts; Melbourne, Thurs Dec 14, School of Art Auditorium, V.C.A.; Perth, Mon Dec 18, 6-7.30pm Perth Concert Hall; Adelaide, Tues Dec 19, 6-7.30pm S.A. Writer's Centre, 2nd Floor, 187 Rundle St; Hobart and Darwin dates late January, early February t.b.a.

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Southern exposure

Pacific North West Ballet, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, Chunky Move, *design for powered flight,* Callum Morton, *things you want to run away,* Theatre Complicité's *Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol,* Mark Newson, Sarah Cathcart's *Tiger Country,* Cheek by Jowl's *The Duchess of Malfi, The Floating World, The Head Of Mary,* Louise Bourgeois

Richard Murphet, Rachel Fensham and Natalie King exchange responses to the performing and visual arts at the 1995 Melbourne International Festival of the Arts

RM As an international festival it was shockingly unrepresentative. There were two American dance companies, and two British theatre companies. The Chinese Peking Opera would probably have toured anyway. It felt like a return to old forms of cultural domination.

RF There was the Japanese company doing Romeril's The Floating World.

RM Yes, that was visionary. But the choices of British and American work were unremarkable though not uninteresting, although I didn't see the Pacific North West Ballet.

RF I was really struck by the contrast between Pacific Northwest and the Bill T. Jones/Arnue Zane Company. Here were all these sugar-pie, blond-haired, ponytailed girls in the ballet company and lovely white men. I mean this is an American ballet company that is still, in 1995, entirely white. That says something either about ballet or the recruiting policy of the ballet company. When you look at the Bill T. Jones company you see bodies that are black, white and in between. The Pacific North West epitomised for me a kind of nostalgia for an America I don't think has been seen here since the 50s. What are we doing importing that image of squeaky-clean America?

RM Well, we export it, don't we? Squeaky-clean Australian ballet made up of white people.

RF The Paul Taylor piece in Pacific North West, using the music of the Andrews Sisters, was playful, although I felt it lost some of the twang and double entendre *which makes their music appealing. The* Carmina Burana *was awful. It is hard to do German romanticism well but when the priests came on surrounded by dancing peasants, and men and women in shining white leotards and leggings as the sexual fantasies of the priests, it lost me.*

RM There was a great piece in the second program of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company which was a take-off of romantic ballet. Four of them, three men and a woman, engaging in romantic little duets and trios, painstakingly getting into romantic ballet poses and then breaking them all the time, subverting the form.

The second piece on that program was based on Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men. It was full of stillness—poses on pedestals and variations of couplings based on those poses—man/man, man/woman, woman/woman. The patterns of duet, quartet and full group work were constantly punctuated by the power of stillness achieved with such ease. In his solo, Arthur Aviles filled his work with tension and charged energy. Then he would just stop, walk around the stage completely relaxed, allowing you a moment to kind of watch him untrammelled by the dance, and then go into it again.

RF I think their bodies were just extraordinary.

RM The full range: short, tall, fat, skinny.

RF The vocabulary of movement they were working with was so rich. There were traces of many different layers of learning in their bodies so they were never trapped by one style. If they needed to be soft or touch another person gently, they did. If they wanted to strike a pose, they could. If they needed to work fast and frenetically, they could.

RM They were also able to evoke loneliness. In her duet with Gordon White, Odile Reine-Adelaide was able to combine both the sense of extraordinary desire in her body and a complete loneliness in the space.

RF Unfortunately, the critics didn't seem to read the stillness of their work.

RM For me, there was a big contrast with Gideon Orbazanek's new Australian company Chunky Move. This was one of the worst nights in theatre I've had. It seemed to be all kitsch, with cartoon sendups and masturbatory images of guys climbing to the top of an island of car tyres towards godlike figures. The dance people in the audience seemed uncertain about the work.

RF I thought the bodies of the dancers were too segmented, working at times at a pace that is probably physically damaging to their own bodies. They lose articulation because they are simply pumping it out and racing across the stage. What the audience is seeing is actually dancers that attract because they are broken up.
Compare this to the piece which won the movement award for the Fringe Festival, design for powered flight, *which took the idea of flight and fear of flying through the body in short vignettes. Great ensemble work choreographed by Nicky Smith, and teasing with language. Going to the airport to say good-bye there is 'the flyer' and 'the flown from'. The flyer gets on the plane and the flown from falls apart. Then depending on the intensity of feeling for the flyer, the flown from waits to watch any plane that takes off. There were lots of little signature patterns.*
Things you want to run away *was performed by the dancers attached to bungee ropes and hurtling themselves at the audience, pulled back at the last minute as one of them chanted a litany of the things you want to fly from—the tax inspector, your girl friend, your mother's phone call. Nicely resolved into a thirty-five minute performance of physical theatre which was quite delicious.*

RM Speaking of physical theatre, Theatre Complicité's *Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol* was wonderful to watch though I wasn't seeing anything new.

RF I found it transfixing to see a theatre company that had obviously developed a physical language of performance over time. They could do wonderful transformations , like the scene where they picked up wooden planks, lined them up like a wall, the men holding them becoming cows, framing the shed where Lucie Cabrol's seduction scene took place. The pressing in of the planks and the sound of the cows in the midst of the seduction overlaid one another and then the planks disappeared and became a bridge or a pathway.

RM Other groups use skills of transformation and the ability to establish a *mise-en-scène*, but these people with their strong background in physical training can actually achieve it.

RF And they are funded to work together for a long time. We get to see the rewards of the ensemble company when there are so few left in Australia.

RM In essence though, it's a traditional form of theatre not really pushing out the boundaries. I found the story uplifting but incredibly sentimental. What was selected to tell us about Lucie's life, particularly in the second half, seemed to me to miss out all the nasty bits in order to come to a warm conclusion. I wanted to know how she survived alone in the city.

RF In her life as an individual beyond the family?

RM It was terrific how she survived the family. I loved all that. But it felt to me like an enormous act of avoidance for a company working in contemporary Britain not to have dealt with, well, how fucking hard is it to live in the city.

RF I think a lot of that comes from John Berger's story and his view of the world.

RM But it's not enough just to refer to Berger. The company has chosen to do his piece. And they are playing peasants.

RF Probably with even less personal motivation than John Berger.

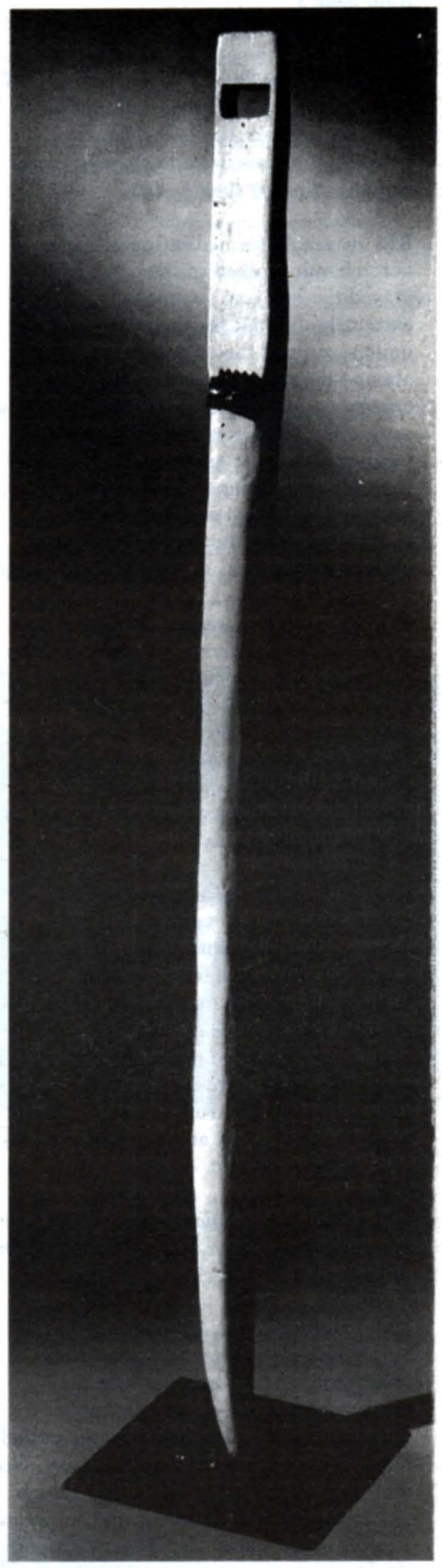
RM Sarah Cathcart plays a number of Australian women.

RF In Tiger Country *she takes narratives of women living in the outback and interweaves them, performing each of them in fragments or segments. An interesting form, but I felt she hadn't resolved some of the problems of structure. She seemed to get stuck on those women who were closest to caricature, such as the owner of the petrol station and didn't really get inside the body of the young girl. She gave us statistics about the desert and the sky in an endless reverie about landscape but didn't offer anything more about being a sixteen-year-old living on the edge of the Australian desert. The 19th century woman explorer could have been one of the most interesting given the rawness of her relationship with the land and the degree of discomfort she was experiencing. But this seemed not to be taken up.*

RM She was attempting to weave together some of the inner fears that can operate for these white women in a place of abandon like that. So that one character's fear of blacks was being allied with another's fear of space aliens, and another's fear of the emptiness of the outback.

RF I have a bit of a problem with this idea that these fears can converge. They are all about an Australian emptiness which can be filled with threatening things, sub-atomic particles as well. Of course, the biggest fear we were shown was of the atomic bomb. The climactic moment of the atomic explosion seemed to override all the other more pervasive, silent dangers. It became the biggest representation of fear whereas the ones that eat away at you are more threatening.

RM They are, but that explosion was for me a metaphor for explosions of another nature. The woman who was waiting at the fence of her station, terrified of moving outside, all she can see around her is the emptiness of the Australian landscape and she is terrified.



Louise Bourgeois *Portrait of C.Y.* bronze 1947-49

RF The whole question of landscape didn't come up anywhere else, except perhaps in Floating World *and* The Head Of Mary.

RM The flash of insight really lay in Rosemary Hinde and Playbox putting on one bill a Japanese play done by an Australian cast and an Australian play done by a Japanese company.

RF An adventure by association. Both as a spectator and in terms of collaboration. None of the other Festival events offered alternative ways of responding in their programming. There was no way you could be expected to set up resonances between events.

RM How did you deal with the language barrier in *Floating World*—listening to a Japanese translation while you read the English text on a screen ?

RF Difficult for the actors I think. It seemed inhibiting—they couldn't play it big in Japanese the way they might have wanted to.

RM Nor could the audience laugh at the verbal humour.

RF The middle section with its use of puppets seemed an interesting resolution for addressing Australian naturalism. It stylised the tension of the central character's

continued page 4

from page 3

distance from the Japanese characters. His final apotheosis seemed to need cutting. We didn't need to see the personal trauma so literally after watching the Japanese performers demonstrate the psychological ruptures through their bodies.

RM It was performed in Japan beforehand. I talked to the actor who played the lead and he said it was extremely difficult for the Japanese to understand and face what the play is on about—the traumatic effect of Japanese cruelty during World War II. Here he was, portraying an Australian, reliving the horrors of his war experiences. He said that one time in Japan he stood in the middle of the stage and realised the enormity of what he was doing, and he could hardly go on. A huge act of courage.

RF You certainly sensed that when you were watching. There were shifting levels of horror. Spectators recognised an Australian story of nightmare and then it quickly stopped being Australian and became a Japanese story of horror. And that was liberating in some way—atrocities of war didn't have to be pinned only on the Japanese.

RM I thought *The Head of Mary* was far better than the critics allowed. It dealt impressionistically with the lingering after-effects of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki. Its religiosity was obscure but it had an appealing picaresque quality and a production that tried to do justice to this. It reminded me of Kurosawa's *Do-des-ka-den.* And to tell you the truth it was wonderful to go to the Playbox and experience a play from another culture.

RF What about a play from another time in our culture, Cheek by Jowl's production of Webster's The Duchess of Malfi?

RM I really liked it. Its aesthetic was so strongly chosen that it was incredibly intelligent. There was a contemporary nervous energy which was probably Jacobean as well. The actors never settled into the play, it was always explosive. Not that they played it big but it was always unstable, physically and vocally; surprising choices being made. The woman playing the Duchess was an extraordinarily unstable being in the space—magnetically neurotic, juggling her power by throwing all the balls up in the air at the same time, knowing that if any of them fell she was gone. I loved the fact that she wasn't a victim of her brothers' evil, she was as Machiavellian as they were.

RF They didn't seem to play up the overt themes of Jacobean drama—sex and revenge.

RM Sex and politics are wound up in the energy of the performance's momentum. But what is driving it are the simple decisions people make in their lives in order to survive and get the best for themselves. It wasn't like an American production of a classic, it wasn't completely postmodern, it was very straight in a way. But riveting all the time.

* * *

NK The main problem for the visual arts in this festival, and indeed in most festivals, is that they always seem to be placed at the back of festival brochures as an obligatory but marginal genre, the poor cousin of the performing arts. Melbourne galleries just cross-list their exhibitions in the festival brochure so there is no coherency in the programming, unlike the Next Wave Festival which is very carefully curated. We end up with a random range of exhibitions which would have been scheduled at the same time anyway. Having said that, amidst the randomness, there are of course some interesting exhibitions and installations.

Cheek by Jowl *The Duchess of Malfi*

John Haynes

RF Like Mark Newson's Geodesic Dome?

NK Newson is a young industrial designer who has captured the imagination and support of Alessi and Starck. The Dome was freighted from Paris where it was commissioned by the Foundation Cartier. It's constructed from multicoloured amoeba-like chairs that are arranged in a dome formation. The work is impressive but I couldn't help but be distracted by the fact that the different components were soiled and damaged. Unfortunate. From a distance, however, the dome consumed the space at 101 Collins Street in an energetic way.

Undoubtedly, Louise Bourgeois was the highlight in the visual arts program. I suspect though, that it came about as a result of (former director of the National Gallery of Victoria) James Mollison's long-standing association with the artist and her dealer in New York, Robert Miller Gallery. Jason Smith has curated the project and Bourgeois' assistant came out to install the exhibition. As a result, it is dimly lit and quite dramatic. Once again, it seems to be coincidental and fortuitous for the Festival that the Bourgeois exhibition has been cross-listed. The exhibition is exceptional in revealing Bourgeois' facility for using materials in inventive ways and using key sculptural forms like the totem and the spiral in such bodily and sensual ways.

RF There are sort of three chapters, aren't there? There is the first section from the 40s which is a kind of modern primitivism in the use of totemic forms.

NK The works borrow motifs from primitivism but they're also very human in scale and delicacy. I was astonished when I was finally confronted by these works 'in the flesh', having seen them only in reproduction. I thought they'd be large and robust when in fact they are tender and delicate. They ensnare one's body in their human scale.

RF The first section is called Personages *and covers the period when Bourgeois went from France to New York in 1938.*

NK She was missing her world—her family and friends—so she created feelings and states of minds that are apparent in these totems in relation to the absent persons in her life. What is interesting is the materials that she is using, like wood, small castings in bronze which are not in any way grandiose. The work is very gentle and eloquent. The use of weight and suspension goes through her work to the current day. She moved on to using found materials in the 1950s. Using assemblage at this time seems to be incredibly adventurous. You can really see where younger artists, especially women, are drawing some of their source material from. The work from the last ten years is laid out in the final room of the exhibition. Here are tougher materials like marble which display robust and hardy preoccupations—they're brazen and sexy. Here's Bourgeois as a confident woman in her 80s.

RF I particularly like the mesh room installation which the National Gallery of Victoria has acquired.

NK *Cell (Glass spheres and hands)* 1990-93 is a room constructed out of worn factory frames containing wooden chairs upon which are tentatively placed glass spheres, like characters in an uncomfortable conversation. Bourgeois has inscribed herself in this work in the guise of a pair of crossed hands that are cut off at the elbow.

RF These hands are waiting, about to speak or say something.

NK She plays in an emotional way with images that are tough and delicate, soft and hard, gleaming and mute. The work is breathtaking.

RF Are there any other visual arts events that are worthwhile?

NK Callum Morton's giant balcony wedged into the Karyn Lovegrove Gallery is engaging in terms of scale and the way it takes up a banal, suburban motif. Zane Trow's collaboration with photographer Vivienne Mehes, historian Jenny Lee and performance poet Jeltje, is spread across two sites and takes up a fascinating oral history.

Overall, the visual arts program is lacking in integration and not contextualised within the overall festival. I find this highly problematic.

* * *

NK It is extremely demanding to produce an annual festival. Do you think Melbourne needs it?

RF Well, what are we producing? If Melbourne is going to have a Sunset Boulevard *future, is this to be the one event in which we get a bit of highbrow culture, brought in as a little taste of what is happening in New York and London? So we feel good about being connected to those markers of taste, and the rest of the time the local products struggle along?*

NK If it was held every two years there could be more forward planning—a year turn-around is very quick for one director to bounce from one to the next.

RF There is talk about merging it with the Melbourne Cup so this will be the arts program for the Spring Carnival.

NK How disappointing!

RM You could have art shows on horses.

NK They already do.

Local identities

Brett Adam samples the Melbourne Festival Fringe

The Melbourne Fringe Festival is billed as an opportunity for those artists working outside the mainstream to have their voices heard. It is also a chance for audiences who are dissatisfied with establishment art to experience something new and stimulating. With its open house policy, the Fringe runs the risk of including a lot of dross. This risk is exactly what makes the Fringe such a unique cultural event. It's a showcase for (mostly) local talent and despite any value judgements on the work itself, the festival becomes a reflection of the concerns and issues relevant to the communities that create it.

Arden Productions *Edward II* Brandon AhChong

The festival opened with a hallmark event that has identified the Fringe festival for years, the annual parade down Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. The performers, actors and musicians, most of whom are presenting work during the following three weeks, use the opportunity for publicity—and with over 170 separate events in this year's program who can blame them? The crowd lining the street is perhaps the largest and most diverse audience of any festival event and gives a good indication of the people the Fringe is interested in reaching. After this high profile event the Fringe disperses and mostly retreats back into Melbourne's many theatres, pubs, galleries, studios, cafes, restaurants and cinemas.

The first of the Fringe events I caught was Sam Sejavka's play *All Flesh Is Glass*. The narrative concerns Jay and Justine, a young couple whose relationship is in decline and their separate initiations into a pseudo-religious cult. Justine rockets to the top whilst Jay quickly becomes the lowest of the low and seeks an escape. Sejavka states in his program notes that there is little in the play that is not based on fact. If true, this is disturbing, as characters have their identities altered and reconstructed (willingly or not) to conform to the cult's norms. The play, however, could best be described as a comedy. Sejavka uses the humour inherent in the sobering and at times horrific subject matter to create a critical distance, allowing us an insight into an insidious symptom of modern society.

The B-File by English writer Deborah Levy sits much more comfortably in the Fringe camp. Subtitled 'an erotic interrogation' it explores the theme of identity, specifically of women. However, it is in reality a construction and ultimately a performance that all are compelled to engage in. Five women of different physicalities, ethnicities and sexualities stand before us each holding a suitcase. One by one they are interrogated; all are named Beatrice. As the piece progresses we begin to question the truth of their answers. At times the questioner corrects one of her interviewees, a clash of wills threatens then subsides leaving unresolved mysteries as to their 'true' identity. Levy eschews standard dramatic structure in favour of simple presentation. The work raises a number of questions on many different performative levels and leaves it at that.

VirtualFringe is a new and popular addition to the festival. At Stop 22, Fringe's gallery/performance space, a number of terminals are available for public access to the net. Personal opinions about the hype surrounding this info-wonder aside, the exhibition provides the curious and uninitiated with a simple and enticing introduction to interactive technology. Users can take part in video conferencing, access world-wide data bases, play video games, create their own art or any number of other things. Ultimately, this was largely a populist presentation of the net and its wonders and hopefully points the way to more subtle and creative uses of the medium in future festivals.

Arden Production's *Edward II* adapted and directed by Julian Beckedahl takes us back to more familiar Fringe territory. The production begins with a prologue spoken by a drag queen, establishing the theme of transgressive sexual identity which lies at the heart of this adaptation. With much of the drier political intrigue of the play cut, the focus tightens on Edward's relationship with Gaveston and its marginalisation by the court. Brandon AhChong is a frequent presence on stage as the drag-chorus and occasionally interrupts the action to perform a tightly choreographed drag routine, a Brechtian commentary through the persona of the drag queen as outsider.

La Mama was host to a number of Fringe productions including *In the Belly of the Whale* created and performed by Luke Elliot and Damien Richardson. The piece 'originated' from personal experiences of fishing, working at the Victorian Fish Markets and growing up in a fishy environment. At its heart it is a piece which examines male identity and relationships. The two performers explore all the theatrical possibilities of the intimate La Mama space in a dazzling, entertaining way. They flit between comic scenes, catalogues of marine facts, song and storytelling to produce an immensely satisfying and successful work. This was one example of the best that the Fringe can engender.

The official closing party, *The Fringe Shutdown*, was held on St Kilda beach in less than hospitable weather. The nine hour marathon offered various events designed to excite even the most exhausted Fringe-goer. Perhaps the most interesting events were the Drag Race, judged by Stella Constellation and compered by Barbara Quicksand(who in true show-girl style had the crowd eating out of her hand) and the evening dance party which continued until midnight.

If there was a prevalent theme in this year's Fringe it would have to be identity, both individual and social. A large percentage of the events I attended dealt with identity in some way; the construction, preservation, fluidity or transgressive forms of it were all apparent. The final night of the Fringe for 1995 mixed various social and cultural groups in celebration of Melbourne's thriving arts community.

Brett Adam is a freelance director working in Melbourne and currently involved in the process of establishing a gay and lesbian theatre company.

Competing spaces

Peter Eckersall surveys the Melbourne festival outdoors

An arts festival will absorb the tensions and urges of a city. Outdoor events are the public and democratic face of this and offer collective witness to facets of contemporary performance. Outdoor program director Patrick Cronin wanted the city to be utilised as a stage and to change people's perceptions of performance. The result was the 1995 MIFA outdoor program out-numbering the big-ticket events ten to one. Festivals now legitimise an outdoor avant-garde largely consumed by the populous Melbourne citizenry—even in the rain.

Theatre Physical *Miss Havisham's Dress* Pamela Kleemann

At the Melbourne International Festival of Arts opening night party, where few artists were mentioned after a long list of sponsors, an outdoor artist wittily heckled the Premier. Two days before the Festival opened, *The Age* (mis)quoted Leo Schofield's comments that outdoor performance was too much like therapy for its makers. Outdoor performance inhabits the spaces of the city and like everything else at this festival must be read within the context of the city.

Performance sites were consequently decisive: Myer shop windows, the recently corporatised City Square and Southgate (restaurants, shopping complex). Given some excellent shows there was a detectable tension between the politics of performance and the commodification of space.

Post Arrivalists' homage to the humble Valiant was a visceral and immediate performance. 'Hoon' cars surrounded the audience. The invasion of the pedestrian spaces was a potentially hostile act. Dark rumbling of engines, amplified and mutated, made the syncopated parking routine all the more sinister.

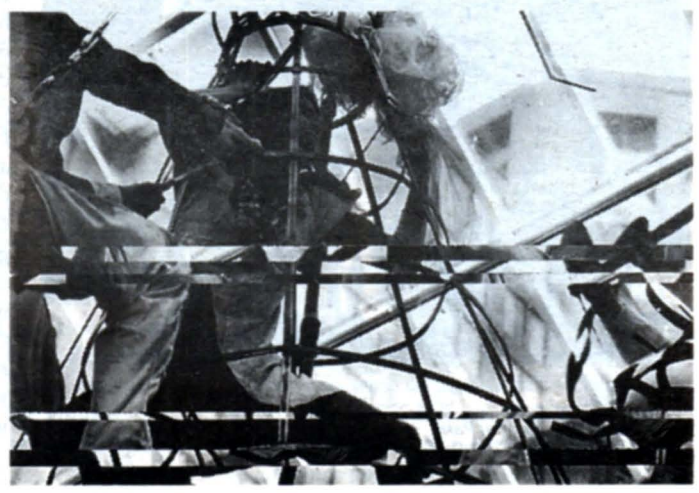
But most interesting was how quickly the feral and anti-social became safely comedic. There was none of the danger that had been present at a previous performance. Public liability and the genteel nature of the arts festival (heckling the Premier was generally deemed 'not fair') neutered the raw volatile potential of this act. Smoke bombs and dancing released the audience from their fear that taboos might be transgressed.

Miss Havisham, the jilted bride from Dickens' *Great Expectations*, inspired Theatre Physical's *Miss Havisham's Dress*. Devised by Beth Kayes and skilfully directed by Carlos Gomes, the work was intensely physical, theatrically and culturally complex. Various strands of longing and desire, identity and the personal were present, the work brilliantly coupled a physical sensibility with queer and feminist interventions.

A woman trapped in a large iron wedding dress, part cyberpunk part Frida Kahlo, is one of the images that remain in the mind long after viewing. A priest, "a mix of many sides—pervert, preacher, camp, evangelist, American imperialist ...", descended from the roof decrying the hypocrisy of marriage; a bride and groom later flew through the air on a counterpoint trapeze. Gravity dictated their congress would be short and violent. Gomes designed "a playground for the actors and their bodies". Ideas and images were similarly playful. They reverberated around the mind and swung from the rafters.

Stairway to Heaven (in which this writer participated) was performed on an installation of three parts representing Earth-Antarctica, Hell and Heaven. Meaning was consciously blurred; "take power with imagination" was the motto. Physical images and sub-narrative marked each zone accompanied by a complex soundtrack composed by Adam Nash. The first zone denoted adventure and discovery, the second a persistent hell. The third featured a slowly emerging repetitious cycle; bodies ascending a spiral staircase, descending the pole attached at its side. Architecturally the piece inhabited the remnants of the City Square partially reconstructed as a corporate space. The silver metal of the spiral stair blended with the grey power of surrounding buildings.

Each work was distant from the other, framed by its location in a shopping precinct and despite its internal integrity, was marked by corporate intervention and ownership. This space can be seen to co-opt the avant-garde and neutralise its critical faculties. A nexus between the 'democratic' outdoor festival that is heavily promoted in Melbourne and the new 'owners' of the work and of the city is evident. We are consequently reminded that "the city ... has itself been utilised as a stage, but now with distinctly more conscious political and social concerns" (Carlson, M., *Places of Performance*, Cornell U.P. 1989).



Theatre Physical *Miss Havisham's Dress* Pamela Kleemann

Peter A. Eckersall is co-director of The Men Who Knew Too Much *and appeared in* Stairway to Heaven. *He is completing a PhD on the cultural history of avant-garde theatre in Australia and Japan and lectures on Asian Theatre and Japanese Studies at Monash University.*

A popular brief

Anthony Steel speaks with Keith Gallasch about directing the Sydney Festival

AS As far as I know the only brief I've ever had from the festival board is "Keep it popular". I said that's fine by me as long as I define the word "popular".

KG You're making some of the 'popular' material challenging.

AS You can get people to try the more adventurous simply because you are selling the idea of an event, which as we all know everybody likes nowadays. You can slip things into the festival which people find, very often to their astonishment, that they have enjoyed very much.

KG What are the constraints of running a popular festival in the height of summer?

AS It simply makes it very difficult to know who your audience is, unlike, for example the Melbourne festival. Its director, Leo Schofield, has discovered a very comfortable relationship with his middle class, middle aged, middle brow audience at the right time of the year. In Sydney in high summer, I don't really know who my audience is. There are people in town but obviously there are also loads of others out of town, a lot of families in outer suburbs who are on holiday but not going away and with kids to entertain. And there is a mass of tourists, particularly in January, and a natural meeting place certainly is down at Circular Quay, hence our attempts to focus things there.

The Women's Circus

KG When you took on the job did you want to change the dates of the festival and the kind of content?

AS I definitely wanted to move it into more of an arts festival—not that it isn't one, but you know what I mean—and one of the very first suggestions I made was that they should change the time of year, and my contract was more or less terminated on the spot. There is something which I haven't quite got hold of yet, which is very dear to the heart of political Sydney, which says the festival must be in mid-summer. Having accepted that, I am now enjoying trying to make something good of it under those circumstances.

Vis á Vis perform *Central Park*

KG Has the level of funding of the festival been adequate?

AS The sponsorship has been very good in the last few years as a percentage of overall budget which is a reasonable way to look at it. In those terms we do better than any other festival in the country, except Adelaide, and we do reasonably well at the box office, although we have a very small box office programming in comparison with other cities. We do very well from the City Council, and extremely badly from the State Government. I think the new government, as far as I understand, does have intentions to be fairer to the festival, only it didn't really have a chance this year; not only because it was elected late in the process, but also because it wasn't giving away any money this year.

KG What about the pressure to focus on Australian content?

AS I have no problems in that area. What is interesting is that people in Australia responsible for programming are beginning to feel that it is no bad thing to take the tried and the true from inside your own country, as well as from around the world. There was that long period—and I was just as guilty as anyone else—where you always felt that local work had to be new to be interesting. Consequently it was put up beside an overseas production which had probably been honed over a decade, and it was completely unfair.

Asked about his future with the festival, Steel pointed out that his contract was up and renewal was being negotiated. If he didn't get the job? "I have got a few irons in the fire for the rest of this century."

Binghui Huangfu *Towards Fusion*

palimpsest, a parchment from which writing has been partially or completely erased to make room for another text. *Palimpsest*, a multidisciplinary exhibition of 13 Australian and three German artists including special guest German writer and radio producer Gerard Rühm, is a collaboration between Ruark Lewis, Jacqueline Rose, the Goethe Institut and ABC FM's *The Listening Room*. *Palimpsest* opens January 6 as part of the 1996 Sydney Festival. Palimpsest examines "the relationship between image and text, writing, reading, tracery, calligraphy, digital vocabularies, poetic narrative and literal contents, cartoons, text books, notes, aphorisms, extracts, transcriptions and illustrations..." The artists, from a range of forms including painting, computer art, spoken word, performance and radio are: Hanne Darboven, Jan Davis, Jochen Gerz, David Haines, Binghui Huangfu, Martyn Jolly, Ruark Lewis, Peter Lyssiotis, Chris Mann, Lee Patterson, Rea, Jacqueline Rose, Gerard Rühm, Christopher Snee, Yuji Sone and Ania Walwicz. Palimpsest, *Artspace, Sydney Jan 6-27; Australia Day Readings at Artspace, Jan 26, 7.30pm.* Palimpsest *tours to Canberra School of Art Gallery and Canberra Contemporary Art Space April 5 - May 5; Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane June 6 -29; RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, July 18 August 24.*
Catalogue essays by Mark Gisbourne, Vrasidas Karalis & Andrew McLennan. The performance component will be held at the ABC's Canberra studios on April 27, produced by John Crawford.

Mind's Eye is subtitled "a journey into sound". Co-producer Nick Wishart is an artist who works mostly with sound. He describes himself as "an aural person" and the work as "theatre in the dark". It's designed for both the sighted and the vision-impaired and will take you carefully through two blacked-out rooms, the first "a complete audio environment with 3D sounds coming at, around and through you", a second room in which your movements trigger objects with a sound component—machines and sculptures—and a third, which is lit, in which you can relax, reflect and listen to domestic appliances. You'll be guided on your journey by instructions from a Walkman. Wishart says the work offers "art minus light", though as with the degrees of vision impairment, the work will range from black to low lighting. *Mind's Eye* is co-produced by visual artist Peter Woodford-Smith and includes participating artists Joyce Hinterding, Stephen Hamper and Vaughan Rogers. The promised journey sounds more caring than Mike Parr's "Father" for the 1994 Adelaide Festival at the Experimental Art Foundation, a pitch black maze that swallowed you and where small children belted through the dark at your genitals. I only got a few metres into that one. KG
Mind's Eye, *Sydney Festival, Australian Steam Navigation Building, Level 1, 1 Hickson Rd., The Rocks, Tues-Sun, Jan 9-25, 11am-6pm. Tickets $7 and $5 at the door. Assistance provided for the vision-impaired.*

Dancing under fireworks

Keith Gallasch surveys the 1996 Sydney Festival Jan 6-26

This could be Anthony Steel's last Sydney Festival as rumours abound of Leo Schofield's imminent appointment as artistic director to the year 2000.

In a short time, Steel has taken the festival brief of 'popular' in hand and run with it on a modest budget, cleverly focussing events around Circular Quay including the Opera House forecourt and the Museum of Contemporary Art. He has expanded the notion of popular to offer audiences free showings of major open air contemporary performance works from Spain and Holland they might otherwise never experience, overseas and Australian art works on nearby buildings and in public places, international cabaret in the MCA's American Express Hall and a range of street theatre. At the nearby Basement jazz venue and—after a brief ferry ride—at the Harbourside Brasserie, the joint *Listen Up* jazz program completes the Quay circuit.

The challenge of the popular is taken a step further with one of the festival's biggest offering's, *Stars of Illusion* at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, two hours of some of the world's best illusionists—from the U.S., the Ukraine, Japan, Canada, Austria and Australia. Given the interest in illusion among Australia's innovative physical theatre and puppet companies and their audiences, *Stars of Illusion* should appeal to a very wide audience.

The Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Legs on the Wall, *Miss Havershams' Dress,* Pesce Crudo's *Négrabox. African Heritage* (the National Dance Company of Guinea), The Women's Circus and others should please and challenge Sydney's summer populace. The Catalan company El Comediants' *The Demons,* a version of an ancient ritual celebration, the Corre Foc, to be performed in the Opera House forecourt, is "not suitable for children, the aged or the infirm" and you get "to dance under fireworks", "so please wear suitable clothing". But Vis a Vis create a skyscraper roof top survival drama, *Central Park,* "for the whole family" in the same space. Both *The Demons* and *Central Park* are free.

Theatre performances include the premiere of Michael Gow's *Live Acts on Stage* for Griffin at the Stables, *The Steward of Christendom* by Sebastian Barry, an acclaimed production from the U.K. Not another Irish play for an Australian Festival, you groan, but Steel says this one is special. The long-awaited *Ningali,* the multi-lingual autobiographical performance by Ningali Lawford in collaboration with Robyn Archer and Angela Chaplin arrives after a successful Edinburgh Festival season where *Ningali* won the Fringe 1st Award for innovative theatre. The spoken word power of this show will be complemented by the powerful presence of the Nuyorican Poets (see p 7).

Another long wait is to be rewarded at The Performance Space where a collaboration between Germany's Heiner Müller and Australia's Mudrooroo is to be realised as *The Aboriginal Protesters confront the Proclamation of the Australian Republic on 26 January 2001 with a production of The Commission by Heiner Müller.* This production adds significant weight to the participation of Ningali Lawford and the Boomalli Aboriginal Co-op. Linsey Pollack's acclaimed *Out of the Frying Pan* is theatre that turns domestic appliances and household items into musical instruments and is aimed at 4 to 12 year olds.

Negrabox Thierry Ardouin

Dance, along with *African Heritage,* is represented by another first appearance in Sydney, by the Meryl Tankard Australian Dance Theatre in *Songs with Mara,* a dance response to the folk music of Eastern Europe, the singing by Bulgarian traditional music authority Mara Kiek.

Contemporary music gets a look in with one only solo concert with Philip Glass, works ranging from 1981 to '94. You can also lunch with the composer-musician at the InterContinental for $50. The Australian Chamber Orchestra are presenting world premieres by Arvo Pärt and bonuses from Berio and the all too rarely heard Symanowski whose string quartet Richard Tognetti has arranged for chamber orchestra. Jazz is well looked after and the *White Hot and Blues* cabaret season at the MCA offers Yiddish Cafe, Duelling Divas, the Three Chinese Tenors, Archie Roach, Paul Kelly, Slava Grigoryan, the Xylouris Ensemble, Nuyorican Poets Cafe Live, and Ashok Roy, an impressive line-up of artists you'd associate more with the concert hall than cabaret.

The visual arts get more attention than usual with *Palimpsest* at Artspace (see box) and *Mind's Eye* at the Steam Navigation Building (see box). The Kaldor exhibition at the MCA flows into the festival with Koon's giant Puppy, and as part of *Quayworks,* curated by Ewen McDonald and Gitte Weise, Boomalli Aboriginal Co-op 'occupy' Bennelong Point with symbolic flags, Maria Kozic will float her inflatables, The Cherry Twins, above ICI House, and Robert Longo will have two giant banners across AMP Building in Circular Quay. Combined with the Koon's Puppy, these should give the festival a visual impact it's never had, intensifying the sense of occasion round the Quay.

For an apparently modest festival, Steel's 1996 program is impressive in its detail, in the numerous correspondences it establishes between the physical, the visual, the popular, the indigenous and an expanding vision of the role of public space.

Should he direct future Sydney Festivals how far will he take the notion of the popular?

Rapping tongues – street side

Nicholas Gebhardt has words with the Nuyoricans at the Poets Cafe prior to a Sydney Festival gig

It's down in the East Village, where the history of New York's poetry is ingrained in the sidewalk—St Mark's, Tomkin Square, King Tut's, SOBs, Bird Lives!—where for years street poets have been slamming and glamming and jamming their way in and around and amongst 'the word', carving out a territory somewhere between jazz and rap and performance art. The Nuyorican Poets Cafe is a mecca for spoken word performers and audiences alike; it's a place where rappers mix it with new-old beats and next wave poets; the site of a growing movement that Allen Ginsberg recently described to Henry Louis Gates Jr., as a place where "...the human voice returns, words return, nimble speech returns, nimble wit and rhyming return. The movement is like compost for poetry. It serves to cultivate an interest in the art by cultivating a great audience—an audience of amateur practitioners".

Edwin Torres, long standing *Nuyoriqueno,* slides and glides through a thousand reasons why the cafe is bringing a whole new force to bear on the limits of the word, why it expresses the "cry of the people". For Torres, it's all in the nature of the place: "All kinds of people pass through, all kinds of performers, all kinds of audiences. Its warmth and attention to rhythm allows for a variety of art forms from dance to music to performance art that inevitably influences the shape of the poetry. And while there are connections to the Beats, to the Black Arts movement and to rap, the cafe practices a different kind of anarchy, a different kind of poetics."

For Torres, rap music has paved the way for spoken word through its emphasis on the rhythm of the word, on the power of the rhyme. And poets live on words: "I mean, you got to realise that what is happening here is a transformation: we're becoming hip to the idea of language in a different sense. It's a whole other way of conceptualising rhythm that acts directly on the experience of the audience. By calling it spoken word we're moving things along, changing the reality of poetry. It's a renaissance that reconnects the voice to the street, but in a way that highlights the nature of poetry as an underground form. For most people, hearing someone on a stage reading their work, performing their work, revealing their ideas in this way, is still a strange thing, and for us, well, there's a lot of power in that."

The voice or "the word" is instituted as the essence of reality, of an authentic relation to the street, to language, and to "the people". In this sense, it is an idealised relationship that opens up all sorts of ideological and theoretical questions. In a recent interview, the poet Amiri Baraka, one of the founders of the Black Arts movement, suggested that the famous poetry slams, where poets are pitted against one another in a word-off, "...make poetry a carnival—the equivalent of a strong man act. They will do to poetry what they did to rap: give it a quick shot in the butt and elevate it to commercial showiness, emphasising the most backward elements".

Torres, however, thinks that poetry is always a reflection of the times and remains incorruptible at a certain level because of its commitment to telling the truth. "In fact, because of the times, more and more people are turning to our work. They don't want to hear any more rhetoric from politicians, from spin doctors. They want something real, something from the heart and this is where we come in. The volatile political climate has, in a lot of ways, paved the way for what we're doing and has produced a lot of good work. Social unrest always produces great art, and basically, the nature of the oral tradition is politics. It's the politics of what's real and what's affecting people now."

The thing that excites Torres the most is the momentum of the spoken word movement. He's been on MTV, been on the cover of *New York Magazine,* and feels that everywhere people are becoming increasingly receptive to what he and his fellow poets are up to. "Change is difficult. With something as deeply historical as poetry, it's even harder to convince people that what you're doing is real. It's the performance itself that makes the work, that gives us the power to move people. When I'm reading I use my whole body to express the ideas in relation to what I'm doing with my voice. It's all about producing a language in rhythm, of creating speech that is real but not as we know it through the propulsion of ideas. In this way, the poetic form itself will change along with performance and everything else."

Emily XYZ Alan Kirschen

Edwin Torres Sherman Bryce

Bob Holman, artistic director Michael Wakefield

Nuyorican Poets Cafe Live will be performing at Sydney's Metro Theatre , Jan 22 & 23. They'll stage a special one-off Poetry Translam during Sydney Writers' Week Jan 24, as part of the White Hot and Blues program at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Performers will include Emily XYZ, Dael Orlandersmith, Mike Tyler, Samantha Coerbell and Edwin Torres.

ALOUD: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, *edited by Miguel Algarin and Bob Holman. A Henry Holt paperback $29.95 available from Ariel Booksellers Ph: (02) 332 4581.*

Film as opera

In New York, Nicholas Gebhardt talks with composer and Sydney Festival guest Philip Glass about a new work

I picked three Jean Cocteau films: *Orphée, La Belle et la Bête,* and *Les Enfants Terribles* and began to think about how I would take film and make it part of opera.

There's a cinematic condition at work in music.

First of all, this isn't really a soundtrack.

So what is it?

I think the best way to talk about it is to talk about what the whole enterprise was about in terms of Cocteau and in terms of film, although I'm not so interested in the history of film.

But there's a sense where the history of cinema has become integral to the image of an artist.

Cocteau was, besides being a film maker, a novelist, a painter, a poet; he did everything. One of the things I was interested in about Cocteau was that he was an artist who used film as one of the art forms that he worked in. I was really interested in working with a film maker who was an artist in that way.

The problem lies in reconceiving the movement between aesthetic practice and cultural action.

Cocteau addresses the general subject of creativity, the creative process, the process of transformation, the things that generally interest artists and actually almost everybody. The transformation of our own lives is something that we're engaged in, so it's not just an artistic project when we talk about transformation. It's actually an everyday project.

We are talking then of a certain expectation of freedom, of how art has become central to the question of freedom. Or vice versa?

Certainly, it can be a compelling motivation for an artist to find a new expression. With Ornette Coleman, when he came to New York in the 1950s and began playing his form of jazz, he more or less invented free jazz and yet people thought he couldn't play the saxophone. People would go and hear him and say he can't play his instrument. They didn't even hear what he was doing. Ornette was searching for a new language, for freedom. That was certainly true for John Cage. And I may have been thinking that myself when I was doing my early pieces, the ones they call minimalist pieces. I was freeing myself from the dodecaphonic serial music of my predecessors. But I wonder whether artists haven't always felt that.

What is difficult is creating a complex art of sounds that carries with it the potential for a transformation in musical thought that understands its relation to freedom and actually transforms our thinking of freedom.

These things are happening on the borders of technology, world music, popular music, theatre music. There are these border areas where things are happening very rapidly and in a very interesting way—in these funny areas which are hard to describe which don't fit into the normal categories that we work in. Aphex Twin asked me to work with him and I wanted to know what he was thinking about—it's that border area between experimental music and house music.

But an opera...?

With *Orphée* I did something quite simple, I chose a scenario which is all the dialogue in the film and used it as if it were a libretto. And I wrote an opera based on that libretto. We noticed two things. First, when you look at an opera, you look at it very differently than you look at a film. In a film the director tells you what to look at; when you look at an opera the spectator sees the whole stage. So we look at an opera with much more freedom than we do a film. The second thing is that the actual length, the actual time, of the film was quite different from the opera: I could make things longer or shorter depending on how they struck me as being important in the story. In other words, I could interpret the original in a certain way in terms of the structure. But what I did do was use all the original dialogue and in the order it was done. So basically, I kept very close to the original.

Still, the concept of borders or mutating forms is at odds with the formalism of an operatic work. In rethinking music, in proposing a radical art of sounds, it becomes a case of introducing an audiovisual phase or moment into the demand for pure music.

The second project, *La Belle et la Bête,* was much more challenging and a radical approach to this idea of film and opera. Again I took a scenario. But this time I timed every word in the scenario as it appeared in the film and then I wrote an opera in which the words appear in the opera exactly in the same time as they do in the film. Then we proceeded to make a stage performance of this in which of course we turned off the original sound track and we projected the film upstage behind the singers. Then Michael Reismann conducts the opera looking at the film without a mechanical hookup, but simply by watching it. As the characters on the screen begin to speak, instead of speaking the singers on the stage begin to sing.

What in effect happens is that the singers have become interpreters of the characters on the screen. In a way it's kind of an astonishing thing because film is not something that we normally can interpret; we can do it on a big screen or a little screen, but the film is the film and you don't do anything else with it. In this case, the degree to which the film can be interpreted by the singers is quite amazing. Then the whole experience becomes different from either a film by itself or an opera by itself. You now have two characters, or rather, two persons playing the same character, one a screen actor and one a singer. I think we're just at the beginning of seeing what that will bring about.

Interview with Philip Glass in New York, September, 1995. The music of the opera La Belle et la Bête *is available on Warner Nonesuch CD.*

Festival Jazzwatch

Sydney and Montsalvat Festivals, Oliver Lake, the Holmes Brothers, Phoreean akLaff, Carlos Ward, John Hicks and more in December and January

The Sydney Festival this year has a strong lineup after jazz was dropped from the event the previous year for being too popular. There will be a series of concerts at The Harbourside Brasserie and The Basement under the title *Listen Up*. An enterprising scheme of gold passes will enable holders to visit both venues for the month and a harbour ferry service will shuttle punters between the venues.

Oliver Lake, who last toured Australia with The World Saxophone Quartet (still regarded by many as the best tour here in the last ten years) returns for three nights in January. This time Lake brings with him master drummer Andrew Cyrille and the exciting bass player Mark Helias. Lake's style is a unique blend of R & B à la Maceo Parker, the inventiveness of Bird, the free designs of Ornette Coleman, and the dynamic flow of Sunny Simmons. This mixture has led to a style that has been lauded by the critics and public alike.

Lake's abilities have recently spread from jazz to that of performance poet. He received very good notices in *The New Yorker* and *The Village Voice* for his one man show *The Matador of 1st and 1st.* Described as a wry and ironic look at New York life through the eyes of a street musician, Lake's Quixotic poems and monologues are accentuated by his saxophone playing. Selections from the work now make up part of Lake's Trio shows and with the dynamic team of Helias and Cyrille will be a show not to be missed. He will be playing The Harbourside Brasserie on January 18 and The Basement on January 21 and 22.

There will be a change of lineup in Melbourne for the Montsalvat Festival (last weekend in January). Lake was to have played but commitments with the WSQ in Europe mean that Carlos Ward and John Hicks, no less, will team up with the rhythm section. If this goes ahead they will all return to Sydney to play again! As this is still to be finalised please check local papers in Melbourne and Sydney for the full line up at Montsalvat.

Oliver Lake Jane Marsh

Drummer Pheeroan akLaff, like all great drummers, has spent the last fifteen years making good players sound better. His unique treatment of rhythm has led such diverse artists as Henry Threadgill, Sonny Sharrock and Cecil Taylor to call on him. As a leader himself akLaff is a major crowd puller at Sweet Basil and The Vanguard in New York. He has played on over fifty albums that cover all aspects of modern improvisational music. For many jazz fans Bakida Carrol's CD *Door of the Cage* displays Pheeroan's glorious mix of rhythm, texture and subtlety to the full. akLaff plays with local hero Mike Nock at The Basement on January 24 and 25 and at The Harbourside Brasserie on January 28.

Stars of Womadelaide and Peter Gabriel's Real World label The Holmes Brothers make a welcome return to the country with a national tour. Their blend of Gospel, Soul and Blues has always made them a crowd favourite. National dates are yet to be fixed but Sydney dates have been confirmed for January 11 for The Basement and January 13 and 14 for The Harbourside Brasserie.

Bassist Buster Williams and pianist Billy Childs will play Sydney January 14 - 17 at The Basement. Williams worked briefly with Miles in the Sixties and has recently received five-star reviews for his CDs on the *In and Out* label, while Childs is by far the most impressive player on the Wyndham Hill's Jazz label. This will be jazz of the highest order.

At the time of writing, John Stubblefield is touring Sydney and Melbourne. Stubblefield deps for David Murray in the WSQ. His stylish playing is not to be missed. In Sydney Stubblefield plays one gig with Mike Nock's Trio at the Strawberry Hills on November 29 then Melbourne's Bennets Lane with the great Barney Mcall on December 1 and 2, then back to The Basement on December 3 and 4, then on to the Jazz Lane in Melbourne on December 8.

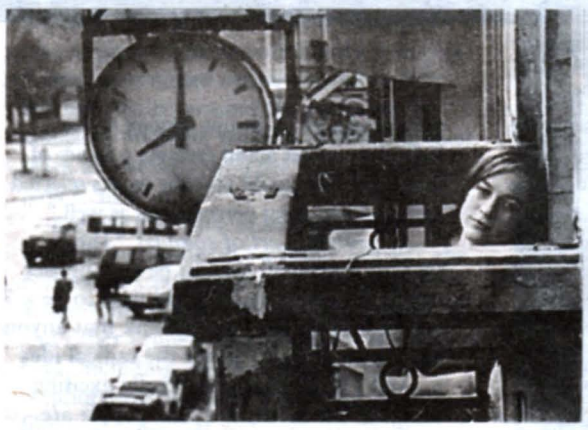
If you're in Sydney for Xmas you'll find the local scene bolstered by the opening of The Blue Fox Room in Darlinghurst for jazz on Sundays in December and January with Mark Simmond's Freeboppers. SIMA continue their usual high standard of shows at The Strawberry Hills. Merry Christmas and don't forget to support live music and performances of all kinds in 1996! *AR*

Ashley Russell is a Sydney writer working at the Birdland Record shop.

The bigger picture

Keith Gallasch in search of Kosky's vision in the 1996 Adelaide Festival

After earlier launches this year of his visual arts program and the principal performing arts and music presentations, Barrie Kosky completed the Adelaide Festival picture in October atop a Hills Hoist and next to a pacey barrage of computer-driven clips of the scheduled works and events. An intriguing picture of Kosky's vision is beginning to emerge.



Meg Stuart Company

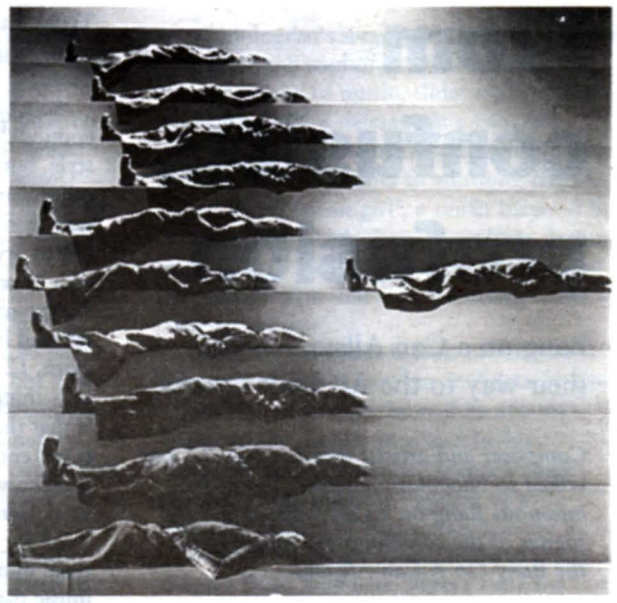
Film gets surprising prominence for an Australian arts festival, not only through the Media Resource Centre's *In Spaces Unsuspected* (Mercury Cinema March 7 - 13), but also in Art Zoyd's four piece rock group playing live to screenings of F.W. Murnau's silent classics *Nosferatu* and the

Artzoyd

rarely seen *Faust*. Pierre Henry, one of the founders of the *musique concrete* movement, and for whom "the ear plays the role of the eye", "will surround the entire auditorium of Her Majesty's Theatre with loudspeakers and electronic equipment and perform live music" to silent film classics, Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Camera* and Walther Ruttman's *Berlin: Symphony of a City*. The connections between film images and sound that pervade contemporary performance, including Kosky's own work, will be celebrated in these works. *In Spaces Unsuspected* equally broadens cinema's scope in its inclusion of multimedia work and computer animation as well as premiering Rolf "Bad Boy Bubby" de Heer's new feature, *The Quiet Room*, and recent work from Britain's leading animators the Brothers Quay and Eastern European innovators.

In dance, the emphasis is squarely—but also laterally—on the contemporary, bringing to bear issues of site, cross cultural influence and the challenge to received notions of the body. The Batsheva Dance Company from Israel and Nanette Hassell/Leigh Warren Dancers/Synergy *(The Ethereal Eye)*, are joined by Angels Margarit's six nightly twelve minute performances at the Hilton International Hotel in *Hilton 1109* to audiences of ten at a time; the Slovenian company Betontanc's 'sound dancing' against a metal wall; DV8's *Enter Achilles*, a provocative dance interrogation of masculinity; Meg Stuart and her Damaged Goods dance company from New York, delivering startling, convulsive but beautiful movement; and a new work from Meryl Tankard's Australian Dance Theatre in collaboration with an Indian master of Kuchipudi dance.

The performance program confirms how radically ideas of theatre formed early in the century have invaded the mainstream. It's also indicative how much of it is still European inspired. And it's also in this area that Adelaide audiences are most likely to be challenged, and largely by Australian productions. From Melbourne, IRAA premieres *The Blue Hour*, a theatre of memory; Jenny Kemp premieres *The Black Sequin Dress*, with soundscape by Elizabeth Drake and visual inspiration from Paul Delvaux; and the song and dance powered Hildegard, in collaboration with the new Bulgarian University's Theatre Department in Sofia, premiere *Inje*, about a Bulgarian warrior-hero. From Adelaide, the Red Shed Theatre Company will delve into the unconscious and questions of perspective in collaboration with sound and visual artists. Adelaide's Centre for Performing Arts will create *Excavation: The Last Days of Mankind*, drawing on Austrian Karl Kraus's epic of cultural and spiritual devastation. In a relatively rare encounter with Asia, the Flinders University Drama Centre students, John Romeril and Japanese performers combine to create *Red Sun—Red Earth*. But we're back on track with Lech Mackiewicz directing Wenanty Nosul in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*.



Hotel Pro Forma *Operation: Orfeo*

Even the Japanese company Molecular Theatre's *Facade Firm* is based on a work by the marvellous Polish avant garde novelist, playwright and 'collector of faces', S.I. Witkiewicz and the production is directed by a practising psychiatrist. Of course, the Japanese connection with Dada and Surrealism has a long history quite unlike our own anglophile wariness of same. And that appears to be changing, if festival programs are any indication. The Danish company Hotel Pro Forma (sometime collaborators with Japan's Dumb Type) have created total staircase theatre: *Operation: Orfeo* looks like a Svoboda design fantasy worked to the max. The Maly Theatre of St. Petersburg's are presenting two major works and nine Adelaide children will rehearse *Nits* with Image Aiguë's director Christiane Véricel in January for the festival.

Then there are the surprise pieces of programming you've probably heard of but never dared hope to see—the threatening La Furas dels Baus, so beloved of daring young men during their Sydney Festival season a few years back (if it's the same kind of spectacular and visceral stunt theatre, go knowing there is no place to hide); from Johannesburg, Handspring Puppet Company's *Woyzeck on the Highveld* and *Faustus in Africa*—using live actors, film, shadow play and puppets in works for adults; and Annie Sprinkle, *Post Porn Modernist*. While we are used to R rated cinema, it's a strange experience to come across it in a festival of arts program, but the rating is wise in Adelaide where unexpected nudity alone has previously roused the city's censorious side. While not unrelated to Karen Finley and Penny Arcade with their autobiographical drive and curiously didactic American moral concerns, Sprinkle is reputedly the most liberating of the bunch.

On the music front, the Kronos Quartet and the Bang on a Can Allstars (see p 10) are presenting generous programs alongside Art Zoyd, Pierre Henry & Son/Re and the major celebration of the music of Scriabin, along with symphonic works by Mahler, Messiaen, Xenakis, Gubaidulina and Hartmann. We'll take a closer look at the music program in *RT11*.

In the meantime, you'd have to say that the 1996 Adelaide Festival is dauntingly rich. The stated themes of ecstasy, map and utopia are woven loosely but clearly through the program creating a synthesis that reveals the lines between late romanticism, the early 20th century avant-garde, film, revitalised explorations of the unconscious (after postmodernism's querying), and contemporary performance. The Whirling Dervishes, for example, are in the program not for their contemporary cross cultural appeal, but because for Kosky to whom the ecstatic appeals, they are another European influence from the East via Gurdjieff. It's not the East of contemporary Australian political concerns that Kosky draws in, it's the radical edge of our wider European heritage, a bigger picture of Europe than anglophile Australia has usually admitted of, one of dreams and visions. We're not finished with Europe, he's saying, and there's a lot to work through before we finally pronounce ourselves postmodern.

Festival of Perth 1996

February 16 - March 10

It's a rich if wildly mixed bag, but its international range is considerable and the focus on Central and South America, so often neglected in Australia, is welcome even if the selection doesn't extend into the visual arts. There's some sharing—*Gaudeamus*, one of the Maly Theatre of St. Petersburg's two shows for Adelaide is headlining in Perth; Vis a Vis, of *Topolino* fame (Perth 1994), from the Netherlands are also appearing in Sydney with their vertiginous *Central Park*; Sandra Bernhard, Malcolm McLaren and Robyn Archer are shared with Adelaide along with Tom Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra. That still leaves a lot of Perth-only shows and the very real cultural pull of Latin America for the ardent festival-trippers from across Australia.

The Latin front is led by Cuba's Teatro Buendia with *Innocent Erendira*, an adaptation of a Marquez story, promising "a dazzling, sensuous battle between two extreme archetypes of womanhood—the innocent spontaneous beauty and the fearful exploitative dreamer." The production features live Cuban music.

Brazilian pianist Arnaldo Cohen will play works by Villa Lobos and Lorenzo Hernandez in his solo recital and Bolivian composer Cergio Prudencio and three members of his Orquestra Experimental de Instrumentos will collaborate with Perth's Canto Sikuri. Prudencio is renowned for avant garde compositions featuring traditional Andean folk instruments.

Grupo Corpo Brazilian Dance Theatre will perform to music by Ernesto Nazareth and Philip Glass. Tito Puente's Latin Jazz Ensemble are not to be missed (also to be seen and heard in Adelaide). One of the world's great bandoneon players, Argentinian Dino Saluzzi (whose work can be heard on the ECM label, he appears on Rickie Lee Jones' *Pop Pop* CD and has worked with guitarist Al DiMeola) is a unique stylist, playful as any jazz great, teasing with half melodies, suspended beats and silences in a manner not usually associated with the bandoneon. Brazilian guitarist Egberto Gismonti is another distinctive composer and virtuosic player with an orchestral sweep in his technique. The Latin line-up in this festival should be a crowd-puller. Of course, many who would love the work of Saluzzi and Gismonti have never heard of them. You have been advised.

And there's more, street theatre appearances by Teatro Buendia from Cuba, Palo Q'Sea from Colombia and, for opening night, Calypsamba Carnaval in Northbridge—hours of street dancing climaxing with even more dancing to Cuba's sonero band, Sierra Maestra at a party at the Perth Entertainment Centre. It's $65 to party at the Centre and that includes a costume, or you can party without costume for $25, or you can costume yourself for the street dancing only for $50. What a package.

The rest is pretty diverse and we'll have a closer look in RealTime 11 in February. In the meantime it's worth noting an impressive Australian line-up including Black Swan doing Louis Nowra's *Miss Bosnia*; Theatre West & Deckchair Theatre's *Lou ...* by David E.R. George, an account of the life of Lou Andreas Salome featuring Russian actress Yelena Koreneva; The Marrugaku Company, a new group directed by Michael Leslie and Rachel Swain, with composer Matthew Fargher and members of Stalker collaborating to create *Mimi* in the Boya Quarry; Barking Gecko are premiering Elizabeth Stanley's *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears* in the Subiaco Gardens; Perth Theatre Company are doing John Misto's *Shoe Horn Sonata* after its successful Sydney premiere; and Bangarra Dance Theatre continue their national tour of *Ochres*.

In addition to the Maly Company and Vis a Vis, England's Young Vic are presenting Grimm Tales using acting, mime, puppetry and live music; Belgium's Compagnie Nicole Mossaux and Patrick Bonté are presenting a dance theatre work (some of the very best comes from Belgium), *Twin Houses*, about doppelgangers; Que-Cir-Que from Switzerland are the latest manifestation of the European circus avant garde; and from South Africa there's the popular *Mama, The Musical*. West Australian Opera is presenting Handel's opera *Alcina*, directed by Lindy Hume with striking design by Kimberley artist Daisy Andrews and costume designer Ray Costarella. The dance highlight of the festival should be the collaboration between Canada's Fondation Jean-Pierre Perreault and Australia's Chrissie Parrott Dance Company. There's more street theatre, plenty of music, a film festival and a visual arts program featuring Brett Whiteley, Akio Makigawa, Trevor Vickers, Bill Henson, Yvette Watt, Ian Dixon, Japanese Picture Books, an impressive array of international photographers and other exhibitions we'll preview soon. *Festival of Perth: 09 386 7977, e-mail fop@uniwa.uwa.edu.au*

From confusion, profusion

Bang on a Can Allstars are on their way to the Adelaide Festival

Composer and artistic director David Lang talked to Nicholas Gebhardt about the infamous Bang on a Can Festival and the rogues of the contemporary music scene, the Bang On A Can Allstars.

A brief history of time: "The Bang On a Can Festival was started by Michael Gordon, Julie Wolf and me. Bang On A Can happened because we were three young composers in New York and we were all best friends and we'd sit around all day moaning about the state of the world. And we would talk about how there were so many millions of things that were easy to imagine being corrected to make life a lot better: play really great music, be really friendly, play a lot of young composers and don't treat them differently from the famous composers, and create new audiences.

"Classical music in general, but new music especially, has so many problems it's not difficult to put your finger on them. The real problem is how to solve these problems. So we were three young composers fresh in New York, trying to figure out how to improve the lot of our lives and we realised that our music wasn't being played for a lot of reasons. And not just our music, but the music of the people we were interested in, and the music of a lot of our generation who were trying to solve the problems we were trying to solve, just wasn't being played. There was a whole class of music that wasn't really being played and when it was being played it wasn't being played properly."

So what happened? "Music everywhere is continually sorted by ideology or sorted by style, but we thought maybe there were other ways to get in there and change the way that music was organised and heard; not by style but by innovation, or by some idea of whether or not the composer is challenging assumptions. And then we decided to put all those pieces together in a giant, 12 hour marathon concert where the only thing that these pieces have in common is that the composer has said: what I learned is not enough and I've got to change it somehow. Over half the composers that we work with every year are unknown. We have a call for scores or tapes and we listen to them blind and try to be very honest about music that satisfies our needs. We're after an attitude, a way of challenging the world."

And then there was a festival: "We joked about it the first year and called it the first annual Bang On A Can Festival and we thought this was the biggest joke in the world because how could this possibly happen again. Most of it was donated services; we just called up everybody we knew. We called up Cage, we called up Steve Reich, and Milton Babbit and Pauline Oliveros. And then we filled it with other composers who nobody knew."

It's like this: "The experimental music world is not even on the map. If people are after interesting music they try to find it in the interesting parts of the pop music world or in the art world. We had the first Bang On A Can in an art gallery. We had this carnival atmosphere, we served alcohol, we didn't print program notes, and we wanted it to be a real hang out. Any one who programs by ideology is saying, the world is very small. And our sense is different. We really want people to think that there are millions of great possibilities in music."

From Charles Ives to Bang On A Can: "We have tried to define an experimentalist as someone who tries something in which the results are not necessarily known from the beginning. In a sense, we are more interested in provocative failures. We're interested in how it's made and how it's structured; the question of composition is central."

Bang on a Can Allstars

The role of Dutch composer Louis Andriessen: "What's interesting about Andriessen for Bang On A Can is that he represents the kind of thinking that we are in favour of; someone who kind of decoupled things that seemed like givens in the American musical world. When minimal music came along to challenge serial music it was important for it to completely overturn the structures and inherent complications of the 'old world' and create a new world of consonance. Unfortunately, dissonance was reserved for the people who wrote complicated music that was rigorous and consonance was used by composers who were trying to write music for the people. What immediately interested us about Andriessen's music was that he embodied dissonant minimalism, the energy of pop music without the idea that the sound idea or the harmonic language had to be simplified in order to make it possible for you to listen."

The Bang On A Can Allstars: "A six member electroacoustic ensemble that's a combination of instruments. It's different from most contemporary ensembles in that we're working with the electric guitar. The group grew out of the Bang On A Can Festival as a response to funding cuts in New York that prevented a lot of groups coming to the festival so we set about creating a group of musicians who could play the works selected and who had great personalities as well."

An untimely art of sounds? "The fact that it's a difficult time to be a composer means it's also a really good time to be a composer because I don't think that anyone has the solution to where the radical idea is. And I think one of the really exciting things at the moment is that people are confused and that this confusion is creating a profusion of music. Nobody really knows where the boundaries are and I think people are trying to work with divergent or opposite ideas and put them together. There's nothing more revolutionary than error on a big scale."

Bang on a Can Allstars are appearing at the Adelaide Festival in four concerts in four venues, works ranging from Brazilian jazz composer Hermeto Pascoal and Canada's Michael Maguire to Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Frederic Rzewski and Louis Andriessen.

Bang on a Can's CD Industry *Sony Classical SK 66483 was reviewed in* RT8.

Maintaining Artrage

A brisk report on Perth's fringe festival from Graham McLeod

Artrage sets a whole season in motion which carries on through to the Fremantle Festival and the Festival of Perth provoking local artists to consider questions about community identity in a growing national and regional context—taking in Taiwan and South Africa and, in the future, Indonesia.

This year, apart from generic events such as visual arts exhibitions, the parade and opening and closing events and the festival club, Artrage produced 35 performing arts events during October with comprehensive coverage in the mainstream media, which has not always been the case.

The implementation of the DEET scheme's New Work Opportunities provided staffing that has assisted the short and long term aspirations of Artrage. Having the extra hands on board allowed more focus on marketing, publicity and infrastructure, assisting artists in pre-production and production.

Artrage has evolved by taking risks and by encouraging experimentation by emerging artists—the next generation of artists get their break. This has been the case for many Western Australian artists who have taken their work beyond Artrage to establish a profile in the national arts scene. To further support artists in WA, Artrage will tour local artists and productions to the Adelaide Fringe Festival in late February on the Artrage Bus.

For some time the Artrage board of management has been pursuing cross-cultural links with overseas fringe festivals. Jay Pather and Peter Hayes came from South Africa performing the premiere of their new work, *The Stories I could Tell.* From Taiwan came Ahuan and sound artists Dribdas who were an active force in the local arts community during their stay. A delegation from Surabaya, Indonesia observed the last ten days of the Festival and the two sister cities have agreed to artistic and technical exchanges for the 1996 season. Eastern states artists Moira Finucane and Shirley Billings came with their new cabaret and the Snuff Puppets knocked Perth audiences dead. Greg Fleet's hard hitting humour made *Thai Die* a festival hit.

Snuff Puppets

Festival for a real city

Michael Denholm reports on Canberra's festival season and looks to the future

The success of the National Festival of Australian Theatre held in Canberra in October this year, with good ticket sales (according to Barbara Oaff of *Canberra City News* an increase of 33 per cent on last year) and corporate sponsorship (increasing by 63.5 per cent from the situation in 1994) is not only a tribute to the vision and drive of its director Robyn Archer, but also an indication of a lively arts scene in Canberra. This is especially true of grass roots activity from a group of young, determined artists centred mainly, but not totally, around the performance company Splinters who are celebrating their tenth anniversary, and the Gorman House Arts Centre.

For the first time in its history the Festival was joined by a fringe festival, the Festival of Contemporary Art, based around the Gorman House Arts Centre and other venues. A series of events were held, including *The Fortress,* a combination of dance, text, performance, film and song that was collectively devised and presented by the Defunct Ballerinas, Collaborative Theatre's *We'll Let You Know,* P Harness's *How Things Work,* Paige Gordon & Performance Group's *Party! Party! Party!,* Poppy Wenham's *Barefoot,* 2 til 5 Youth Company's *Rubber, Steel & Confidence* and Leisa Shelton's *When I Am Old I Shall Wear Purple* that involved a collaboration between young female performers from Canberra Youth Theatre and the Canberra Older Women's Network. As well, there was a *Reel-Art Contemporary Film Festival,* involving aspects of film such as documentaries, women's and experimental films and Super-8, organised by the Canberra Youth Theatre and the Moot Group, and *Fugitive Visions,* a caravan of contemporary Australian film and video art presented by the Sydney Intermedia Network in conjunction with the Canberra Contemporary Art Space. Artists whose work was exhibited during the Festival of Contemporary Art included Alex Asch, Gordon Hookey, Tess Horwitz, John Johnno Johnson, Paloma Ramos and Ruth Waller.

More than 140 Canberra artists and 200 artists from around Australia performed in events during the National Festival of Australian Theatre and related events. To further maximise the attractions available

Maree Cunnington *The Secret Fire* George Serras

to both locals and tourists to Canberra during the popular Floriade Festival, the second Contemporary Art Fair was held at the Australian National University's Drill Hall gallery from 5-15 October, showing work of a wide range of Canberra's art galleries as well as work from the Taller Kyron graphic investigation workshop in Mexico City, founded by master printer Andrew Vlady and his wife Beatrix.

Robyn Archer is very positive about the future of the National Festival of Australian Theatre but is critical of the *Canberra Times* coverage of it. The fact that the festival has survived, she says, shows that the community is very prepared to accept it. She considers that there is a vital arts subculture in Canberra—the arts scene here, she says, is endlessly satisfying and more accessible than in cities like Sydney.

However, she considers that, in some ways, the Festival is being held back. There is a problem, she says, with the ACT government and the media. They have co-operated with the Festival and, at times, generously supported it. But she is not convinced that their hearts are in it yet, the arts being covered too much like a small country town despite the national institutions based in Canberra. The *Canberra Times,* she states, is a bit of a problem. Part of their function is to praise and encourage the amateur arts, but when the state and federal governments combine to bring major companies to Canberra, priority should be given to these companies in the papers. She cites the fact that the *Canberra Times* gave space to a large photograph of a local ballet school, the National Capitol Dancers, rather than to *Ochres,* the performance by the Bangarra Dance Theatre. There is, she adds, no proper dance overview, with Robert Macklin, in his column 'A Capitol Life', not mentioning it. The reviews in the *Canberra Times,* she also states, come out too late.

She does, however, have praise for the coverage of the Festival by the paper's news editor and news workers. The *Canberra Times* did list details of events held during the Festival in Jennifer Kingma's 'Arts Diary' and published a full page feature article on Archer entitled 'Keeping Theatre Live'. Hopefully, publications like *RealTime,* when they establish an increased presence in Canberra, will help ginger up the *Times.* which has no major local competitor. Macklin's interest, she says, is not in new work, despite the fact that the strength in Canberra *is* in new work. In three years, she says, nothing has improved with Macklin despite his being feted.

Archer has great hopes for the future of the Festival. She likes Canberra very much and considers that its citizens like challenging work. In the future she would like that side of the Festival to be better supported. She adds, the easy option of something you can tap your foot to is no good. She is grateful for the support the Festival has received from the media and the ACT government, but would like the more challenging, uncompromising works, like Maree Cunnington's *The Secret Fire,* and the Red Shed Theatre Company's production of Daniel Keene's *Because You Are Mine,* which dealt with the rape camps in Bosnia, to receive more support.

Cunnington's work reveals the secret fire buried in the soul of a 50s child. Using a clever collage of music, slides and song, she punches out her message in a cabaret environment, a tale of transformation, the journey from suburbia to stardom, the life of an 'Antipodean girl', a misfit inspired by mystics. The black sheep in wolfish clothing crosses over to the other side as she sheds her second skin and sees 'the danger and feels the power'.

Archer's successor is Rob Brookman, a former director of festivals in Adelaide and Auckland. Hopefully he will be able to build on the foundations laid by his predecessors, Archer and Anthony Steel. The latter initiated the concept of a national festival of Australian Theatre in Canberra with such productions as Black Swan's *Bran Nue Dae,* Meryl Tankard Company's *Court of Flora,* Margaret Cameron's *Things Calypso Wanted To Say* directed by Jenny Kemp and Theatre of Image's *Swimming in Light.* In his artistic director's statement, Brookman says he wants to "take (the festival) to a new stage of maturity and national prominence". But lessons from previous festivals will need to be learnt if it is to expand and attract larger audiences while developing the more challenging, innovative side that Archer has introduced. As Canberra Theatre's General Manager David Lawrence has stated in the *Canberra City News,* "(the festival) still requires a lot of nurturing", we need "to look to the future to see how we can continue to improve".

As we move into the next century, Canberra needs to lift its game and become a real national city rather than the unreal city many consider it to be. The signs are there that this development could occur. However, if inertia and ignorance hinders this development, many artists will give up in disgust with Australia's national capital and go on to greener pastures. The implications of Canberra's future as a lively arts centre will be explored in part two of this article, the artistic vision for Canberra.

Michael Denholm is Publications Manager University College Library, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, author of a two-volume history of small press publishing in Australia and of a history of Australian art magazines, 1963 to 1990 (Power Publications forthcoming). For a decade he was co-editor of Island Magazine.

The ultimate live-in festival

Byron Bay '96, January 5-7, Belongil Fields, 2 kilometres outside of Byron Bay

This is the third of the Annual Byron Bay Arts and Music Festivals and it features a mighty sweep of music of almost every conceivable kind from rock to body percussion. Despite its scale—some 200 music and performance acts—the seven main stages and four smaller ones that run simultaneously allow for an "emphasis on intimate creative space where the line between performers and audience become blurred".

Undiscovered acts get a guernsey at Byron Bay '96 in the company of Cruel Sea, Regurgitator, Audioactive, Renegade Funk Train, Swoop, Bu-Baca, the Dirty Three and Belly Dance. Also on the agenda are a capella group Nude Rain, performers Prik Harness, singer-songwriter Kev Carmody, powerful jazz combo Jackie Orszacky and the Grandmasters, plus The Whitlams. From the world music scene are Tibetan singer Yung Chen Llama, the Sundiata Marimba Band, Cuban band leader Jacinto Harrera, "an eclectic Scottish pipeband with Celtic bouzouki and congas" called Piping Hot, Perth's Wunjo with "their ambient roots music", the Latin style Gypsy Moon and African body percussionist Jean Paul Wabotal.

Brandon Saul, festival organiser and founder, says the festival's music profile is somewhat misleading—it's the nature of the event which attracts sell-out audiences. Campers enter a festival that is outdoors, blends the rural and the urban, offers not only music but film around the clock (programmed by Flickerfest), workshops (massage, women's erotic writing, didgeridoo, Cuban percussion), spoken word (Toby Zoates & Co. working with film, Standup Poets, The Absence of Elvis), multi-screen multimedia installations (including the big-screen projections of the festival's web-site) and street performances everywhere.

The visual arts, says Brandon, are not as strongly represented as other arts, but the festival is intensely visual with the impact of the new technologies, 'totem poles' created by the ferals, big sculptures "by a local metal maniac", a pit of alluvial sand you can get into with the sculptor, and a bus in a maze that everyone can have a hand in painting.

Byron Bay Arts and Music Festival

Byron Bay '96 is as live-in a festival as you could expect to get—three days and nights of music, film, discussion panels, dancing, craft workshops, multi-media installations, market stalls, late night food, all night soccer, spoken word and cabaret performances.

Brandon observes that during the festival the diverse cultures of "the confused country town of Byron Bay" become marvellously integrated. And yes, he does get to sleep over the course of the three days—he recommends the 'quiet' campsite over the 'noisy' one.

MCA Ticketing 02 873 3575. Information on-line: www.ozemail.com.au.\~bsm

Livid Festival '96, Brisbane

Brisbane's festival of music and new performance is on as we go to print (see RT9 for details). We'll have a report from Peter Anderson in RT11 in February.

Yellow lady meets black stump: an obscene postmodern heroine in Australia

Trevor Hay

In our feature essay re-evaluating orientalism, Trevor Hay encounters wild swans, the female dragon, Chinese Orientalism, the Peking Opera, Pearl Buck, M. Butterfly, Miss Saigon, *Madam Mao and, the key to the quest,* Red Azalea.

The contemporary Australian view of China is sometimes a choice between clichés—'orientalism' or 'Asia-literacy'. I much prefer the former because, like sex itself, it stimulates the imagination, and that may well turn out to be the true survival value of sexual dimorphism. 'Asia-literacy' on the other hand, is just one more in the current swarm of wasp words—full of noisy menace, but precariously articulated at the head and thorax and not all that difficult to disarm. If you can get them to stop buzzing between your eyes for just a moment they are easily separated into useless twitching bits with a quick chop through the hyphen. By contrast, Nicholas Jose considers orientalism "a way of finding something to love, to be ravished or amused or appalled by, in another culture, for finding inspiration there in things that are quite oblivious to the standards of the contemporary west—kitsch or sublime".

That is exactly why I prize my cloisonné panda thermometer, and would not swap it for an antique jade anus-stopper. But for some, culture is a very serious business indeed. Being anxious about 'Asian' culture, respecting it all the time, guarding its indigenous purity, and scrutinising the arts for paternalism, orientalism and ethnocentrism, can make people very insensitive. It robs them of the raw curiosity and imagination needed for sifting through stereotypes and finding odd traces of truth, or for simply looking at them afresh and finding inspiration. I suppose that is why poor old Pearl Buck has taken such a beating since we became Asia-literate instead of Asia-well-read. In looking back at what she had to say in 1949, in her preface to the twenty-sixth edition of *The Good Earth,* it is still possible to catch a glimpse of wisdom and understanding flickering under layers of orientalism, paternalism and prophecies so disastrous one might almost believe she had been seduced, against her better judgement, into 'tempting fate':

> *The Chinese people alone have come to the high point of understanding that life is in and of itself the most valuable possession of the human being, and life therefore is to be held in higher estimation than any religion, than any ideology; even than any dream or vision of utopia.*

Elsewhere in the preface she says "They do not die for an idea, these people of China". Yes they do, and they also die *because* of them, just like everybody else, but Pearl Buck still deserves to be read, and to be respected for her way of finding something to love and be appalled by. And there might well be a good deal of sense in her particular brand of paternalism, even a clue to the excesses of the Red Guards in her view of traditional Chinese socialisation:

> *The Chinese people, generally speaking, are a nation of rational adults. The ancient theory, consistently followed for centuries, has produced the admirable result. Only children early frustrated and repressed find their revenge in later forms, and, as Western history proves, most violently and frequently through religion and war. When a man is at peace in himself, he can seldom work up enough anger for a war on any subject.*

There is much to be said for the idea that the relentless control, sexual repression and moral-political authoritarianism which gripped Chinese classrooms between 1949 and 1966 was an ideal breeding ground for the pathologies of the Red Guard movement. They could have done with more orientalism and less Maoism, if the sexual aspect of the violence is any guide. And speaking of Red Guards and sexual repression, there has been a most remarkable book lying dormant in Australian bookshops for over a year—*Red Azalea, Life and Love in China* by Anchee Min, supposedly the autobiography of a Red Guard. It is shockingly edited, daringly, almost recklessly written, with a dash of provocation and mischief about it, and it may even be almost criminally 'orientalist', but it is also moving, powerful and enlightening. At the heart of the book is a sensational story of cross-dressing at the highest political (and psychic) level in China. Yet it does not assume even the most rudimentary knowledge of Chinese politics among its readers—quite the reverse it seems. As far as I am aware, no reviewer except me, in *Real Time 1,* has yet commented on the identity of the cross-dresser, although the clues are almost mockingly obvious.

Despite the claims on the dust-jacket, intended to take full advantage of the fact that people have actually heard of Red Guards, but have no idea who they really were, Anchee Min was not a 'Red Guard' in the sense of the militant Cultural Revolution movement of school and university students. She was too young. In fact she was a member of the 'Little Red Guards' which survived into the seventies as a watered-down Party feeder organisation after Mao himself had disbanded the Red Guards and sent them off to the countryside to educate the peasants, and themselves, in real revolution. But the most interesting thing about the book is its sexual dynamics—and its implicit connection with Peking Opera (the first sentence of the book is: "I was raised on the teachings of Mao and on the operas of Madame Mao"). If a non-Chinese had written *Red Azalea,* even in collaboration with a Chinese, there would have been a good deal of highminded literary scorn directed at it for its blatant orientalism—salacious Western soft-porn values, China-as-female-mystery, exotic, sinister, cruel—the complete identikit Yellow Lady. You might think of it as a latter day *Golden Lotus* (which Pearl Buck herself described, incorrectly I think, as the "the greatest novel of physical love which China has produced"), except that it is the politics which is rendered into allegory and metaphor, not the sex.

The book describes Anchee Min's passionate, frustrated, lesbian relationship with a fellow communal farm worker, followed by her big break in a screen test for a movie called *Red Azalea* and a disturbing, tantalising affair with a male movie director, known only as the Supervisor, who wears dark glasses and seems unnervingly feminine. Perhaps this is beginning to sound more like *Yellow Emmanuelle,* but the Supervisor is a cipher begging to be cracked by amateurs. We are given a great swathe of clues about this person's life—his passion for peonies, his playing the role of Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House,* the dreadful fate of his prostitute mother in Shandong, his hatred of dogs—until it is absolutely crystal-clear, or ought to be, that this 'man' is Jiang Qing, Mao's wife.

If you can imagine a book in which a mysterious, powerful and androgynous Hollywood producer goes around talking about the White House, assassinations in Dallas, Greek shipping magnates and Marilyn Monroe, you have something of the effect. Anchee Min is about as subtle, but she is playing to foreigners, and while a great many Chinese have read about Jackie Kennedy, very few non-Chinese have read anything about Jiang Qing. So, the identity of the Supervisor is always a delicious 'secret' and everything associated with him is charged with an archly-toned sexual and psychological ambiguity:

> *I never used to believe that the Supervisor worshipped Comrade Jiang Ching* (sic) *But now I believed it. He was her spiritual lover. I believed his obsession with her, because she represented his female-self. Because she allowed him to achieve his dream—to rule China's psyche.*

This sort of complex allegorical relationship between author and protagonist, whose identity may both be fictional and real, and the use of the writer's voice to achieve both an ironic detachment and a 'code' effect for the politically initiated literati, is an established tradition in the very kind of literature that Jiang Qing herself replaced with 'revolutionary modern' operas. For instance, there is a striking source of irony in the mere fact that Jiang Qing did not approve of female impersonation, and thought it symbolised China's Confucian sickness. In 1963, as she built up to her assault on the 'fortress of Peking Opera', she told the Number One Peking Opera Company that female impersonation was a product of feudal society and could only undermine operas on revolutionary modern themes. She never said anything about orientalism of course, but it was probably something close to it that really disturbed her—something that removed the portrayal of women from the control of women themselves, and turned them into an outsider's fantasy. That she herself could not resist the lure of the role, and set about her own portrayal of the stereotype of seduction, barbarity and exotic self-indulgence, is simply another great irony, and a tribute to the power of theatre, which she always understood at least as well as her enemies. In any case, I suspect Jiang Qing's primary objection to patriarchal Confucian fantasy was not that it invested women with sexual mystique but that it robbed them of political power. She simply wanted both—exclusively.

But there is another outside-influenced portrayal of Chinese women abroad in Australia these days. The phenomenal success of *Wild Swans* raises some interesting parallels with *Red Azalea* and prompts the question of what kind of Chinese image is compatible with Western

literary tastes. In some respects *Wild Swans* appears to be conceived and structured as a Western novel rather than as documentary or memoir, the dominant genre in which the Cultural Revolution has been revealed to Westerners. Non-fiction has provided our only view of China in the absence, since the days of Pearl Buck and Lin Yutang, of people who could write psychologically convincing fiction. Perhaps *Wild Swans* captures the territory between airport 'blockbuster' novels about historical China and that whole range of books *(Born Red, Son of the Revolution, To the Storm)* which have really only appealed to those with a specialist interest in modern Chinese history. Jung Chang's book has been read by thousands of people who cannot compare its revelations with any other work, and will not read another book about China. In its sensational perspective (the highly placed insider), in its intimate and fashionable first person female narrative voice, its generational, 'epic' sweep, and the portrayal of an 'alien' Red Guard cruelty and madness, it fits comfortably into the expectations of a reader of modern, popular historical novels about exotic cultures. It is built like fiction, and to my way of thinking would perhaps have made a 'better' book if it were a novel, but there is no doubt that people respond to it because they see it as 'real'.

None of this is to suggest necessarily that *Wild Swans* is not a 'good' book, or a true one. Far from it. But it is not, as so many of its readers believe, the product of a now-it-can-be-told 'Chinese' perspective, nor is it simply the translation of Jung Chang's Chinese voice into very readable English. It is a highly processed work, shaped by Western literary tastes and judgements, by the things Westerners know and don't know. If it were to be judged by Chinese tastes it would be dealt with very harshly indeed, and probably unfairly, since many Chinese either consider it an unexceptional tale or regard Jung Chang's generation and class as instigators of Cultural Revolution tyranny and therefore bitterly resent any expression of sympathy for the author and her kind. It is, in their understandably jaundiced view, a book for gullible foreigners, including some of the overseas Chinese, who need to identify with accessible personalities rather than nameless masses and complex political movements. But there is a personality factor at work in their own domestic interpretations of the Cultural Revolution too, as is evident in the demonisation of the Gang of Four, the violent caricatures of Jiang Qing and, more recently, the obsession with Mao's dragon-like 'power' and sexual appetite. At present there is probably no orientalist like a Chinese. Perhaps the endemic cynicism of the post-Mao era has led the heirs to the revolution to believe that everything can be explained by sex—a perfect example of the way cynicism can be so naive.

As far as Western tastes are concerned, it may be that Anchee Min has learnt the lesson of Jung Chang's success and taken the process of literary hybridisation a step further. Both writers might well be accused of everything from carpet-bagging and historical distortions to orientalism but they have nevertheless created a vital form of bridging east-west literature. Personally, I would like to see people reading Jonathan Spence and Joseph Needham, but without the intelligent manipulations of *Wild Swans* or *Red Azalea* we would adjust to the demands of 'Asia-literacy' the same way we adjusted to metric conversion—inch by inch. Even in the highly acclaimed fiction we have recently produced in Australia, notably by authors like Alex Miller, Brian Castro and Barbara Hanrahan, we are really looking at literature which derives its inspiration not from China itself but the experience of migration, 'crossing', psychic dislocation and the modern diaspora—a state of being 'after China'. We are still a long way from writing about China itself, and when we do it may well go unrecognised or be branded orientalism.

In the meantime, I hope *Red Azalea* will be widely read and appreciated for the 'right' reasons, because at some bewitching level between fact and fiction, Anchee Min has continued a Chinese (and international) literary tradition in moving beyond realism into some kind of mythic 'essence'. In doing so she has raised this issue of orientalism at home—the extent to which the Chinese themselves see China and the politics of the Cultural Revolution as a continuation of traditional fantasy and folklore, in which the demon, the fox-fairy, the scheming concubine, the harlot actress, manipulates her way into the kind of power which many Chinese see as the most dangerous and total of all, the appalling power of the 'female dragon', epitomised by the legendary cruelty and debauchery of the Empress Wu Zetian and the 'Old Buddha', the Empress dowager, Ci Xi. How ironic that in death Jiang Qing should demonstrate the truth of her own aesthetic theories, that certain abstractions have much more power than 'realistic' characterisation.

In her brilliantly teasing, guileful way Anchee Min has herself manipulated an 'outsider' audience to the brink of understanding the universal and self-actualising power of Chinese myths. She has also added to the cast of sexually ambivalent orientalist heroines. These characters are not just figments of a Western imagination—they are migrants, and like all migrants they have had to make adjustments, but they are no less 'authentic' for finding a welcome elsewhere. For instance, the 'M. Butterfly' story owes as much to time-honoured Chinese tradition from Daoist sexual techniques to Ming erotica and the poignant folk tale of *The Butterfly Lovers* as to japanoiserie and the Puccini opera. The orientalist themes, motifs and symbols of derivative contemporary best-sellers and theatre smashes like *Miss Saigon* are certainly the end product of inter-racial perceptions, but it makes no more sense to deny the power of the sexual symbolism than to dismiss fairy tales for their simplistic characterisation and gender stereotypes. The crucial test is whether the stories have some kind of psychic impact or whether they are just so weak that their ideology is the only thing worth discussing. Beyond that judgement looms the iceberg of academic protocol, ritualised sensitivity and that peculiar, sterile view of 'genuine' culture which is best left to politicians and the writers of high-minded multicultural textbooks. Unfortunately, the modern concern with the portrayal of Asia as sex has itself now become a major source of stereotype and cliché, a way of not appreciating either sex or Asia.

As Linda Jaivin said recently in *The Australian*, "Call me superficial, but I reckon you can get a lot of insight into a place from studying the plots of its best-sellers and the hairdos of its pop stars. The entire range of human experience does not meaningfully convert itself into balance of trade figures and GDP". Popular culture with a streak of imaginative orientalism has the distinct advantage of giving insight into two places at once. Perhaps this kind of hybrid vigour is what Nicholas Jose had in mind in his talk with Alex Miller at the 1993 Melbourne Writer's Festival:

> *Our do-it-yourself China, constructed by, with and for people here, has a homemade actuality that comprehensive national strategies for engaging with China—or any other regional culture—in the abstract may lack.*

Fortunately we have a number of creative writers, artists and performers who are not concerned with 'comprehensive national strategies'. David Pledger's *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* is an example, inspired by one of Jiang Qing's 'eight model works' of the Cultural Revolution. It was performed in Melbourne at Theatreworks in February this year to very small but highly involved audiences. The play creates precisely that kind of 'do-it-yourself' China in which contemporary local politics (such as Victorian police anti-demonstrator tactics) and incongruous contemporary satirical effects are blended with the basic plot of the original to produce quite a strange and moving piece of China-influenced Australian theatre. Guy Rundle of *The Age* reviewed it, dismissively, as a form of '70s experimental theatre on the theme of "Eastern propaganda and Western commercialism" missing the point perhaps that there was not only Maoist ideology involved but a traditional Chinese theatrical convention which highlights the whole problem of 'realism' in art. The difficulty, once again, is that we focus on the stereotypes themselves, and congratulate ourselves on simply recognising them, rather than noticing their possibilities for meaning.

It is worth remembering that certain east-west literary encounters, which appear on the face of it to have that clash-of-cultures, cloisonné thermometer effect about them, have had a profound and lasting, if largely unrecognised, influence—like that between the Stanislavsky method and Chinese drama of the 1950s, or the weird 1935 meeting of Bertolt Brecht and Mei Lanfang, when Brecht saw the great Chinese female impersonator perform impromptu, without makeup, in a dinner suit at the Chinese embassy in Moscow, and was captivated by his ability to turn a scintillating performance on and off without going into some kind of creative trance. In Australia sixty years later, there are echoes of that meeting. Sally Sussman's *Orientalia* at the Performance Space, Sydney, in March this year, included this scene, as well as excerpts from the traditional Peking opera *The King Farewells his Concubine*, the model opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* and a version of the final aria from *Madam Butterfly* sung Mei Lanfang style in a dinner suit. It all seems to be both a *form* of orientalism and a *response* to it—or perhaps as one critic has said, it is a "catalogue of orientalisms through which we view the east".

Melbourne resident Clara Law is another notable sport when it comes to eclectic production, as in her latest film *Temptation of a Monk*, described by Audrey Yue in April 1995 *Filmnews* as a "spectacle of ambiguity" including "black Rococo-vamp lips, *Orlando*-style bustiered hoop skirts, Kabuki-like sets and coloured strobe lights".

When it comes to Asia, there is a fine air of creative miscegenation and cultured profanity about the arts in Australia—like those alluring creatures the Italian diplomat Gabriele Varé used to dream up in the 1930s, the offspring of consumptive White Russian princesses and one-eyed Manchurian warlords. We are not simply reproducing multiculturalism (which is a 'model opera' of another kind entirely)—but something like 'Australian postmodern orientalism', in which a small minority of artists are freed from overwhelming reverence for 'real' culture and dare to perform in a dinner suit instead of proper ethnic costume. I could scarcely recommend Jiang Qing's approach to the arts, but in her role as the Supervisor in Anchee Min's book she says some marvellous things, and easily deserves the last word, to inspire us all—"We must resurrect Red Azalea... The heroine. The fearless, diabolical, the lustful, the obscene heroine, Red Azalea". Now there's some *real* orientalism for you, straight from the heart of the dragon.

Trevor Hay lives and writes in Melbourne. He is the author of Tartar City Woman, *(Melbourne University Press, 1990), co-author with Fang Xiang Shu of* East Wind, West Wind *(Penguin, 1992) and writes regularly for* Eureka Street. Tartar City Woman *won the Audio Book of the Year 1991 (The Braille & Talking Book Library).* Reading Tartar City Woman, *a collaboration between Hay and Open City writer-performers Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch was commissioned and broadcast by Radio National's* Radio Eye. *Anchee Min's* Red Azalea, A Life and Love in China *was published in hardback by Victor Gollancz, London in 1993 and is now available in paperback.*

That's a book in my pocket

The success of Penguin Books' sixtieth anniversary Penguin 60s prompts Colin Hood to look at a century of pocketable gems lurking in the shadows of bestsellers and postcards.

At the William Morris Centenary Dinner in 1934, Holbrook Jackson spoke critically of what he regarded as the baroque excesses of craft printing techniques. "The Kelmscott books are overdressed. They ask you to look at them rather than read them. You can't get away from their overwhelming typography."

The reading of artists' books, however, is more than just an archivist's pursuit of ephemera, more than what meets the eye in the dumb-show of pre-Raphaelite curlicues. In *Reading out aloud,* a collaborative book of poems by Mayakovsky and Lissitsky (made in 1929), the variations of typography and colour serve not only the transgressive intonations of the poet but also to "unbind" the antisocial conventions of reading, creating a model of publicly accessible hieroglyphs.

As Tim Guest remarked in his introduction to *Books by Artists* (Art Metropole, 1981): "The best artists' books propose systems of visualising which take into account not only the logical structure of books and language but also promote and illuminate the psychological power of reading."

A major impetus of modernist movements in the last one hundred and fifty years is carried through the collaborative work of artists, poets, and writers in the area of publishing *(Blau Reiter, Révolution Surréaliste* and the Australian *Angry Penguins* being obvious examples). Pierre Naville, first editor of *La Révolution Surréaliste,* made the point quite emphatically: "To direct a review," he wrote, "is to organise the embryo of a movement."

In fact, it is not unreasonable to suggest (as Dawn Ades has in *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed)* that the reproducible formal structure of the book or magazine has been, at times, the most important showcase for manifestos, illustration, collage, art criticism, the genre of the poem-painting, typographical gymnastics and the interpersonal politics of movement identities.

But the preciousness of painting, art-market speculation and the dream of contemplative intimacy are always pressing in against us. Marcel Broodthaers was a Belgian poet who started his career as an artist by embedding 50 copies of vanity press printed poems in plaster (a 'sculptural' object entitled, "I too wondered if I couldn't make something and succeed in life"), thereby proving that the value of the poem (unlike a painting) is not identical with its printed materiality. For books, we might conclude, are still not art. The sanctity of uniqueness (which we still attach to painting) is never quite assured for a book or magazine (no matter how small the print run). The $US5,000 price tag for a whole 13 issues of *Minotaure* (another important surrealist periodical) will always be minuscule compared to the price of an original Miro.

The mutual influence and synthetic productions of artists and poets has been no less significant in the post-war period. During the 50s and 60s, the American poets Charles Olson and Frank O'Hara were major influences on the painters and film-makers of the day: Olson through his work as co-ordinator of the Black Mountain College and O'Hara through his poetic and critical commentaries on painting. It was also at this time that galleries and smaller publishers were active in promoting (in print) the collaborations of beat poets, painters and musicians. For writers like Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley and Alan Ginsberg, the book format seemed the unlikely medium for a poetry that resisted the constraints of formal versification. But for John Cage (whose book *Silence* was published in 1961), it was the "noise" of reading which challenged the dominant conventions of musical composition and performance.

The formation of Hanuman Books in 1986 by Raymond Foye and the Italian painter Francesco Clemente marked the continuation (in a somewhat hybrid form), not only of a tradition of American liberal publishing, but also an attempt to incorporate alternative craft techniques into the production of the books themselves.

Foye had learnt the ins and outs of the publishing game through various apprenticeships to New Directions, City Lights and Petersberg Press, while Clemente's interest in the project stemmed from a desire to expand his personal interest in publishing writers and artists like Henri Michaux, Francis Picabia and John Ashberry, utilising the strangely artisanal publishing techniques of Nachiappan's *Kalakshetra* press (based in Madras). In 1978, Nachiappan produced a book of Clemente's called *Undae Clemente Flamina Pulsae,* a personal iconographic reflection of Clemente's travels through India. The high point of this collaboration (before the formation of Hanuman) was a book of poems by Allen Ginsberg called *White Shroud* with illustrations by Clemente printed and hand-bound from handwoven cloth. At this time, Clemente's fascination with Indian religion and iconography had come full circle to embrace the expressive idiom of the American oral poetry movement.

The physical appearance of books in the Hanuman series (with their almost standard format of two and a half by four inches) reflects a cross-over between craft press, alternative press and the devotional prayer books of the Indian sub-continent. The reader experiences, therefore, both the frisson of cultural difference and the design fetishist's passion for aesthetically pleasing shoddy design and cheap materials.

Looking through the list of titles, the reader is perhaps reminded of the encyclopaedic melange of subjects and themes which seems almost peculiar to a sometimes eccentric liberal tradition of publishing. In 1923, for example, you could buy the full set of E. Haldeman-Julius Ten Cent Pocket series of 239 titles (on a dizzying array of subjects) for only $16, while a cursory glance of title listings in any Dover Press publication will often blur the difference (and why not?) between Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *How to shoot craps to win.*

The range of Hanuman titles (for the moment at least) is perhaps a little more focussed, reflecting Foye and Clemente's shared and individual preferences. Seamy confessional realism, the beats, memoirs and tales of Greenwich Village, autobiographical sketches and essays by underground celebrities and significant European artists, and, just when you thought it was safe to step into the nineties at 150 bpm: *Saved: The Gospel Speeches of Bob Dylan.*

Cookie Mueller introduces her selection of John Waters memorabilia, *Garden of Ashes,* with an anecdote as poignant as the book-object itself (exotically alien with its hand-tinted photographs, uneven typesetting, and slightly skewed binding).

I started writing when I was six and have never stopped completely. I wrote a novel when I was twelve and put it in cardboard and Seran Wrap, took it to the library, and put it in on the shelves in the correct alphabetical order.

Jack Smith's *Historical Treasures* contains four essays by the late great artist, poet and film-maker (who died of AIDS-related illness in 1989). Smith made and collaborated on a number of films which have become classics of underground cinema. In 1962, he orchestrated and filmed a Scheherezade party (an early sixties equivalent of 'voguing'), which he edited and screened in 1963 as *Flaming Creatures.* Opposition to the film's 'sordid' vamping erotica led to the film being suppressed in both the U.S. and Europe with conservative critics going so far as to fling their demented bodies across the rude light of the projector beam.

The fourth essay in *Historical Treasures,* "The perfect filmic appositeness of Maria Montez" (which first appeared in *Film Culture* in 1962/63) is Smith's tribute to Maria Montez, the 1940's star of such cheap B-Grade epics as *Arabian Nights, Cobra Woman* and *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.* Blurring the line between exotica, trash and cultural difference, Smith writes: "You may not approve of the Orient but it's half the world and it's where spaghetti comes from. Trash is true of Maria Montez flix but so are jewels…"

Smith exalts the narcissism of Montez (who 'reappeared' in Smith's film *Blond Cobra* as the drag queen Mario Montez), as the quality (of seeing one's own beauty before anything else) transcending the difference between trash film and quality film.

The vast machinery of a movie company worked overtime to make her vision into sets. They achieved only inept approximations. But one of her atrocious acting sighs suffused a thousand tons of dead plaster with imaginative life and truth.

Smith's essay is not simply camp homage to the false glitter of Hollywood. Maria Montez is granted her place in history, the prototype for the disruptive exhibitionism of gay and other sub-cultures which would make such a tremendous impact (in the work of Warhol, Ken Jacobs and Richard Foreman) throughout the sixties and seventies.

Right now, I'm heading on down to the train station, the (almost) complete works of Franz Kafka weighing down my brief case like a brick, but with a little Jack Smith riding high in my top pocket, as queer and close to my heart as is inhumanly possible.

What are arts (newspapers) for in a time of destitution?

Cameron Tonkin, inspired by Gregory Ulmer's visit to Australia, poses questions some of which *RealTime* thinks it's already answering and some it wouldn't begin to

In August this year, Professor Gregory Ulmer participated in a reciprocal consultancy project with the EcoDesign Foundation, designing learning ecologies directed at the invention of modes of sustainability. In order to give an account of Ulmer's public presentations during his time in Sydney without rendering those seminars into a series of bottom lines, what follows is a series of questions.

Journalism has played an important role in a culture of experts, in the invention process by assisting the dissemination of ideas across disciplines. An expert in one area reads a popular—and fundamentally erroneous—account of a discovery or practice in another area, and gets an idea about some problem or solution to a problem. The spread of accounts of chaos theory or even deconstruction through popular magazines is having a considerable impact in the formation of 'eclecteracy', for example. It does not matter that these accounts make little sense out of context, given the way creative invention works. The immediate future of arts journalism involves building upon this disseminating function. The fact is that what is now confined to the arts institutions—the skills, values and practices of design and aesthetic making—is essential to the emerging reasoning associated with electronic technologies. I am convinced that aesthetic-making is the key to moving computing out of the literate ghettos of expertise into the daily life of the general population.

The immediate task for arts journalists is to help make this shift in priorities intelligible and practical, without sounding too self-serving. It will not be self-serving in any case, because the realisation of this goal of universal artistry will require the disappearance of the old way of controlling the arts scene. I predict that some of the strongest resistance to the generalising of arts into society will come from within the present institution which must reinvent itself or be superseded.

Ulmer notes that, "The implications of Derrida's media theory can be stated in one word—popularisation [of the humanities]". Would such an engagement transform the academy or the media? Is there a transformatory mode of engagement that doesn't replicate the role of the 'intellectual'?

Much of Ulmer's infectious enthusiasm seems to come from his early work on conceptual art and the idea that criticism must no longer represent the art-work by talking about it, but rather reproduce and extend what is at work in the text/object by doing something with it. Do any of the reviews in this issue of RealTime comply with Barthes's demand: "Let the commentary be itself a text"?

Ulmer gives post-criticism momentum with the recognition that the humanities are saturated with critiques of institutional modes of thinking/writing/ presenting, but embarrassingly scarce on inventions of new modes. Would a post-critical humanities still be a humanities? Why have reviewers of Ulmer's work consistently refused Ulmer's demand that he be judged only by attempts to do what he is doing? Does questioning assist one in acting or is it a way of avoiding acting by allowing one to question the need for/effect of actions?

Ulmer claims that argumentative/logical thought is dependent upon typographic literacy; with the emergence of electronic media, the new literacy will not sustain such problem-solving methods of thought. Is it possible to present a reasoned thesis on the internet/ hypertextual CD-ROMs/ interactive hypermedia? Does Ulmer's generation of ways of making thinking functional in electronic media make him a computer corporation collaborator? Are Ulmer's attempts to translate the humanities into electronic media conspicuous attempts to save the humanities from redundancy or surreptitious attempts to hasten their retrenchment?

Ulmer's work is based on the recognition that learning (to be a subject) occurs not only as 'schooling' but also via entertainment, family and vocation; and that the paradigm shift offered by the computer is a learning that acknowledges these four interdependent domains, refusing their separation. When you teach/communicate, do you just assume that things get through, or do you negotiate the different ways in which things arrive, pass away, return as other things? What is this newspaper's sustaining ecology through these four discourses? What type of subject is sustained by this newspaper?

Ulmer's presentation at the Power Institute of Fine Arts concerned re-making/theorising the internet home-page by chora-graphing an *unheimlich* manoeuvre. But are people choking on-line, or are they rather diarrhoeatically malnourished? Should we cure blocked passages by prescribing addiction to virtual hype?

One of the biggest challenges presented by Ulmer's theory of grammatology is to try to grasp the history of writing reflexively, to grasp the bias of literacy that prevents us from imaging the possibilities of byteracy (rhymes with literacy). Questioning as a practice is a literate device. Analogies at the scale of epochs are crude, but the analogy here would be with song. Singing was a practice fundamental to orality: oral memory depended on the material qualities of rhythm and rhyme. Singing did not disappear in the literate apparatus, but it was no longer necessary to information design, and it devolved into art and entertainment. The same thing is happening to the question in byteracy. The process by which an individual stands apart or outside of a given situation to observe it critically is not any more essential to learning, reasoning, knowledge, and the like, than is singing. It has been functional within literacy, but is becoming irrelevant in byteracy. Virtuosos will continue to question, and will be as relevant to information design as operative divas. The challenge and crisis is to invent the practice that will supplement and eventually replace questioning as the primary attitude or mood of learning and knowing. We should be looking for events that prefigure this attitude, assuming that the attitude might already exist, even if the practice that might be institutionalised does not.

Cameron Tonkin works with the Eco Design Foundation in Sydney.

I want to be Cary Grant

Kathryn Bird reports a conference about film and performance

I was told a formula for reviewing once, as if the process could be as strategic as screenwriting, or the 12 step program. This fellow who produced reviews in reams—exemplary—said that each piece had to cook. Watch. Read. Put the thing away. Come back in three weeks and write on what has risen to memory's surface.

Fastidiously traced out, the mind-map of one of these reviews might literally read: the original film under investigation + a few sentences from an otherwise average radio interview heard in the car two days ago + this other great book I've just read + 20 years of cinema going. It can be that dense, and that accidental. Me, I find my present formulations on *Caught in the Act*, September's two day conference on Film and Performance at the University of NSW arriving filtered by Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* (a book) and Raul Ruiz's *Poetics of Cinema* (another book), two very fine items that treat the world as a big, cross-referenced place, where the number of cultural items is bigger than our reckoning, and cinema is no longer something we could expect to *cover* by religious attendance at the Cinematheque. They offer models of attentiveness which thankfully manage not to display any of the supposed symptoms of sitting at the receiving end of so much production: short attention span, zip historicity and a mild but constant panic over just how much junk the mind can hold. The way they work, the contents of memory—crucial and incidental—get delivered up in productive, improbable combinations. A film gets treated not as an object which can encode its own readings, but a thing which might be used to scan the culture-bank, tracing reverberations and correspondences way outside the acknowledged debts and nods that films clearly make to one another. Meaghan Morris recently launched Laleen Jayamanne's excellent collection of Australian feminist film criticism with the assessment that these writers transformed cinema from that which they were setting out to explain into that which they were setting out to *think with*. And this seems like a very smart way to act, now.

Caught in the Act evidenced much of this kind of smarts. It was an occasion to recall that film scholars do usually have a rather staggering capacity for producing film titles, star histories, chronologies and fragments from the head and at some apparent surprise to themselves. Done well in a collective context, it can sound like some weird call and response: *Great Dictator*/ end of slapstick/Jackie Chan/personal damage/Hugh Grant. When it was working, it worked as a conference should, as an opportunity for genuine proposition. And there were many papers which covered a great deal of ground, extremely deftly. I'm certain most of us there were stunned by how absolutely we were shunted into Barbara Streisand-land by Pam Robertson's paper on "Streisand's Imitative Performance Style", for example. This weird land populated by a desperate, nervy Judy Garland and a Sherman tank Ethel Merman, with Babs striding on through, all spooky stare and silky bob. And possibly we were even more conflicted by the way that we each discovered our own virgin file of Streisand lore lurking around unaccessed in the unconscious, which is probably what Robertson alluded to when she admitted a deep compulsion for Streisand, not the same thing at all as simply liking her. This was one of the moments when we came closest to figuring how performance was being understood in the workings of this conference. It is the element which structures compulsion, the readiness to return to particular cinematic moments, pointing at them.

This gleaned, we might begin to query the manner in which filmic moments and moments of written elucidation were counterposed throughout the conference. Never have I seen so many clips in such a context. And these were not shown as they might once have been when film studies was more concerned with the shot-by-shot breakdown, or the structuring of *mise-en-scène*. In keeping with the eye for performance, everyone here wanted to let their performers run. Fair enough. When looking at Gena Rowlands, Adrienne Shelly, Orson Welles, Jerry Lewis, it seems only right to give them the floor. But for the exact same reasons, who's going to want to follow them on? I'd be wanting to consider whether I really wanted to sit talking in between John Travolta and Tim Roth, with only my basic actor's props (chair, table, paper, glass of water).

Only a few papers were attending to what it felt like to be jolted in and out of moments of viewing and moments of listening. Pam Robertson backed her paper with a staggering, constantly running assemblage of Babs moments, and this worked well. Ross Gibson actually structured the rhythm of his talk around the breathing patterns of his three clips, two of them lifted from the Bond Store monologues which he wrote and directed for the Museum of Sydney. The third, Orson Welles' 'the sea was made of sharks' speech from *Lady from Shanghai*, he made us watch twice over, attending to changes it occasioned in the breathing of his on screen audience, and in our own. Lesley Stern's collection of clips—showing characters encased in plaster, tied up in ropes, silenced under duct tape—brought us right on side with her piece on the histrionics of *King of Comedy* even before she launched into the unbeatable opening: "Everybody wants to be Cary Grant. I want to be Cary Grant". *Wanting to be* might in fact be the principle which links actor and film scholar, and the aspiration which eventually weakened the work of some of the younger scholars presenting papers at *Caught in the Act*. Too willing to concede space to the films they were studying, their attentiveness took the form of veneration, and they left themselves with not much more to do than to point at and to reprise what was already being shown in the clips. To get as good as Laleen Jayamanne, whose paper was able to conjoin sequences of Charlie Chaplin and *Pret A Porter* in ways that brought ideas out of the montage rather than sought simply to re-display what was inside a sequence, one needs to look incidentally, work harder, and bolster up a productive disrespect. Then one is in the best possible place, in the company of startling presentations that generate more than the parts they work with.

Caught in the Act, *A Conference on Film and Performance was conducted by Lesley Stern and George Kouvaros for the School of Theatre & Film Studies, University of NSW on September 23-24*

Kathryn Bird is a Sydney writer working with Manic Exposeur distributors.

Serious sight gags

Fiona Giles at the opening of *Strictly Oz: A History of Australian Film* at New York's MOMA

The presence of the Governor General and Minister for Foreign Affairs, here for the Special Commemorative Meeting celebrating the UN's 50th Anniversary, lent a stately air to New York Museum of Modern Art's *Strictly Oz* opening, and also ensured the happy accident of Australian commercial television and tabloids covering an arts story.

Together with MOMA President Ronald Lauder, the cool, soon-to-leave Ambassador Don Russell gave the opening address, reinforcing his reputation for diplomacy-with-attitude. Paying homage to MOMA for launching "the most comprehensive body of Australian film ever to be shown in the US", he then referred to the 1906 film *The Kelly Gang,* arguably the world's first feature, as a reminder of the remake by Jagger and Faithfull in the 1960s—and one of the few things "even older than Mick Jagger".

But the crews behind ropes in the foyer looked unhappy with the talent. Hayden refused to comment on anything at all. The historic screening over the next three months of 100 Australian films seemed not to strike him as significant; and his critique earlier that day of the Australian Government's latest configuration for the republic had left him with a desire to speak of nothing but his two daughters who reside in Manhattan, but seemed not to be there.

Evans was more fun, lending his well-known art critical erudition to the subject and dutifully pounding the diplomatic pavement with the view that Australian culture deserves greater recognition overseas and is, now, yes, this time, at last, getting it.

Well, maybe. An initiative of the museum, with support from the Australian Film Commission, *Strictly Oz* results from the personal passion of Laurence Kardish, MOMA's Canadian-born Curator and Co-ordinator of Film Exhibitions in the Department of Film and Video. In contrast to *An Eccentric Orbit: Video Art in Australia,* screened by MOMA in 1994, *Strictly Oz* has attracted considerable attention. Guests included the usual Australian-New York luminaries—Ambassador Richard Butler and Consul-General Jim Humphries—together with AFC executives Cathy Robinson and Sue Murray, the National Gallery's Betty Churcher, Director of Australian Art Expeditions Kate Flynn and our very own attempt at royalty, Penelope Seidler. This pulling power is probably because film is a rich industry, but also a sign of the established reputation of Australian film overseas.

Evidence of Australian film's establishment status came just before the MOMA opening with a question in Saturday's *New York Times* attached to a lengthy feature by its Asia correspondent Philip Shenon, asking if the fine films to be screened by MOMA would show up the paucity of current "serious" film production in Australia, which has given way to commercial comedies such as *Priscilla, Muriel's Wedding* and *Babe. Priscilla* director Stephan Elliott, who happened to be in town for meetings on his new film *Eye of the Beholder,* begged to differ, saying that his own film was "black as black", and so frightened him when he was writing the script that he kept having to leave his desk to recover.

In an extensive review of the MOMA exhibition for the *Times,* film critic Caryn James confines himself to praising the cultural complexity it unveils, a welcome antidote to Hoganesque stereotypes. While paying credit where it's due, he balances the critical view of our contemporary efforts with the comment that it is easy to idealise our earlier films, saying "Mining this series for unknown works of genius is not the best approach".

The exhibition moves from *The Kelly Gang* fragment through Australia's first cinematic golden age with classics such as Raymond Longford's *Sentimental Bloke* (1919) and Paulette McDonagh's noirish *Cheaters* (1930), into the virtually filmless 1960s. Along the way is principally a mainstream tour, with Ken G. Hall featured in three films from the 1930s, as is Charles Chauvel, from the 1930s to *Jedda* in 1955. This is counterbalanced by Tracy Moffatt's *Night Cries* (1990) and the increasingly urban vision of recent films such as *Death in Brunswick* (1991), *Proof* (1991) and *Only the Brave* (1994).

Thankfully, the screening program does not reflect this chronology and the pernicious narrative viruses it might import, but mixes new and old, so that Gillian Armstrong's *One Hundred A Day* and *My Brilliant Career* appear on the same afternoon as Chauvel's *Jedda.* Quirky documentaries *(Cane Toads)* and drug-fucked extravagances *(The Cars That Ate Paris),* are also listed.

The program unavoidably acknowledges the value of state sponsorship, with its sudden surge of examples from the 1970s. Only two films from the 1960s were considered worth resurrecting—Beresford and Thom's *It Droppeth Like The Gentle Rain* and Anderson's *Pictures That Moved.*

To open, Tal Ordell's *The Kid Stakes* (1927), a silent black and white comedy set in Woolloomooloo and Potts Point, was screened with live piano accompaniment to a two-thirds full theatre. It proved a sentimental favourite with the mostly Australian audience, delighted by its mix of hysterical sight-gags (the goat falling from a plane being truly a high point) and harshly hilarious Australian lessons to its cast of children on how to be a Great Guy—otherwise known as poofter/sheila aversion therapy, 1920s style.

The screening offered a light-hearted, if not entirely rigorous, answer to the question raised by Shenon in the *Times.* It's true that New Zealand made the corrosively brilliant *Once Were Warriors* in the same year Australia gave muddle-headed *Muriel* to the world, but Australia does have a reputable archive of comic satire to its credit. The recent emphasis on Hollywood-slick crowd-pleasing exports may have overshadowed an equally valuable tradition that ranges through social realism to romance. But when comedy is as good as *The Kid Stakes,* with its class-conscious pranks and transparently ironic hypocrisies, it is hardly a lesser form.

Strictly Oz: A History of Australian Film, *co-presented by the Australian Film Commission with MOMA closes in January and a smaller version travels to the Smithsonian in Washington, UCLA in Los Angeles, and Atlanta, Georgia for the 1996 Olympic Games.*

Fiona Giles is a New York-based Australian writer.

Mean talk

John Conomos celebrates the dialogue of Richard Price, screenwriter of *Clockers, Sea of Love* and *Kiss of Death*

Amos Poe, the New York based filmmaker, once aptly called the novelist/screenwriter Richard Price "Mr Tension". To see and hear a Price script on the screen is a high octane cinematic experience. Name me a movie from the 80s and 90s—something that comes screaming towards you from the left field thematically, performatively, stylistically—chances are that it was penned by Price, the New York wanderer, with an ear for neo-noir realism that is seldom surpassed in the American cinema.

Price, who knows his street life night cruisers, has a pronounced empathy for the urban outsider. His screenplays are alive to the nocturnal poetry, speech rhythms, and performative edginess of his demon-possessed characters (usually hustlers and cops) as they live out their inexorable psychodramas of love, redemption and power. Once Price described his tortured characters as "strange fish" floating in "the great urban, nocturnal ocean" of Manhattan. His greatest talent as screenwriter is his uncanny improvisatory capacity to capture aurally the paranoid nervousness of hustling in the violent sea called contemporary America. His characters are complex and driven, their percolating performative nuances, gestures, and intuitions suggest that they are displaced and isolated (occupationally and attitudinally), seeing life from a markedly off-beat angle.

Price lives and breathes his cop characters caught in the maelstrom of the city itself—which is a looming character in most of his movies—right down to the noirish argot of their occupation. Witness the key sequence in Spike Lee's *Clockers* where Price consummately renders the jazzy banter of the detectives milling around the body of a murdered fast food night manager. Price knows his cops, their street jokes, professional pragmatism and world-weariness as they examine the bullet holes in the corpse and, particularly, the bullet lodged between the victim's exposed teeth.

A similar scene that expresses Price's understanding of cops as playful, macho "wise-guys" on the right side of the fence (most of the time) takes place in John McNaughton's crime comedy *Mad Dog and Glory.* We see De Niro plying his forensic trade in a tour de force parodic performance (he is a shy cop photographer) in a restaurant around a Mafia stiff, set to the bouncy licks of Louis Prima's version of "Just a Gigolo" emanating from a nearby jukebox.

In McNaughton's fine movie we encounter the characteristic Price trope of representing his characters as tightly wound-up figures in extreme situations. Other examples are Paul Newman as the pool hustler Fast Eddie Fenson in Scorsese's *The Colour of Money,* Al Pacino as Detective Frank Keller, a fast-talking loner out to trap a serial killer in *Sea of Love,* and De Niro (again) as the unstoppable white-heat hustler, whose mouth puts him in a deadly corner in Irwin Winkler's remake of *Night and the City.*

Price's characters deliver their street dialogue with perfect pitch. He is in tune with the low culture obsessions, puns, misnomers, malapropisms and musical dynamism that come out of his characters' mouths. Language, for Price, constitutes an "oral Rorschach test". Like Tarantino, Price writes his characters as if he was a speech therapist. He knows where to place a stop, a sigh, a silence. All of Price's moody characters are word dancers. He lives in their mouths.

Like Welles' baroque movies, Price's screenplays are instantaneously recognisable—think of the films already mentioned and Barbet Schroder's remake of *Kiss of Death*—and you are in the unmistakable aural country of film noir, where vulnerable characters descend into hell. Price delineates them in an empathetic light by focusing on their inner lives. The young misguided drug dealer protagonist of *Clockers* discovers (at great personal cost) the wisdom of Price's own words, "You can screw people so deep that you wind up getting screwed yourself. And the only way out is to come clean."

Price's screenplays represent (to use Scorsese's words describing Polonsky's *Force of Evil)* a "city poetry" where characters are fated in a nocturnal world of sewers, corridors, morgues, crack wars, nightclubs, and hustlers at the end of the line. These themes recur in Price's working class urban novels—*The Wanderers, Bloodbrothers, Ladies' Man, The Breaks* and *Clockers*—which are inextricably intertwined with his screenplays.

Price's ear for urban American speech as cinematic performance resides precisely in his realisation that good dialogue is not just mimetic. In order to render the illusion of cinematic reality one has to create a viable shorthand of how people talk. No-one writes American city talk in the movies like Price.

For Price's thoughts on his screenplays see Amos Poe's interview in Betsy Slusser ed., Bomb: Interviews, *San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1992, and Ned Gebler's interview "A Special Angle of Vision," in* Richard Price, Three Screenplays, *Boston. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.*

John Conomos teaches at the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW.

Film reviews

***Persuasion*, directed by Roger Mitchell, adapted from the Jane Austen novel by Nick Dear.**
A New Vision release.

Immediately you recognise the terrain—an adaptation of an English novel made lovingly, intelligently, in the British manner; and you know it'll be absorbing watching. This time, though, it's movie length, so that means many characters and their connections are established fast—and the first 20 minutes do require close concentration. However, the large screen compensates for the sacrifice of some of the ambience that a serialisation allows, and the script is faithful to its source.

The camera makes it clear from the opening shots that the view will be close-up, penetrating, often partial, so that the viewer will share all the claustrophobia and narrowness of its heroine's world. And this adds to one of the film's strengths. Director Roger Michell establishes that this is an unglamorous, imperfect and grubby world, and an uncomfortable one, too. Its detail is meticulously presented and engrossing.

Austen's satire is strong, and socially she ranges wider than usual in *Persuasion*. The film presents this with relish but the acting and the camera, more heavy-handed than Austen's writing, often border too closely on caricature and the world of Dickens. Nevertheless, they enhance a poignant love story that is told faithfully.

Ultimately, though, it is a wide, sweeping shot of the elegant architecture of Bath that gives a hint of the scope that this film lacks. It is moving and splendid in its detail but it somehow remains an adaptation of a novel. It's certainly worth seeing if that's what you want or happen to be in the mood for—otherwise, see *Exotica*..

Suzanne Blagrove

***Wild Reeds*, Directed by André Techiné**
Greater Union

Those of you who were lucky enough to catch—and enjoy—the screening of Techiné's *Le Lieu du Crime* (during the 40th Cahiers celebration festival in 93 and recently on SBS), this picturesque mixture of the vivid pastoral and the fragile family romance will delight in its seamlessly complex treatment of narrative, character and 'gorgeous' *mise-en-scène*.

So many strange resonances—for obscure reasons—with Chris Marker's *Le Joli Mai* (an essay film made at the time of the Algerian Crisis), except that Techinés film—apart from its being contemporary—has that 'in your face' literary quality that so distinguished the work of other Cahier writers-cum-directors like Godard, Rohmer and Rivette.

It's more than the characteristic slow editing and deep space which mark this and other European 'art house' styles. As Allain Philipon remarks of earlier works of Techiné, it's the rapidity of the process of "union and dissolution" between couples and individuals, which gives sustained and emotional depth to even minor characters in the film.

Cut to the chase: When rich boy François loses his heart to farm boy Serge whose brother has recently perished in the final French evacuation from Algeria, the film expands into a sophisticated political and psycho-sexual drama. First there is Maïté (daughter of PCF Mother, and school teacher to most of the adolescent characters in the film) who also experiences unrequited love for François.

When the 'worldly wise' but embittered *Pied noir* (French born Algerian) Henri (who's 21—fucked both boys and girls he reckons) befriends François, the story turns into a hyperactive billiard game on auto-pilot. Uncertainty as to lasting love, political allegiance, finishing high school, getting laid, leaving town. Henri finally does pack his bags—but not before a flunked fire-bombing of the local PCF office and an abandoned but passionate flirtation with Maïté, a fleeting reconciliation of their emotional and political differences.

Tears, reconciliation with the three friends left skipping merrily over the bridge, but with most of Techinés films, we are still left haunted by human collisions and ricochets, relays of unpredictable events and emotional responses rather than happy endings.

Colin Hood

Three short blacks

John McConchie reviews short films from Adelaide

If the Eastern seaboard seems preoccupied with the glamour of camp—queens, Abba impersonators, marching girls and ballroom dancing—Adelaide's short films have taken more subterranean directions. Despite very different approaches and methodologies, they depict disturbed worlds via distorted visions, evoking the full flights of interior lives. This is dangerous terrain for fledgling filmmakers, an unstable land-fill inviting disaster, yet these films map their way through it with either ferocity or sophisticated cunning.

Leon Cmielewski may have abandoned Adelaide for the Victorian College of the Arts, but he must have taken the detritus of Adelaide's water along in his veins. *Writer's Block* is a stop-motion animation that depicts the extremes of human endeavour: sleep deprivation, frustration, exhaustion. Its surreal exploration takes the form of a typewriter assuming a life of its own. Its allegiances seem to be almost European—Brothers Quay or Jan Svankmeyer—as spoons, forks and typewriter keys transform into expressive mechanical beasts.

Hugh Freytag's *Purge* takes a completely different approach: the world's worst hangover. It could be mistaken for a tract about women who retaliate against abusive partners, except that the director has kept the narrative deliberately ambiguous by concentrating on the unreliability of memory after an excessive bout of drinking. The mise-en-scene alternates between the day after and the fragmented recollections of the night before. When it suggests certain narrative directions, it then denies them in favour of a more realistic depiction of emotional confusion, thereby constructing an unresolvable depiction of murderous rage. Its out-of-focus pre-credit sequence suggests a hypnagogic state, while the opening-proper (a close-up of a chicken carcass) sets the tone of what follows, sustained through a masterful use of montage and by varying the camera's proximity to its subject to sustain a confused mental state. It comes out as a dark and disturbing film.

Shan McNeil's *The Unforgiving Weight of Anatomy* poses complexities of a different kind, mainly by presenting a careful approach to production values and a slick narrative reminiscent of an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. It would be a mistake to dismiss the film as a piece of empty post-modernism. While it happily pimps and pastiches, its real concern evokes that old graffiti line, "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you." Ostensibly, it is a straight-forward narrative concerning a university lecturer hung up on the apocalypse and conspiracy theories, which delights in mingling Eco with Hollywood's canniest, but it actually presents a terrifying reality far worse than its final paranoid twist. The truth is that this is not a world which celebrates the freedom of artistic expression. It is a giant, mundane bureaucracy which greedily usurps the occasional stab of individuality for its own purposes. McNeil and producer Joya Stevens have fashioned the only possible response, a film whose glittering surface allows it to travel, but encodes the very frustrations of the system in which they have to operate.

Such are the flavours of Adelaide gothic. The marching girls may cheer from the margins, but I tip my hat to them.

John McConchie is an Adelaide writer teaching at Flinders University.

Festival of Jewish Cinema

Hayley Smorgon reports

The Elsternwick Classic cinema in Melbourne was buzzing with enthusiasm November 9-26 at the fifth annual Festival of Jewish Cinema presented by the Jewish Film Foundation. This event, which has grown in scope and support over the years, is also screened simultaneously in Sydney and for the second year in Perth. The Festival consists of twenty one films from eleven countries, hand picked by the director and founder of the festival, Les Rabinowicz, from those screened at the Berlin, Cannes, Jerusalem and Venice film festivals. These range from feature length films to revivals of Yiddish classics and documentaries reflecting continuing Jewish concerns and themes in a broad spectrum of genres. The Festival aims to showcase films by Jewish directors addressing themes that would otherwise not be screened in Australia and to present a channel for Jewish identity in the diaspora.

This year most of the films have underlying political and historical references. The opening film *Song of the Siren* (1994) by Israeli director Eytan Fox is a romantic comedy. The love story between Talia Katz and her new boyfriend Noah takes place amidst the terror of the Gulf War. The obsessive lovers are oblivious to the surrounding political climate. Although typically Hollywood in formula, the film questions the sad state of affairs where the Gulf War or the threat of nuclear holocaust have become part of the every day life of Israelis.

Green Fields (USA 1937), directed by Edgar G. Ulmer and Jacob Ben-Ami, is a restored Yiddish classic—an old Jewish tale about peasants enlightened by a learned Jew who stumbles across this community. Behind this naive tale is a spiritual message for Jews to redirect their energy inwards.

Addressing the worrying issues of anti-Semitism and intermarriage, *Love* is a powerful film by young Russian director Valery Todorovsky. The film depicts the life of two Russian teenagers Sacha and Vadim who are obsessed with girls and sex. Sacha falls in love with Masha,a Jewish girl whose family has decided to emigrate to Israel in response to constant anti-Semitic anonymous telephone threats. Sacha believes that love will conquer all despite Masha's aunt's philosophy that "Masha will only marry a Jew like her mother and I did...Love is not everything in life." The film juxtaposes love and ceaseless anxiety over anti-Semitism.

There are more documentaries in the program than in previous years due to popular demand and an ongoing interest in Jewish history. *The Seventh Million* (1995) is a controversial two part documentary made in the Netherlands by author and Israeli newspaper columnist Tom Segev. Rare archival footage reveals the prejudice of the Jews living in Palestine before World War II towards the surviving European Jewry who emigrated to Palestine after the war. The film honestly discloses the inability of the Israeli population to comprehend the European Jew's experience.

The Seventh Million also looks at the role of the Adolph Eichmann trial in 1962 as a turning point in Israeli history—the first time that survivors divulged the many horrors that occurred during the war. The trial condemned Eichmann to death and also functioned as a form of catharsis.

The success of The Festival of Jewish Cinema can be attributed to the fact that it is a community event and an enlightening one for other cultural groups. It is one of the most popular of its kind in the world. It would be good to see Australian films in future programs.

thirteen ways of attending an electronic art symposium

(for Wallace Stevens)

Nicholas Gebhardt in Montreal for ISEA 95

one: Let's rehearse the electronic order of things: within cyberspace, which is both a new frontier and a new mode of existence (or perhaps, in the way of fascists, somewhere to get it right once and for all) and an economically driven zone of deregulated cultural action; a range of translucent or even transgressive identities struggle to shape the future of art and life: a revolution of sorts. Now where's the thought in that...?

two: In a city devoted to malls of every kind, interconnecting tunnels, subterranean relationships, there was something inevitable about the primacy of the net. Of course we knew what we were looking for: a large seventies tower in suicide brown where the less important sessions (artists describing their work) drifted towards the top while what went on below sounded like a Baptist revival meeting.

three: The concept of electronic art is bound to various assumptions about the artistic field. There is the language of revolution, the heightened expectation of death and transfiguration: post-humans, post-politics; expanding networks and shifting morphologies; the utter belief in communication as the essence of life; and the shift to non-linear systems.

four: Metaphors curl and splice, gathering into themselves the metaphysical changes that might occur, setting up a series of other worlds, nether worlds, off-worlds; meanwhile great chunks of reality are sliced off, segued over, turfed out, by an endless cycle of endless science fiction fantasies in which artists get to make it all glow and gloom and flow.

five: Thought is replaced by the power of the market, by hyperbole. And the full range of accepted analytical categories—class, race, gender, ethnicity—are flung and plastered and floated through everything as though to merely use them is to guarantee one's radical credentials as an artist, as a thinker...

six: And this by way of avoiding the question of art altogether, assuming that the components of the image are secondary or even irrelevant; that the frame is simply a window onto another world; that the connections to painting, to sculpture, to music are like that of a Mercedes to a model T Ford...As though abstract art or conceptual art, minimalist art or even cinema had never engaged with the critical potentiality of aesthetic practice.

seven: What becomes apparent is that the thinking surrounding electronic art assumes its own structural presuppositions (in the sense of networks, codes, instantaneity, simultaneity, synchronicity, etc.) as the universal model for all communication, and therefore, for all of life.

eight: There is a fundamental conservatism embedded within the ideology of interaction, of screen-based processes, of immersive environments: the demand for feedback (from our machines, from our lives); the primacy of exchange; and the kinds of lives that come to be lived in the very process of embracing this model of sociality, that eventuate from an aesthetics that all too readily pre-empts its own systematic transcendence.

nine: After a keynote address by the performance artists Arthur & Marielouise Kroker that oozed ethereal metaphors, empty signifiers, and bad puns to sustain its apocalyptic fervour, an audience member was heard to say, "It's the Protestant ministry all over again. Fear of the flesh, end of the world, redemption, all that kind of hocus pocus...Where's the thought in that?"

ten: I kept returning to the idea that "...no aesthetic or artistic practice, for fundamental reasons that derive from the determination of the very essence of art, can declare itself politically innocent." In a city where the question of national identity was peeling back the layers of post-war hegemony, where the economic influence of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) continues to reverberate across the political landscape, the very question of politics was subsumed, suppressed, by an overwhelming sense of determinism, by the laws of technology and of the market.

eleven: What was ignored except for a couple of isolated, and therefore, exceptional, commentaries, was a complex analysis of the modern state and modern corporate forms. In this context, we realise the degree to which the image of art as a screen-based phenomenon replicates the very structures of multinational and military-industrial distribution and production it sets out to oppose.

twelve: As paper after paper proclaimed the power of technology to change lives, to reconstitute the globe as a massive web of interconnected subjectivities, you begin to wonder, how is the artist/thinker to resist the ideological imperatives of networks and codes, of informatics, of a naive futurism, of technological determinism? What are we to call art in a world where the difference between a ride and a revolution seems to be in the type of operating system used?

thirteen:

I do not know which to prefer
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendos,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

Wallace Stevens, from Thirteen Ways of Looking At A Blackbird.

New depths and old distances

Cecelia Cmielewski at ISEA 95 in Montreal

Silicon Graphics, darlings!...ISDN lines, darlings!...Mac AV's, darlings!...computer manipulated video playback, darlings!... heat sensors/light sensors/audio sensors!!!

The exhibition component of ISEA 95 incorporated sound and visual arts, electronic cinema and performances. As a curated event with the theme of Emergent Senses, the works were all able to contribute to the discursive, artistic and media practices surrounding the corporeal and social effects of electronic media.

ZKM (Zentrum fur Kunst und Medientechnologies/Centre for Art and Media technologies) at Karlsruhe, provided a coherent taste of the kind of work produced through the support of artists in this centre. Bill Seaman's *Passage Sets: One Pulls Pivots At The Tip Of The Tongue* is a highly poetic work which encapsulates the term multimedia in its potential multidisciplinary approach. A series of stills, moving images and texts which map a visual poem are able to be manipulated by the user at a podium with a responsive scrolling device, the images are seen on a large screen via a data projector. The user concurrently interacts in a highly subjective manner, rather than following an established direction, and appreciates the visual delicacy, architectural illusions and poetic interpretations of "notions of sexuality in cyberspace".

Keith Piper's piece *Reckless Eyeballing* (Britain) was one of the few works which addressed difference and stereotypical representations. Keith works from London and his work "considers black masculine subjectivity through media imagery" (Catalogue notes). *Reckless Eyeballing* uses 3 podiums from which different commentaries emanate. They are activated by multiple users, reinforcing the way in which group dynamics effect stereotypes in society. A large screen at one end of the gallery has projected onto it various texts and images regarding three representational categories: Sportsman, Musician, Threat.

The playful elements of Piper's piece insinuate the user into the discourse of the piece through provocative invective: "Remember when Ben...fucked up / Remember when Mike...fucked up". The user acknowledges the stereotype and is led to a larger comprehension of some of the complexities surrounding representations of the black male gaze.

Maurice Benayoun (France), whose 35mm computer generated *Les Quarks* is programmed for the *In Spaces Unsuspected* program of the '96 Adelaide Festival, is a video artist and special effects art director. His *Le Tunnel sous l'Atlantique* was housed in the Montreal Contemporary Art Gallery and simultaneously in the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris. The 'explorers' at either end of the tunnel discuss and navigate its virtual images with the assistance of the joy stick and a supervisor, until they see each other's faces when the virtual meeting occurs.

The logistical and technological innovations were very impressive, particularly given that it is unusual for an artwork to be able to call up such resources. On either side of the Atlantic the tunnel used an ONYX SGI, Indy and Next stations, A SGI digital camera, Sharp projector, RINS (ISDN) line and quadraphonic sound system.

In the same gallery, *Osmose* (Canada) was again logistically and aesthetically impressive. An immersive virtual reality based on Char Davies' experiences whilst deep sea diving, *Osmose* relies on interactive participation of the user to fully explore the possibilities of the piece. Her aim is to create "an experience where people can play with becoming more open to representations of nature, more receptive, more contemplative". The digital imaging was developed with Softimage and played through several SGI platforms, however the interactive sound aspects of the piece were the significant innovation. Dorota Blaszczak (Poland), is a sound design engineer who developed the programming in collaboration with Rick Bidlack (Canada) who also composed the music score. The breathing and movement choices made by the navigator construct the form of the sound track. In effect, the navigator is involved in the sound design of the immersive experience. Whilst virtual reality is hailed as an 'out-of-body' experience, there is an ironic relationship with the body in *Osmose*. To take advantage of the piece, those navigators who have a strong awareness of their bodies' functions, particularly controlled breathing and movements, are able to more fully explore the potentials of the sound and visuals.

A very playful and ironic piece *Invigorator* (Bosch and Simons, Netherlands) consisted of 28 wooden boxes joined together by large metal springs both horizontally and vertically. Attached to the boxes are motors controlled by a computer. The fantastic noises and movements of the springs are driven in such a way as to almost imperceptibly move from co-ordination to chaotic discord and then back again. This cacophonic choreography invoked a metaphor for capitalist modes of mass production, and the cycles of consume and produce.

Several virtual sculptures were included this year. Nigel Helyer's *Hybrid* (Australia), and Cantin's *La Production du Temp* / The production of Time (Canada), amongst them. That works in progress and conceptual visualisation were included in ISEA 95 establishes the difficulty artists and mediamakers encounter in completing a project. The demands of high-end technology and the imagination working beyond the realms of the technology are contributing factors.

La Production du Temp was a series of documentations of previous work and a double channel video installation. Cantin explores the idea of what constitutes an image. Light is employed as a metaphor for time, which he describes as his material. The works are very elegant lenses through which are projected either video images of a light bulb suspended in water, or bulbs with specially made filaments that create an image of time, and images about image.

George Legrady's interactive CD ROM/installation *An Anecodoted Archive From The Cold War* was shown in ISEA 94, and the interactive *Slippery Traces* exhibited at ISEA 95 maintains his interest in narratives. It is about creating a narrative—a collection of images on related themes exist on a data base which can be accessed visually. The images are projected via data projector onto a large screen. The user weaves a story by selecting one of the five hotspots on the 300 possible postcards. These hotspots are linked to a different image from the data base selected on a set of values which may be literal, semiotic, psychoanalytic or metaphoric. The algorithm will eventually be able to review the user's choices and give an analysis of them. The aim is to have the audience look at a work and the work look back at the audience.

Australian works at ISEA were mostly CD-ROM based with the exception of Dennis Wilcox's *Zenotrope #2* and *Oscillator* and Jon McCormack's *Turbulence*. The vast distances from the global centres in some way dictate the form of Australian works. Whilst hypermedia may dissolve some of these difficulties, it remains the case that locating larger sculptural or visionary works often preclude them from being installed at greater distances. Similarly for Australian audiences the exposure to larger scale interactive installation/cinematic works from overseas is limited due to expense. Stelarc (Australia), of course, has been intimately involved in the place of the corporeal within electronic and kinesthetic works for his entire career. More of a global nomad than identified with any nation, Stelarc represents the outer edges of the discourses of the cyberbody, and is producing concepts and works which will continue to demand attention, challenge the theory and mark out the edges.

Cecelia Cmielewski is the Cross-cultural and Multimedia Project Co-ordinator at the Media Resource Centre, Adelaide. *She gratefully acknowledges the support of the Industry and Cultural Development Branch of the Australian Film Commission for making her attendance at ISEA 95 possible.*

Thinking about killing

Nic Beames interviews visiting UK multimedia artist Graham Harwood

British artist Graham Harwood was in Perth in October as part of a national visit co-ordinated by the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT). It was standing room only at his presentation, *Virogenesis: Letting Loose the Multimedia Rogue Codes,* a testimony to the huge interest in new media art. His work holds up a mirror to Britain's social status quo: class, consumerism, the art world, the failure of left-right politics, the revival of nationalism, racism and homophobia.

Harwood's presentation opened with examples of his early photocopy works, among which were included copies of money that were seized and subsequently became the subject of a House of Commons select committee on counterfeit and forgery.

This led him to a course in computers "for unemployed people, that cost a fiver a year for two days a week". Thinking, "this is a good idea, I might have to never draw again...great, just feed the images in and it happens", he produced a Gulf War satire—Britain's "first computer generated comic". The style—Saddam Hussein morphed out of *Commando* comic book childhood memories.

One of the restrictions of publishing in Britain is that if you have no money (and can't be sued) the printer must assume liability, leading to an effective censorship by printer rather than publisher. Such restrictions led to the production of *Underground,* a free newspaper pasted up all around London, financed from the proceeds of two rave parties. One issue featured a computer enhanced John Major, with a dick where his nose should have been, right when his own PR people were announcing a recent nose operation. Harwood got interested in "giving famous people diseases". Images of businessmen and politicians were distorted and "computer enhanced" so as to appear monstrous yet recognisable.

More recently, Harwood replaced brand labels on grocery items with rather more satirical and subversive labels: "The fun thing about technology is that Saatchi and Saatchi have the same computer as you can get hold of. They invest millions of pounds to make people believe you need to put bleach down your toilet, and you can usurp it in a very swift way."

Rehearsal of Memory, the primary focus of his Australian presentation, is a forthcoming CD-ROM made in collaboration with residents of Ashworth Maximum Security Mental Hospital. Ashworth is home to some 650 people, 70 per cent of whose crimes include murder, manslaughter, rape, arson and criminal damage. The CD was commissioned for Video Positive, an international art festival in Liverpool.

Harwood's interest was partly personal, in how domestic violence might 'rehearse' through generations. He also stipulated that the work be exhibited within the international showing, not pushed off to the fringe.

In the hospital, Harwood's options for involving the patients were heavily restricted. He was not allowed to take photographs of patients, so he scanned their skin, tattoos, hair, genitals directly into digital form. These personal fragments were combined with the patients' own texts, recitals, interviews and songs. When we see a palm pressed against the screen it is the hand of a someone who killed a complete family. The same hand strums a sweet guitar melody, and hearing that music is unsettling.

Graham Harwood *John Major (British MP)*

NB What I liked a lot about Rehearsal of Memory *was the texture of the skin of the whole thing—like a terrain, like a game. A lot of multimedia we see is hooked into that screen-mania, button-mania thing where you've got everything in little boxes. Push this, prod that.*

GH Yeah, the idea was to sort of make the technology transparent so that as soon as you know how to use it—which is very quick—then you can forget about it. You know, when you watch a film, for maybe five minutes you 'know' it's a film, then you suspend your disbelief and you're away.

The whole piece is designed like the nakedness and vulnerability of the figure. You get closer to this figure than you would a lover, or at least as close, and the machine is acting like an interface between you and them at the closest possible level.

NB You don't know how much of the terrain there is, like the human body as a landscape. I also liked the way you used heavy monochrome throughout. But anything slightly coloured appears like a rich gem out of the greyness.

GH You know why I used all the monochrome—because you do multimedia...

NB Just to make it run faster?

GH That's right!

NB I thought it was interesting that whereas Linda Dement has turned images of ordinary sane people into 'monsters', you've taken what society would call monsters and created a piece of work which brings out the human side.

GH Francesca di Rimini said she thought it was interesting that blokes using bodies keep them whole but women using bodies in their work cut them up. Your common sense would assume the other way round.

One of the weird things about the piece is, 'cause I scanned myself too, some of the bits of flesh are my flesh. It's only pixels on a screen but when you start merging your own flesh with people that have killed or self-mutilated, it's like somehow you're becoming part of them.

NB There's a text from a patient who's there for self-mutilation, that was very close to the bone.

GH I was really scared that I'd meet someone that didn't value human life. When I got there I didn't find that at all. I was talking to people to find out what happened—I mean we all think about killing people, we just don't do it.

In the discussions, the single thing that patients talk about is that moment when no-one loved them at all—it completely does you in. That's why with his text I couldn't even edit it. I found another editor who had 25 or 30 years of editing experience. It was really hard for him too.

NB Were the patients able to see the finished work?

GH The success of the thing was measured in that they brought their own chocolate biscuits along, which I was told is like a real sign of acceptance. They've sort of become my friends, but you've got to remain suspicious—like you don't say "Give us a ring". One of the things people usually say to me is, "Aren't you exploiting these people?" and I say "Yeah, but because they're exploiting me!"

At the moment they can't actually talk outside the institution itself. The deal is, if it's art and the internet can be art, then this could give these people access to the World Wide Web and enable them to talk about their own condition and the conditions of the staff in a very direct way. So the deal is: I exploit them and they exploit me—we've come to an understanding.

Rehearsal of Memory *is to be published on CD by BookWorks in early 1996. Inquiries to Rehearsal@artec.org.uk.*

Nic Beames is Multimedia Artist for DUIT at the University of Western Australia DUIT are co-producers of Mooditj—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Contemporary Arts one of five Australia on CD *titles financed through the* Creative Nation *initiative. Nic consults independently in multimedia: nbeames@uniwa.uwa.edu.au*

Re-viewing the everyday

Derek Kreckler finds new growth: *skadada@pica*

skadada are imagery and movement paced with a rhythmic beat. The 'music', situated somewhere between a club and the hubbub of a kitchen, utilises synthesised samples from the everyday: factories, shipyards, foundries, backyards, train tunnels and kitchens. skadada explore the hyperrealism of their/our confused consumerism and in their own words, "the body and the emergent senses", a body transformed, extended and amplified by technology.

From the huge banality of projected bar codes to the eroticism of Burtt's bald head spinning, twisting as a beam of video light, Katie Lavers' computer manipulated video images achieve an iconic status. The large-scale projected Burtt is balanced by the real time and minimalist, physically articulate Burtt. The interactive body with a twitch of an eloquent shoulder blade, a finger tip, triggers events in the performance space. He spins inside a vertical column of light, lifting his arms to cut the beams—a cylinder of interactive pin spots. As the light is broken, a sound is triggered: Patterson's midi system broadcasts a round of Chinese song—courtesy of and sung by artist Matthew Ngui—a melodic canon generated by Burtt's body. "Red Yoyo" is hypnotic and mesmerising.

skadada@pica is skadada's first extended performance work. It takes the form of a kind of techno cabaret. Short stories told by Burtt link image and movement, reminding me of Laurie Anderson. The form is episodic. "Jacques Tati's Jug" for instance, tells the story of a washing machine which performs a perfect samba; "Flip Book" looks at remote control and TV dinners whilst "My Hat " asks, "well what does a hat sound like?" The mood is cool and droll, the images seductive and the sound moves from the melodic to the cacophonous.

skadada reviews the everyday. Burtt's movement reminds me of mortality. Few of us will ever move as well, ever have the dexterity of motion that situates Burtt as a blur between images and idea, generating actions that spawn, actions that give. Burtt, Patterson and Lavers have created a unique yet utterly familiar vision. This is not Louis Nowra looking for the real in a clichéd mélange of symbols. This is local voice and colour creating meaning, effecting displacements and minute variations, commenting and modifying those realities our mainstream arts agencies avoid or describe as if in the latter stages of drought. This is not high art but it is essential art.

Of course, this young skadada had some downsides. Some of the direction was rather too pedantically tied to the technology, causing the staging to be overly tight. Some images were a little glib, despite their relationship to other content elements. Overall, however, the technology, encompassing touch-sensitive floor panels, infra-red triggers, slide and digital video projection was witty, urbane and intelligently integrated into the landscape of the performance. Image and sound combined to complement and enhance Burtt's performance yet operated as powerful works in their own right.

skadada@pica Katie Lavers

If skadada are able to continue, as I believe they should, they will no doubt have a hard time of it. Australia wastes its human resources. skadada may, as so many before them, edge close to the mark—their best performances reserved for the few. In their autumn years will they turn to each other and ask, "what happened?" I hope they remember the names of the enemy—our major and 'excellent' (sic) theatre companies who, mob like, pretend to be doing, but haven't got a hope in hell of achieving more than derivation and imitation ad absurdum. Yet skadada are essential viewing if one is to gather a complete picture of contemporary performance in Australia.

We've seen so much of this in Australia: average work, amazing work, profound work, all kinds of work but work which seeks to expose and explore the spirit of the under-encouraged and underground. The best, like skadada, follow their own voice and employ a tenacious discipline to realise their ideas. What a joy it would be to see a linking of these energies with the so-called mainstream. I imagine an intelligence and growth; some see a calamitous infection. There will be no important growth in Australian theatre and performance until artists like skadada are sought after for their opinions, ideas and skills. This is the source culture—the grass roots—let them grow!

skadada@pica performed by Jon Burtt, visuals by Katie Lavers, sound by John Patterson. Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. September 6 - 16, 1995.

Derek Kreckler is an artist currently living and working in Western Australia.

The X-rayed Hamlet

John Potts sees a work-in-progress showing of Robert Lepage's multimedia Shakespeare at ISEA 95

Attending Robert Lepage's *Elsinore* is like watching *Citizen Kane* for the first time. Or more accurately, it's like seeing *Citizen Kane* in 1941 for the first time. Lepage's one-man multimedia version of *Hamlet* is a virtuoso exploration of a developing technological form; like *Kane,* it fuses astonishing technique and original artistic vision.

Elsinore premiered in Montreal in November; Lepage presented the first three acts to participants at ISEA in September. The work's melding of performance and technology (video, computer-generated visuals, sampled and digitally treated sound) is an indication of the way Lepage is heading. In Quebec City he has acquired an old fire hall which he is converting into La Caserne—a multimedia laboratory equipped with satellite links and technology designed for live interactive performance.

The greatest virtue of *Elsinore* is not its array of technology. This is no production hypnotised by its own apparatus: Lepage is an artist first, technician second. Many of the other works presented at ISEA, particularly in the performance and sound fields, suffered from a heavy-handed over-use of digital techniques. Computers programmed to "play" genetic codes as music; performances swamped with digital delay and a deluge of samples; onslaughts of computer noise in the absurd name of the "post-human"...these and other travesties were vindication of Jacques Attali's maudlin prophecy of the 1970s. The artist as cybernetician, he warned, "is transcended by his own tools". Too often at ISEA we were left with barren sounds and spectacles: the machine playing itself.

Elsinore, then, was an enormous relief. Here was an artist who deployed technology in pursuit of an aesthetic goal. Lepage has focussed on Hamlet's famous indecisiveness, narrowing the action into his own solitary person, using the technology to externalise the poetry and drama of the protagonist's thought. The result, as Lepage claims, is an "X-rayed" Hamlet. While the action apparently takes place in the protagonist's head, it occasionally has the look of an encephalogram."

Lepage plays every character, with the exception of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are "played" by observation video cameras. The two hapless rascals are represented by their points-of-view: we see Lepage as Hamlet from the different perspectives of the cameras, projected onto screens. Digital audio treatment allows Lepage to play Claudius (his natural pitch lowered a tone or so) and Gertrude and Ophelia (raised in pitch). The dexterity of the audio technician in rapidly switching between "voices" is one of the many marvels of this production.

The presiding marvel, however, is that none of these techniques appears gimmicky; each has an integral function in the work. A Claudius speech is accompanied by a green voice analysis wave-form, projected onto Lepage's face: this adds to the mood evoked by the character. The set is washed with grey-blue video, summoning an emotional landscape to parallel the Elsinore setting.

The music score is played live by composer Robert Caux, seated at the foot of the stage with his keyboards and equipment. The sound design incorporates synthesiser effects, quasi-period music (sampled lutes), and treatment of Lepage's voice. The latter technique is especially effective, sampling a phrase or key word, looping and detuning it, superimposing the treatment over Lepage's speech. The effect is used sparingly and with a poetic grace that could serve as a model for the use of sampled sound in performance.

Like Orson Welles, Lepage is at heart an illusionist; *Elsinore* is full of ingenious tricks achieved with minimal means. Hamlet's doublet, undone, becomes Ophelia's dress, which, with lighting effects and malleable stage, becomes the pond in which she drowns. Lepage uses some brazenly low-tech tricks in this hi-tech show; creaky stage machinery is at deliberate odds with the seamless electronics. A vigorous dialogue between Hamlet and Claudius is achieved via a simple block of wood as stage prop, serving as, alternatively, stool and footrest.

And, finally, the whole thing would fall in an over-ambitious heap if Lepage couldn't act. But—most emphatically—he can (in both English and French.) His Hamlet is convincing : quiet, controlled, complex. Neither Olivier-effete nor Gibson-blustery, his is a Hamlet of the interior. And he's not too bad at all the other characters as well.

Elsinore received a tremendous ovation at ISEA, as a work-in-progress. Such a momentous project deserves to be seen around the world. Australians can take heart that Lepage, who has toured here with *Needles and Opium* and *Bluebeard,* at least has us in mind. In describing the virtues of his new hi-tech lab, he told a Montreal magazine: "We will be working via satellite, experimenting with performances that take into account that when it's midnight in Quebec, it's noon in Australia."

Don't sign away those electronic rights

Tony Davies, editor of Arts Law's *ArtLines* discusses with Keith Gallasch the need for a legal advice publication about the digital arts

KG What are Artlines' *concerns?*

TD I think our concerns are mostly digital. And I think possibly, through a process of osmosis, everyone's concerns are going to become increasingly digital, though perhaps not mostly digital.

KG Even in areas where we thought they would not have been?

TD I think so. No-one can predict what will happen in the future, I think it is futile to do so, but digital technologies will infuse themselves into society, perhaps the way telephones did. I don't think Alexander Graham Bell predicted the impact of the invention of the telephone.

KG What is the need for Artlines?

TD A need for information about legal rights, about the law, and what you can and can't do, especially with other people's work. Also there is apprehension, certainly amongst people who have yet to touch a computer, including a lot of creators who work in traditional media. We want to reach those people, and reassure and perhaps encourage them to get out there.

KG To protect their own work and further it?

TD In terms of the law, certainly. You have to look at how other people are going to use your work. There are a lot of concerns at the moment about artists signing away the electronic rights to their works for a song, in the belief that electronic rights really will be an ancillary form of income for them. In the future electronic rights may be a primary form of income.

KG Who will be the readership of Artlines?

TD *Artlines* has been sent to all Arts Law members, but it is aimed at all people who are interested in the creative applications of new technologies. Film makers in particular should really be taking note of the new issues. To an extent, it is also aimed at lawyers, and lawyers need to learn to deal with these issues and they also need to learn how artists think as well. There is always a disjunction between social practice or between the way artists work, and the law. Copyright is a good example. Certainly in the age of appropriation, copyright can't come to grips with the way a lot of artists work. Amongst the creative community, it is aimed at those people working with new technology. They need to know what they can and what they can't do, who they should be seeking permission from. So there is a quite pragmatic focus.

KG So how do you reach all these people?

TD At the moment, the strategy is to let the creative community know about it and get it to them on paper. We are 'dead tree publishers' still. Sooner than we originally planned to, we will also be getting it online. It is a lot cheaper and in the case of *Artlines,* we will be really getting to the people interested in the area. Most people working in digital media have gone online. Six months ago, everyone was talking about CD ROM, now no-one is talking about CD ROM. They are talking about publishing on the World Wide Web.

KG The content transcends legal advice with examples of recent Australian multimedia, CD ROM and online work. But you also give examples, like Negativland's scrap with U2's record company. The article doesn't seem to me to come down on either side of the argument and we know that U2 themselves were not unsympathetic.

TD Negativland taped U2, and they taped some out-takes of some well-known disk jockeys in the States, and combined them into a new recording. The legal and artistic community is ambivalent about the question of copying. I suppose copyright, since the 19th century at least has always looked at trying to balance the rights of users against the rights of creators. Where you set that balance, in each case, will probably be different, and it is very hard to say what is right and wrong. I suppose one way of looking at it is that you should treat others the way you yourself would wish to be treated. We have to maintain a stance of ambivalence at this stage.

KG So Artlines *will be about the ongoing copyright issue.*

TD There are other issues like trademark law which is designed to protect business reputation, to protect logos and images. But a lot of people have pointed out that our social selves are increasingly constructed out of trade marks. An American scholar has said that perhaps the only shared cultural memory in America is the death of Bambi. "Bambi" is a registered trade mark of Disney Corp.

KG I went to a lexicography seminar where I heard that Velcro was giving the Pocket Oxford, I think, a hard time for using 'velcro' as a verb. They wanted it to appear only with a capital V, only as a noun, and with the copyright marker. They were not happy with what was being said with 'velcro' in Australian English.

TD Velcro is a trademark, but it's also part of our language. Who owns it?

KG You feature an interview with Hou Leong who has incorporated his head and sometimes body photographically into iconic images of Australian men. What kind of procedures does he go through to be allowed to use some of the images, like the "I'm Australian as Ampol" image?

TD I guess it was an ironic comment on the mass media's acceptance of multiculturalism. Hou sought and got the permission of Ampol and the advertising agency. The question as to whether or not he should have done that is unclear. A lawyer will always say be safe rather than be sorry. He was advised by Arts Law that the safest thing to do is to write a letter to these people and get permission.

KG It raises issues about the artist as subversive, doesn't it? As soon as you ask permission you compromise yourself to a degree.

TD That's right but Hou wasn't interested in that, only in the final image. It's also interesting that he could only have produced the works using digital image manipulation. But at the same time, he doesn't see himself as a digital artist. In his view it is another tool.

KG Artlines *also provides definitions of techno-terminology (bandwidth, flaming, hypermedia) information on Australian Film Commission and other sources of assistance for multimedia developments, e-mail and Web addresses for artsites, as well as publications and seminars pertaining to the legal issues. How long will* Artlines *have to go to print and what is its majority audience?*

TD We had a conference recently on getting started in multimedia and online publishing. It was excellent to see the large number of artists turn out at the Art Gallery of NSW. We do get a lot of what you would call 'suits' at our seminars, but at this one they were in the minority, so that was good sign that artists are interested in the issues. I suppose we are in a transitional stage between the offline and the online world, and during that transitional period at least, there is a need for a continuing, printed source of information and public seminars.

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Anarchy on the internet

Boris Kelly @ <http://wimsey.com/anima/ANIMAhome.html>

I never knew what a synarchist was until I discovered ANIMA. A synarchist—derived from synchronous, synthetic anarchy—"is an individual linked technologically, socially, collaboratively and professionally in organic spontaneous relationship webs instead of in rote linearly defined or institutionally directed roles". So there. Making this anti-system possible is a computer assisted community network facilitating intercommunications within the "nomadic virtual tribe". There are no meetings, no dues, no qualifications except the self-declaration of participatory engagement: "I network, therefore I am".

ANIMA is a multimedia cultural information service for the internet which provides a forum for artistic expression, critical analysis, educational outreach, experimental projects and research information. The overarching focus of the project, according to chief WebWeaver Derek Dowden, is to research net design, which makes ANIMA a site for experimentation with online multimedia publishing interface, structure and design. The web becomes both the subject and medium of dissemination of the group's work. Work on the site began in 1993 and the project launched in March 1994. ANIMA currently runs several hundred html pages and GIF images. In designing the site the group has tried to take into account the frustration of excessively long download times for images and have attempted to strike a balance between visually appealing graphic content and low bandwidth speed. A particularly welcome design feature, given the vast acreage of the site, is the Fast Find Index which presents the entire web node in a logical hierarchical structure for top sight access—a methodology which, theoretically at least, defies ANIMA's underlying synarchist principles but, hey, who's complaining.

Following a fairly standard structure ANIMA is divided into zones, each with a particular focus: ART WORLD—images, ideas, sounds and experiences of digital art spaces on the net worldwide; SPECTRUM—a selection of new arts and media publication on-line; ATLAS—a resource and reference library; NEXUS—artists' projects online; TECHNE—research on interface, immersion and interactivity; PERSONA—community voice/vision—forum for individual exploration and community discussion of the evolving world media network; and CONNECTIONS—special events from around the world.

With so much to choose from I freaked out and decided to go just down the road to the Australian National University Art Serve location <http://rubens.anu.edu.au/index.html> offering an extensive collection of art and architecture mainly from the Mediterranean basin. This server offers access to around 16,000 images—1.6Gb of data—all concerned in some way with the history of art and architecture and claims to have over 14,000 accesses per day which, if true, would make it an opportunity missed by prospective advertisers. The site has a mysterious logo on its home page indicating it has been designated the honour of being amongst the top 5% of web sites, but no-one seems to know who is responsible for the award or what criteria are used to determine it. But in my opinion the honour was deserved. The use of thumbnail images to allow for the pre-selection of full-screen graphics was welcome for the savings made on download times. It's a feature which should be standard on the Web where so often the images, when they finally do appear, aren't worth the wait. The thumbnail gives you the option of choosing to look at an image in more detail or of overviewing the collection in a single screen as was the case with the Leni Riefenstahl examples from *Olympiad* (1936) and *Triumph of the Will* (1934).

I was immediately struck by the inclusion of Riefenstahl as the only artist listed in the otherwise categorical main index of the site and wondered why a 20th century photographer was given such prominence. So I e-mailed the webmaster and asked, only to be curtly told that Leni Riefenstahl was one of the most prominent filmmakers of the 1930s but, perhaps, I just had a problem with fascists. Naive as I am, I imagined the only people who didn't have a problem with fascists were, well, fascists and given that only the day before the Sons of Gestapo had bombed a train in the USA I didn't quite know what to say or think. So I clicked and moved on.

But it must have been the phase of the moon which led me immediately to the work of one Antonio Mendoza whose personal gallery was a lusty cornucopia of pornographia which I'll leave readers interested in such pursuits to discover for themselves. More sobering was the OTIS site: http://sunsite.unc.edu/otis/otisinfo.html#what-is—an acronym of Operative Term Is Simulate, a place best described as an open-ended collective of artists where works can be posted and ideas exchanged. Any type of original art is welcome. Photos, drawings, raytracings, video stills, paintings, computer-assisted renderings, photos of sculptural/3D pieces, photocopier art, zine covers, quilts, tattoos and pyrotechnic displays are all mentioned.

Although OTIS' focus is still-image, it does have space set aside for animations, self-executing slide-shows and multimedia works. Instructions, including copyright information, are posted for prospective exhibitors. OTIS comprises an archive of thousands of images, a list of participating artists, tips on compression, resources, links and so on. Frankly, what I saw on OTIS was less than spellbinding but it is a fact of life that most images on the net take on a homogeneity of surface and colour quality which immunises the viewer against the possibility of pleasure. Nevertheless, the desperate or foolhardy may wish to paste something on the virtual walls of OTIS.

ANIMA is a project financed by the Canada Council (Media Arts), the City of Vancouver and the University of British Columbia and although a worthy enough enterprise it suffers from trying to do too much. There is a lesson here for Australian public sector organisations wishing to construct grand joint ventures on the internet. I imagine the ambitious ANIMA concept may have looked great as a project description in a grant application but my tour of the site reminded me of Warhol's aphorism "Always leave them wanting less". At this stage in the development of online services it is wise for developers to adopt a less-is-best approach to design both in terms of download times and interactivity. To some extent we have to assume that users will be frustrated by the cumbersome, arcane qualities of the net by the time they get to our site, so we should give them a break by providing high quality content which is technically transparent and functional.

Boris Kelly is a Canberra-based performer, screenwriter and net surfer.

Myopic notion

Annemarie Jonson reflects on *Creative Nation's* multimedia initiatives one year on

The *Creative Nation* statement (one year old in October), though admirable in its elevation of the arts to commonwealth policy status, served up slabs of grandiloquent spindoctoring: a curious alliance between instrumentalist goals of increased efficiency ("the government intends to develop programs aimed at improving the [cultural industries'] management efficiency and links with other industries"); economic rationalist shtick ("we need to ensure that good ideas can be turned into commercial product") and the appropriation of notions of creativity to support a deeply jingoistic nationalism: "Culture is that which gives us a sense of ourselves ... Culture ... concerns self-expression and creativity. The work of writers and artists like Lawson, Roberts and Streeton offered an Australian perspective of Australian life—a distinct set of values ... reflecting a distinctly Australian experience." Personally, I prefer these sorts of sentiments in the original German.

Amongst all this hubris was a clarion call to arms at the dawn of a new epoch: "we must address the information revolution and the new media not with fear and loathing, but with imagination and wit." How? In the view of the architects of *Creative Nation,* this means mobilising significant amounts of revenue to support a "vibrant multimedia industry", "ensuring that we have a stake in the new world order" while retaining a "distinctly Australian identity". In dollar terms, the price of our ticket to the new world order translated as a cool $84 million over four years: an allocation of $45 million to the Australian Multimedia Enterprise (AME), $20 million (over the first 4 years) to the Cooperative Multimedia Centres (CMCs), $7 million to the *Australia on CD* program, about $4 million to the Multimedia Forums program, around $5 million to the AFC, about $1 million to the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) for multimedia education and training and some $700,000 to the Australian Children's Television Foundation.

It doesn't require much RAM to work out the tilt of the playing field here. The AME, for example, intends to invest in commercially viable 'product'. Run by a corporate lawyer and staffed by young industry top guns, the AME is, by its own description, a venture capitalist aiming to catalyse the production of demonstrably profitable multimedia titles and services. Applications for investment funding are now open, and the Enterprise has announced its first successful proposals.

The CMCs were initially vaunted as sites for research and development, as well as for the education and training to develop multimedia skills (the "critical pool of talent" *CN* says is required). With the government's decision that they should become self-funding enterprises, they look increasingly to being driven by short term commercial imperatives. Early in the piece, there was a degree of optimism amongst some artists and arts advocacy bodies involved in the consortium development process that the Centres would, as an integral part of their function, broker access to high-end multimedia technologies for artists—that is, if they were genuinely committed to creative R&D, a process which takes time and doesn't necessarily provide an immediate financial return. With bottom lines now setting the CMCs' agenda, the involvement of artists, let alone integrally, is looking far less certain. Paradoxically, the very viability of the 'industry'—its ability to innovate and create new forms—is itself dependent in the longer term on the high-end experimentation and R&D which is the stock in trade of contemporary artists. There are plentiful instances State-side of the medium-to-long-term flow-through effect from techno-artists' research and experimentation into quality 'product'. Myopic policy makers would do well to take note.

Throughout this year, some 18 consortia submitted proposals for funding of CMCs across the states. Two were funded: the Access Australia CMC to be headquartered at the Australian Technology Park in NSW, with a consortium comprising major NSW universities and industry partners; and the IMAGO CMC in WA, similarly, a university/industry group. Both come equipped with voluminous business and strategic plans and very chi chi logos. Other states are currently vying for the remaining Centres and results are expected to be announced this month.

The *Australia on CD* program, "designed to showcase a wide range of Australian cultural endeavour, artistic performance and heritage achievements" has already seen some action. Five CDs of "national significance" have been funded in Round One, and will be distributed to every school in the country. Here's the "wide range": Did we get one about Australian art? Too right -*Under a Southern Sun,* a catalogue of 50 great Australian works of art. (We're thinking Streeton, Nolan, Roberts, Drysdale, Boyd, McCubbin...or maybe Nolan, Drysdale, Boyd, Roberts, McCubbin, Streeton...). How about the war? No worries. *Australia Remembers* does WW11 in *son et lumiere.* Then there's the *Tales from the Kangaroo's Crypt,* our national prehistory via the fossil record. But let's not forget *Backstage Pass*— "an exciting performing arts concept with an on-stage and behind the scenes focus" — with hot links to a do-it-yourself guide to Stelarc's stomach sculpture performance...*not.* A WA project called *Mooditj* will look at the relationships between contemporary Australian indigenous arts and cultural heritage. Applications have closed on Round Two and successful projects will be announced before the end of the year.

The Multimedia Forums were an object lesson in how to disenfranchise the arts and intellectual community and defuse debate on the social, aesthetic and political implications of multimedia. Suits, business cards and cellulars were mandatory at all three 1995 sessions (on "the government's multimedia initiatives", "creative aspects of multimedia" and "export markets") which, despite their diverse monikers, spanned the gamut of issues from fast bucks to, well...fast bucks. Perhaps this is not surprising. At a recent meeting a high ranking functionary from the Department of Industry, Science and Trade which administers the program was asked whether the government's intent in supporting multimedia is primarily commercial, or primarily about cultural and creative concerns. (Naive? Perhaps. Some would even say artificially dichotomising terms which need not be mutually exclusive.) The DIST operative shot back with an affirmative on the former objective: no ambiguity in his mind on the exclusivity of the terms. Forums planned for 1996 will focus on online and new technologies, copyright, marketing and distribution and—in a laudable attempt to make good on the program's past failure to accommodate creative artists— "building bridges between the creative community and industry". They're going to need the Golden Gate.

All this is not to suggest that industry development policy, and government support to kickstart industry viability, is necessarily a bad thing. (It's commendable that the incumbent Labor government has had the foresight to deliver a reasonably resourced policy on new media, with some good open access initiatives in relation to users—as opposed to producers—of content; and too abominable to contemplate the consequences of a Coalition win next year.) However, any genuine attempt to engender the kind of "creativity", "innovation" and "leading edge" practice the government purports to be fostering requires that a diverse range of objectives share the policy agenda: critical, aesthetic, cultural and social as well as economic ones. A number of Australian artists, though their own efforts and against the financial and geographical odds, have established themselves at the forefront of the cultural and intellectual community's version of the microeconomists' 'world best practice': witness the disproportionately large representation of Australians at the recent International Symposium on Electronic Arts in Montreal, and the status of artists like Jon McCormack and many others in international new media art.

Direct support for artists developing multimedia works has been left squarely to the Australian Film Commission and its $5.25 million over 4 years (which works out to 6 cents in every dollar out of the $84 million over four years allocated overall to multimedia). The Commission intends to fund projects which are exploratory, innovative, geared to lower budgets and high risk: projects which, in other words, are unlikely to be funded under the objectives of the other multimedia initiatives set up under *CN,* notwithstanding the rhetoric. A number of works have already been funded, including a collaboration between multimedia artist Brad Miller and writer McKenzie Wark. Miller created the CD ROM *A Digital Rhizome,* based on Gilles Deleuze's *A Thousand Plateaus,* and Wark is the author of the book *Virtual Geography.* Another project to receive funding is the development of a prototype multimedia game title by the cyberfeminist electronic artists VNS Matrix, based on their ongoing work *All New Gen.*

It might be asked what the Australia Council has been doing in all this. Apart from channelling the genius of Hugh Mackay, dismantling peer review and heaping invective on artists, not a great deal. As their self-promotional hyperbole goes, they have been supporting electronic and media artists for years, and indeed, artists in these areas have been receiving support, predominantly through the Hybrid Arts Committee. But, 13 months after *CN,* Council has yet to establish any public policy position on support for multimedia arts practice. Council plans to announce its new initiatives in early 1996—in terms of the cultural policy, a mere year and a half or so after the event.

In the interim, artists will doubtless continue to work critically and innovatively with the new technologies, helping to ensure that multimedia culture in this country develops beyond—in the words of digital artist John Colette—the "acumen of a computer sales presentation".

The opinions expressed in this article are strictly personal.

More than kangaroo scrotum coin pouches

Keith Gallasch talks to APM's Managing Director Alan Kuczynski about training in arts and entertainment marketing

APM Training, Marketing & Consulting has been operating in Sydney since the mid 80s offering a one year diploma in marketing either full or part time and a part time course majoring in marketing the arts and entertainment.

KG Where did the impulse come for the arts and entertainment courses—in response to a burgeoning market?

AK It's been going for four years now. In marketing training most of the emphasis is on general marketing principles. Of course, there's been a lot of specific emphasis on the hospitality industry but people were contacting us for a course which specialised in the arts, entertainment, events and sport.

APM students preparing for the industry

KG What kind of people enrol in the course?

AK From a variety of places, the music industry—from Sony and Polygram—and the Australian Ballet, the museums and sporting organisations. The part-timers tend to be already working in these areas and need to improve their knowledge of marketing, or maybe because they want to get into it, or they may have been given a title which includes the word 'marketing' but they haven't had the training.

KG But the arts and marketing don't always go comfortably hand in hand.

AK It's an area where marketing hasn't been sophisticated in the past. With *The Phantom of the Opera, Miss Saigon,* Yothu Yindi, and the Melbourne Cup, we can see the difference that effective marketing can make. The creative emphasis in the arts and entertainment industry means that it's not been business oriented.

KG Creativity is the primary issue in the arts, not the selling of the products, even though you have to survive.

AK Creative integrity is for many people the most important thing but now there's a recognition that there is need for a balance. The blockbuster shows like *Phantom* have found the formula that the general public is interested in, without really detracting from the creative quality.

KG It's not just a one way process, just catering for an audience, is it? It's also a matter of shaping that audience. They are told that these big musicals are important, expensive, value for money, one-off, and part of a package that can include a meal, tickets, travel and memorabilia.

AK Culture on this scale traditionally has been something that a small percentage of the population thought was suitable for them. These musicals have changed that. You also have something like *Opera in the Park,* a great way for the general public to actually get a taste of opera without having to go and pay $80 for a ticket to find out if they like it.

KG What's the teacher-student relationship like at APM?

AK We do a lot of marketing consultancy for our students. They talk to us about specific problems they're having at work. It's a business relationship rather than student-teacher relationship. My title is not dean, it's managing director. In our mentor program, every student is allocated to a company and they work for them one day a week every week of the year. It's not the traditional two weeks' work experience of photocopying. They work on specific projects and get to know how the organisation works, the politics and the culture, and how a marketing manager works.

KG In your opinion, is the Australian arts and entertainment industry developing its marketing capacity to the fullest?

AK I think our 'naivety' and 'she'll be right' attitude whilst helping to make us a friendly and fun loving culture is now working against us. For example, we've got the Olympic Games. What happens next? There is a five year gap before the games. What should small business be doing during that period? The five star hotels are doing a great job; what about the three star hotels? When will souvenir shops realise that not everyone wants to buy kangaroo scrotum coin pouches but are also looking for quality items? Those involved in the arts, entertainment and sport have a great opportunity in front of them. Australia is known for animals, buildings and beaches. The opportunity exists to broaden this to include entertainment.

When I am old, I shall wear purple

Nine women aged 62-75 from Canberra's Older Women's Network and eight 18-25 year olds from Canberra Youth Theatre came together for this show for the Festival of Australian Theatre, choreographed and directed by Leisa Shelton (Theatre Is Moving) with composer Kimmo Vernnonen and lighting designer David Longmuir. Working separately with the groups Leisa began by asking each to contribute 5 things that were important to her, 5 things that she saw as possible, 6 things her hands could do, working towards more complex ideas to do with pain, joy, 6 ways to comfort someone. Interestingly, the latter was difficult for the older women to articulate—they would sit with, do whatever needed to be done for, help to get over and, much as they hated to admit to the cliché, make cups of tea. The younger women had a more intimate physical vocabulary for comforting. Still, many of the older women had come to Australia from England—either with young families or to marry Australian servicemen they had never met. They are more familiar with stoicism, getting on, making things work.

They spoke about jewellery (many wore rings as the only reminder of dead female relatives).and we combined their live and recorded voices with some of the physical movements (5 things my hands can do). The five night season at Theatre 3 was sold out to a 70% female audience, half of them over 40, surprised and exhilarated to see work that "had something to do with them" The company hopes to repeat the work for Senior Citizens Week in Sydney next year.

Win one get one free

Keith Gallasch reports on the Blundstone Contemporary Art Prize

The number of arts prizes available in Australia is expanding rapidly, allowing artists one-off if highly competitive sources for much needed financial support outside the various grant systems and sales of their works. John McQueenie, one of the instigators of the Blundstone Contemporary Art Prize, says that prize giving for artists "is inherently problematic but the corporate sector likes to give prizes". The solution, he argues, is "to remodel the criteria for prize giving so that part of the available funds goes to development" of the art form. The Blundstone Prize gives the artist, in this the first year it's Melbourne visual artist Angela Brennan, $20,000 and a ticket to Europe, but an additional $10,000 goes to Launceston's Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery to acquire works from the competition exhibition. This policy encourages the gallery to collect the works of living artists and in doing so rewards competitors other than the winner of the prize.

McQueenie, who trained in Tasmania as an artist, is the Arts Officer for the Trades and Labour Council. He used to be on the board of management of Chameleon, an artist-run contemporary artspace in Hobart, housed in the old Blundstone boot manufacturing building. (The building was subsequently lost to development and Chameleon was replaced by C.A.S.T.) McQueenie and director Chris Downie approached Blundstone for sponsorship. This resulted in Blundstone providing artists with pairs of boots for artistic transformation for what became a widely travelled, wildly successful show curated by Downey, reaching the pages of *The Face* and *Interview,* and travelling for two years.

Blundstone enjoyed the experience and were approaching their 125th anniversary. They asked McQueenie to assess the feasibility of setting up an effective prize for contemporary art. The Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery expressed strong interest in the proposal and Blundstone committed themselves to $500,000 over ten years for a biennial competition for emerging artists. The money would cover judging costs, prizes and purchasing of submitted art works.

The judges for the first prize were National Gallery of Victoria director James Mollison, fine arts curator at the Queen Victoria, Dianne Dunbar and New Zealand photographer Fiona Pardington. One of McQueenie's recommendations had been that the prize be trans-Tasman. There were a total of 450 entries, each submitting five slides of their work, one hundred works were then brought in for the second round of judging and 40 selected for the exhibition which opened on November 9th.

Making faces

Drawing Out in regional WA with Barbara Bolt

I'm on the road again. It's Friday night, another town (Esperance), and another exhibition opening. For the past twelve months I've been travelling the countryside, the 'performance piece' in a touring drawing exhibition called *Drawing Out*. I hit each town on opening night, 'do' portraiture as performance, stay around a couple of days, drag people off the streets

Nicole Dunn

(Albany) to have their portraits done and then disappear, the dirty charcoal patch marking where I once knelt.

It might be argued that my presence in the exhibition is a little tacky. I should really be down outside Woollies with the balloon man, taking my chances in the free market atmosphere of regional shopping centres rather than messing up the gallery. We did that in Port Hedland. The exhibition was tucked away in the library at Hedland College, carpeted floor, closed on the weekends. Where else to go but to the mall. I was mobbed by kids, all vying to have their portraits done with brothers/sisters/cousins or mates. They dutifully put on their faces for the portrait and sat very still. Adults sidled up to me afterwards, hoping I was going to be back the next day so that they could bring along their kids, pet poodles and the like. Society portraiture meets pavement artist outside Woollies in South Hedland on a Saturday morning.

The catalogue essay tells me that I'm supposed to be trying to convey individual character and personality in my portraits. After Albany, Bunbury, Esperance and my mobbing in Hedland, I doubt that this is what I am doing. Total strangers sit down alone, in pairs or as families as I struggle with a mass of marks, lines and shapes. It's an event really. Friends stand around and comment, babies crawl and gurgle, kids draw, art students ask for step by step instructions and generally everyone seems particularly social and yes, it's also very theatrical.

Tonight in Esperance, you could have paid $6 to watch fireworks at the Esperance Agricultural Show, gone to Slim Dusty's 'last' country tour for $27, attended the National Party dinner for $25 or come to *Drawing Out*, enjoyed food, wine and art and taken home a charcoal portrait.

Understandably, there are those critics who would say that these drawings are not very interesting as drawings. I would of course have to agree that I'm not a virtuoso portraitist, but never mind, my goal is far greater than capturing a mere likeness. I propose instead to theorise portraiture out of the mire of the faciality and the death of the subject—into the realm of touch.

What I am doing across the length and breadth of Western Australia is passionately 'touching', or to put it crudely, 'touching up' people in public. It makes me, I would suggest, very promiscuous: twenty to thirty portraits in a couple of sessions. It is both a very intimate and a very public performance. It allows for a 'touching', an intimacy that in our society is unimaginable or only imaginable with people one knows very well and then usually in private. Traditionally of course, portraits have been made/painted/drawn in the privacy of homes and studios.

It's been asked, "What makes you different from the artists who sit in the streets and do portraits for a living"? I guess nothing and everything. At one point I may have offered a critique of the pavement artist making portraits for a living. Since starting out on this adventure I have come to observe how these artists attract a crowd, provide a point of meeting in public places where people usually avoid the gaze of others. It is, I think, a profound activity.

Like the pavement artist, I sit in a public place and draw people as they come through. Conversely, my performance also aims to critique the commodification of the art object, not a pragmatic objective for my counterpart sitting in malls and on street corners. If people want the drawings they take them home; if they don't they are most welcome to leave them in the gallery or put them in the bin.

The 'drawings' are not, I would argue, drawings in the 'cultural object' sense of the word but are a mapping or a trace of an event. They serve the same function as the video or photographic documentation of a performance. The performance itself, as Peggy Phelan remarks, "plunges into visibility—in a maniacally charged present—and then disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control". (Phelan, P., *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge 1993).

I am curious as to whether the other art objects in *Drawing Out* are content with their own objectness or whether like the performer they need an audience? As the corporeal presence in this exhibition, I have found myself wondering how the other objects in the show feel about their relationship with their audience and with the other objects in the show. What do they think of me crowding their space for example and how have they felt in different exhibition spaces? Is it these relationships that can make an exhibition buzz or look sad and confused? And then, what happens if no-one comes to see the show?

People speak with their feet. If it was a fine day (Bunbury), the Fisherman's Ball (Geraldton), the Blessing of the Fleet (Albany) or the annual race round, people just wouldn't come. On the other hand, if people liked what they saw, they came back a second and a third time, brought the whole family; friends and relatives, had a go and then insisted I sign my drawing of them. So much for my critique of the 'objectness' of the portrait.

Barbara Bolt is an artist and a member of the WA RealTime *editorial team.*

Drawing Out *was curated by Judith Dinham and funded by Art on the Move, the National Exhibitions Touring Structure for WA Inc. in partnership with the WA Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University. Barbara Bolt's travel to seven regional centres was sponsored by Hewitt's Art Bookshop.*

Hygiene 1995

Director of the elegant little Kunst Gallery, Gitte Weise represents a small group of "I don't want to say 'young' but Australian artists who have been working for around ten years as well as some overseas artists" (including Bill Culbert). Currently on show at Kunst is Jeff Gibson's screen print and video exhibition *I Lost My Ass* to December 16 and from February 14 Neil Roberts *Balls*. Upstairs from the Hot Gossip Cafe. Wednesday to Saturday 436 Oxford Street Paddington. Worth a visit and stop for coffee on your way up.

For pre-Christmas calm-down try Melbourne's Centre for Contemporary Photography (Helen Schutt Access Gallery) where until December 16 Mary Green is exhibiting colour photographs of *clouds: a field guide to the atmosphere*. 205 Johnson Street Fitzroy Wednesday to Friday 11-5 and Saturday 2-5 pm.

Book reviews

The Error of My Ways
by Edward Colless
Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane 1995

There's often something of the avuncular in Colless' prose, a quality which can place paternalism at one remove and make it easier to forgive his sexist gaffes—"It is easy to see the evening as feminine: beneath the masquerade, nothing; within the maternal embrace, death"...please! The tone is often that of the erudite and seasoned relative bent on provoking a reaction with his tales of mad travels, romantic peccadillos and philosophical discoveries. It can be irritating, and sometimes even verge on the purple and cloying, but it can more often enliven and amuse, his writing impressive for its breadth of reference and its (seldom excessive) self-reflexivity.

The Error of My Ways brings together a series of essays and reviews from 1981 to 1994, spanning art and film theory, art pedagogy, the work of individual artists and writers, and the institutional politics of Australia's cultural scene. Colless is at his best in the longer more speculative essays, where the subtlety of his connections can intersect with strident polemic to great, very often humorous, effect. "The Imaginary Hypermannerist", on the fatuous extremes of film theory, and "The Total Look: Decor and Ambience", on the Rococo tendencies of contemporary visual arts, remain most compelling pieces of writing.

Writing on individual artists, the job of the theorist is always tougher. The essays grouped under "Two Evil Eyes" on individual exhibitions do not display the same level of engagement, the scintillating cut and thrust, of the more strictly theoretical pieces. At times, Colless' concern to celebrate the sensuality of art, "the evocation of substance", comes close to overwhelming his subject. However, one must grant Rex Butler's introductory observation that Colless almost alone amongst his colleagues "understood that the only real way to investigate the limits of critical language was through the practical attempt to speak of its object, the work of art". In his attempts, Colless demonstrated his respect for the process of art-making and his commitment to artists, a refreshing stance in the midst of theory-ruled stasis. Indeed, his insistence on "living sensation" and sensualism in art, or on a passionate theory which can "touch and pierce the heart", may have played harbinger to some new trends. Recommended. JM

Apparition: Holographic Art in Australia
by Rebecca Coyle and Philip Hayward
Power Publications, Sydney 1995

"Holography is a tantalising medium", we are told in the opening sentence. Holography may be, but after its seductive black cover, *Apparition* remains a pretty straight piece of empirical documentation, comprehensive if tinder dry. Coyle and Hayward set out to address "the characteristics of holography as an expressive and artistic medium; discourses around art and technology which impinge on such work; and Australia as a site for such activity", devoting most of the book to long semi-biographical chapters on early Australian and British holographic artists such as Margaret Benyon and George Gittoes. With the issues around art and technology so current, documenting early collaborations between holographic artists and scientists is undoubtedly relevant to Australia's new wave of multimedia practitioners, but extrapolation to current developments could have been more vigorously explored. Indeed, one gets the feeling that some of the tough theoretical questions, such as the development of a critical discourse apposite to this medium and the light it might shed on high technology art have been sidestepped for a narration of significant scientific events and specific artistic works. While this documentation is of value, an opportunity for valuable speculation has been missed. JM

Adelaide light and dark

Daniel Thomas opens out the intimacies of a set of recent exhibitions

Since Salman Rushdie's visit to the 1982 Festival Writers' Week, Adelaide has been inclined to exaggerate and brag her wickedness. The progressive City of Light began to cherish its dark and shifty underside. It had been noticed by a great writer.

Rushdie's essay was on the Adelaideana reading list provided to six artists and four writers by artist-curator Alan Cruickshank for an October exhibition *The Invisible City*. The installations, notably serious and thoughtful, lurked in abandoned rooms above a flighty, fashionable cafe strip.

Characteristically of thieving, narky, death-of-the-author post-modernism, Cruickshank's introduction was uncredited. It was in fact a passage from Italo Calvino's *The Invisible Cities*. Invisibly stitched into Calvino's paragraphs were six sentences from Rushdie's essay on Adelaide, concluding with, "This city once left is revealed as a mirage, alien, a prevarication".

Hewson/Walker's airy dispersion of unloved, discarded, furtive presences included (i) a junk-shop vinyl pouf on which lay an album of faded Adelaide photo images with texts from Robbe-Grillet's *Typology of a Phantom City* and elsewhere, (ii) a field of glistening rock-like chunks of waste foundry glass on which were inscribed secret messages and symbols once used by tramps and hobos, and (iii) a rootless olive tree, divided savagely down its trunk, fresh from a disappearing plantation. The sharp orange vinyl sang against the intense green glass and the grey-green foliage.

Early-colonial plantations have become fragmented and hidden within suburban housing estates. Bird-sown olive trees scattered throughout the Adelaide Hills have recently been declared feral, and a beautiful, generous, once-cherished immigrant from Europe is now to be eradicated from Adelaide, or strictly controlled. The roots of Hewson/Walker's eradicated tree will leave a rotting circle in the ground at Magill, a ghostly O in the olive grove beside Penfold's first colonial vineyard. (The same olive plantation was the subject of a 1946 picture by Dorrit Black, perhaps the best of all South Australian oil paintings.) O sigh, for the vanishing of the olives ... and for the unnoticed beauty of workmen's waste materials, or of out-of-fashion housewares, or of damaged men's private languages.

Richard Grayson's *Lilliput*, visually the most gripping presence in the exhibition, was a slithery brown ring of raw-clay midget figures, adult despite their decorous school-uniform dress and their being caught standing, shamefully, in the wetness of the clay's daily life-support water-slosh. Female breasts and male phalluses swelled beneath the blazers and shorts. Ambiguous child/adult sexualities brought to mind the child murders and molestations which (nice) Adelaide believes (wrongly) to be a local speciality. The title was also a reminder that a century before Adelaide's colonisation the neighbourhood was already vividly present in European minds through the science fiction *Gulliver's Travels:* there the little people's Island of Lilliput had an imaginary location whose specified latitude and longitude has turned out to be inland from Ceduna, in the Nullarbor.

Bronwyn Platten *untitled* 1995 (detail)
Alan Cruickshank

George Popperwell's cramped, easily missed *CLIMATE/(...)*, was titled in reference to Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass,* its "climate of eroticism", its abstracted gases and sex-machines, and its "... bachelors, even". The peep-holed, walled-in construction invoked Duchamp's other Philadelphia masterpiece *Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas,* a superrealist installation with a suede-leather naked spreadeagled woman upon whom the viewer's gaze is forced to rest voyeuristically. And one of Popperwell's spyholes was patterned after the water inlet and outlets in Duchamp's transgressive *1917 Fountain,* a transformation—by title, artist's signature and disorientation—of a readymade wall-hung porcelain urinal.

A nasty lingering smell of urine on the staircase-landing had inspired this Duchamp-lover's colonisation of the worst bit of the improvised artspace. His was the most site-specific of the installations. The *Fountain* —patterned spyholes were inconveniently below eye-height, in fact at pissing height. That also means glory-hole, cock-sucking height: AIDS-infection height. Stoop and peer awkwardly (vulnerably) into the tiled interior—tiles suggesting, says Popperwell, not only lavatories, or kitchen domesticities, or sex in the shower, but also hospitals and mortuaries—and looking back at you from beside your own face in a two-way mirror was a knowing, Halloweenish grin of death.

Popperwell says he was also thinking of a friend, recently dead from AIDS, and once the artist's leader on a tour of the city's beats and glory-holes. Although the extreme muteness of so much 'contemporary art practice' is usually extremely trying, here one can perhaps agree with Popperwell that the ineloquent, the quiet, the puzzling work of art is the one that, at the end, is the most truly stimulating.

This was a startling, yet tactful, illumination of an invisible city of men on the prowl, one that exists everywhere, not especially in Adelaide.

Mehmet Adil Alan Cruickshank

Mehmet Adil's matchstick coffin holding a violin bow perhaps implied the flaming ecstasies of music, death, and arson; brief is beautiful. Simone Hockley's gridded banks of icecube trays no doubt referred to the military regularity of Colonel Light's mythologised Adelaide city plan, which under the heat of new research is being melted away from his ownership and becoming the creation of a different founding father.

Four outstanding solo exhibitions resonated with *The Invisible City*.

Bronwyn Platten's *Aire de la Noche* (the Night Air), at the Contemporary Art Centre, considered the racism of white anthropology, its detailed knowledge of, say, Native American witchcraft, whereas no end of Western gobbledegook remains unexamined. The key images were two found photographs: from a Mexican anthropology museum an old witch breathing benign smoke onto the face of a younger woman; from an Adelaide junk shop, a 1920s wicked schoolgirl tricked up as a Star Fairy. Her work has always had a fine, fierce, mad look, and Platten cheerfully concedes that her powerful new drawing of a Mexican museum skull, the paper sewn with thread to imply the missing flesh and hair above, came to her entirely untheorised.

Antony Hamilton's *The Velvet Target* was a single installation in the big space of the University of South Australia Art Museum, a rooshooters' night piece. A blinding spotlight was beamed onto roos' feet, knives, bullets and a pair of white gumboots, stained with coagulated blood; a gutting light onto a single, wondrous trophy of the night—an utmost rarity, a white fox. A highly skilled shot will kill invisibly, without damaging the cool beauty of this gleaming spirit of the desert moon and stars. It is not brutality that we find here, but love of what shares the hunters' lives and habitat. Intimacy brings forth tenderness. This was a real-world variant of Hamilton's earlier tribute to bushmen's creativity and aesthetic delight, his *Miss or Myth?* installation of traces of a blonde kangaroo girl, the wished-for Nullarbor Nymph.

Angela Valamanesh also used the U.S.A. Art Museum's vast space for reinforcement of haunting mood. In her sparse *Birds Have Fled* installation a light-box irradiated the emptiness through a text from Colette's *The Rainy Moon:* "I might hear my own footsteps on the other side of the door and my own voice ..." A white door opened onto solidified blackness; pale waxen feet, very delicate, were falling through the opposite wall; in a corner a tall heap of plaster footprints arose. The light which engulfed these white objects was blue. This artist is also a ceramicist, a maker of super-refined, reticent blue & white porcelains. Her installation was an astonishing, dizzying magnification into endlessly expanding space of the intimate ecstasies normally to be gained from small, blue-washed pearly vessels, containers of inner darkness.

Hossein Valamanesh, at Greenaway Art Gallery, perhaps commemorated, and celebrated, his return this year from a heart-attack brush with death. Earth, stone, oil-fired flames, twigs and branches, shrouding fabrics, have been among his repertoire of wondrously poetic materials. Now he has introduced geometric colourfields of surprisingly colourful seeds, grains and pulses. He glued together heart-achingly fragile, veined lotus leaves as the support fabric on a stretcher bed and for a neatly pressed and folded wall-mounted shirt. Leaping from the shirt a mediaeval poem by Rumi was painted on the wall in the poet's (and the artist's) native Persian calligraphy: "I tear my shirt for the great joy that now all my body has become my beloved, and that I have become her shirt." We read his supine bed and airborne shirt as images of the artist's own endangered body. The disciplined seed pieces were cries and whispers from persistent, scattershot genes, assertions that life and art will most certainly regenerate, come what may for fragile, delicate-veined, lotus-like flesh.

Snap Happy the 1995 exhibition of final year Photography students from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University curated by Jay Younger includes this one by Natalie Paton from the *Fat Chance Centrefold* series.

What's in a body?

Eleanor Brickhill worries at the dance experience in Sydney

There's a lot of spectacle out there—colour and movement, sumptuous images, fabulous techniques of all sorts, a real party, but the more dance I see, the less idea I have of what other people are actually looking at. Little girls fall in love with their favourite dancers, aspiring to embodied ideals with intensity and passion. For others, there's all that flesh, sexy tumultuous glances, the heat and sweat, quivering sensitivity, swathed in the very height of fashion, re-drawing the images of what is desirable.

I'm usually interested in all the wrong things, and what I see is not what others see. Perhaps I just miss the point, but I don't want to live vicariously through someone else's fantasy, constructed on someone else's terms with pre-digested ideas about how I should view my body, other bodies, the way people live and relate to each other and the world. Frequently I feel I'm being asked to discard my own hard won individuality and jump into that glorious shared heaven of living fantasy that is there for me, if only I could just think differently, loosen up a bit, not be so demanding, maybe be someone else. Well, that's me.

In the last six weeks or so I have been to seven different dance programs.

I've been able to enter into the spirit of some of it, without too much of the aforementioned anxiety. However the experience has been coloured by renegade publicity, inviting, for example, a view of "Sydney's hottest dancers/performers" *(Four on the Floor)*, which rather sets the tone of a 'fashion statement', implies something ephemeral, transient. But some of these works, and certainly the artists, might last considerably longer than that. Even so, a few older pieces, for example Dean Walsh's *Hysterical Headset* and Ros Crisp's *On Lucy's Lips,* had been worked over to the point where the fine lines, ambiguities and loose threads had been tidied away, as if they had been mistakes. For me, particularly with *On Lucy's Lips,* the unfinished and vulnerable quality of the original performance was an aspect I missed this time.

The four programs of *Dance Collection '95* really were what the publicity said: a forum for playing, trying things out and working out what you think is important in dance. Meanwhile, it strikes me that times and ideals have changed, and the irony is that the primary aim of the growing number of Sydney's 'independents' is to flock together for mutual support. There must be a better name for them. Even so, it's a shame the organisers want to foreclose their open door policy and act as curators, because a place where artists can feel relaxed and informal rather than pressured to create a finished product is a rare treat for most performers.

With Link Theatre at the Museum of Sydney, the program invited me to see "a dance that utilised the inherent design of the exterior of MOS ... both architecturally and thematically inspiring", a commissioned 'site specific' work, *Site Lines,* which seemed in the end itself to reflect the same environmental insensitivity, or more politely, a cultural strangeness that the first settlers might have experienced on this very spot. We see in the dance material and design the same curiously blinkered reading of both body and environment. The permanent MOS installation *Edge of the Trees,* by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, demonstrating the passage of time in the weathering and layering of physical and cultural material, was used as a set for the new work. However Link just appropriated some superficial visual effects for their own purposes and ignored the inherent potential interactivity and delicate soundscape already part of the installation.

Another vivid collision of material occurred when an old lady wandered across the square, as anyone might have done, walked up to the dancers, stared at them briefly, and started imitating them in an engagingly oblivious way, after which she proceeded to roll up the leg of her pants, demonstrating to a group of young boys her aged and wrinkled knee. A well-meaning administrator tried to lead her away, stop her interfering in the 'real' event, but only in her own time did she wander off, much to the relief of the dancers whose performance task was, at this point, to pretend nothing was happening.

The unspeakable eloquence of this episode encapsulated my feeling that the actual present and highly visible layering of cultural values that is in front of us every day, speaking through all our bodies at every turn, with the real passage of real time, continues to remain unacknowledged right here and now, afflicted as we still seem to be with the same cultural obtuseness of 200 odd years ago.

Not entirely, though. There were two short works both of which illuminated in their different ways that very aspect of cultural difference: *Mother Tongue Interference* , a performance work by Deborah Pollard *(Four on the Floor),* and *Karmagain* by Simone Baker, subtitled "A Western Woman's Eastern past life" and performed as part of *Cha Cha Cha,* the fourth *Dance Collection '95* program. Both works expose facile perceptions of cultural displacement and assimilation. Deborah Pollard has gone straight to the difficult bits, where the pretence of bridging impossible cultural gaps is simply unbearable, leaving her witless and inarticulate. *Karmagain* highlights a westerner's short-answer response to the culturally inexplicable, with idealisation of classic stereotypes being like a first stumbling attempt at cultural understanding.

And speaking of stereotypes, The Sydney Dance Company's *Berlin* is composed of a multitude, all redolent with the nostalgia and romance of Berlin's theatre and film tradition. If you haven't already seen Wim Wenders' film, *Wings of Desire,* then perhaps you should do that first, because, entertaining though it might be, *Berlin* doesn't come close to its beauty and depth. Surprisingly, there is no mention of the film in the program despite the fact that it appears to have stimulated many of the ideas, and only a vague mention of "ghosts and angels". Nor are any of the other sources acknowledged. Maybe it is simply too obvious to be worth bothering about. For heaven's sake, Iva Davies and Graeme Murphy look for all the world like the two angels watching benignly over the human world of pleasure and wanting.

Sex, drugs and violence, both nasty and poignant, make their obligatory appearance. Janet Vernon is entirely at home in a tired sort of way as our Marlene I caught a glimpse of a more contemporary Pina Bausch chorus line from *1980.* The Wall is represented too, both the climbing up and the coming down, as well as the militaristic influences of now and then, blond boys perpetually bullet-headed, innocent, power hungry.

But what about the dancing? I hear you ask. Yes, it was there, and I was right up close, not more than 3 or 4 feet from the performers. We could see through the wire mesh, (another image from *Wings?),* the elasticity, the resilience and flow of dancers caught up in something they have done all their lives, the perfectly timed slippery partnering of duets, and the complex and articulate ensemble work in parts like *Angel Life,* and *Complicated Game.* To understand dancing, I need to ask, "What are these bodies saying to me? What do they make me feel?" and I often get stranded with all those unacknowledged physical habits and empty gestures, which lie in that impossible gulf between what they might want to say and what they do say.

It's all dance

Tony Osborne talks improvisation with Ruth Zaporah

In August Tony Osborne attended a one-month intensive workshop in Berkeley, California with improviser Ruth Zaporah. She originally trained as a dancer but for the last thirty years has been stretching the boundaries which enclose dance and developing her own style of improvisational performance which she calls Action Theatre.

RZ When I originally coined the term, *Action Theatre,* because I'd come from dance, I needed to make the distinction that there was a whole instrument at play rather than *just* dance and its techniques. Dance is theatre for me. Theatre is when one or more people get up in front of another group of people and create a fantasy world. That's why politics is theatre. A politician gets up there and creates a fantasy world and we all believe it. That too is theatre.

TO Did you get bored with the lack of attention to what the body is saying? Was there a dissatisfaction with technique? It seems to me that dance languages have a sort of bathos built into them.

RZ When it's just technique?

TO Yes.

RZ That was always the problem my teachers had with me. They always said I was too dramatic. I didn't clean out enough. I didn't just do the technique. I was always visible. I kept switching teachers until finally I started teaching... looking inward for the teacher.

TO So did the idea of teaching what you do now come before you met other improvisers? Did you meet Al Wunder before this point?

RZ Before I met Al Wunder I was teaching improvisation on the east coast. I got a job with a theatre department teaching movement to the actors. I looked at these actors and I knew that my dance class was not going to be possible. So I asked them what they wanted and they said they wanted to *embody* their characters. At the time I didn't know what 'embody' meant because that was not something that we were taught in dance classes. I didn't know what character was because that's a theatre term, not a dance term. So I said, "Okay, walk, sit, pick up something" etcetera, and I just started improvising and seeing what was coming back—this was telling me what I wanted to see next. Then I had to figure out some kind of framework. That's how this all started. Then when I moved to San Francisco [in the 1970s] there was this guy, Al Wunder, who was teaching a much more formal kind of improvisation that he'd learned from his teacher, Alwin Nikolai. So Al and I hooked up and put a studio together because we were both interested in improvisation.

TO Improvisation means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. Theatre and dance practitioners might employ it in certain specific and varying ways but people like yourself and Al Wunder have created the genre of improvised performance which, paradoxically, doesn't necessarily relate to theatre or dance processes generically, even though it employs both.

RZ Al Wunder's work was always very dancerly but I haven't seen his work in a long time. *(Al Wunder has lived and worked in Melbourne for over ten years).*

TO I think Al Wunder's Theatre of the Ordinary *is very much about creating form; finding form in all sorts of stuff.*

RZ Well, this work isn't really theatre improvisation in the traditional sense because theatre improvisation deals with situation. This work doesn't 'set up' situation and it doesn't fit into any genre of dance because it deals with situation.

TO Would hybrid be an appropriate word?

RZ I don't think so, because its not like I studied dance and I studied theatre and then figured out how to put them together. What happened was I just extended myself from dance and kept on extending from a body-based form—expanding the avenues of experience and expression from body-base to include language, speech, vocalising. Its all body-based to me. Its all dance. Then that includes content which just grew out of my original body-based interest in action which started with dance. The action extended into my mouth and language.

TO You talked earlier about embodiment and in your work you talk a lot about inhabiting or 'filling out' an action in performance. It seems to me that in a lot of dance and theatre the body is a bit absent; that is, there's a lot of text or intellect going on but the performers' bodies are unconsciously telling a different story.

RZ The body's just supporting the text? Propping up this instrument so that the mouth can...

TO Yes, with very little connection between text and body—something in the body tells you that the performer is lying. It occurs to me to ask why this work isn't more prevalent in training institutions.

RZ That's a very good question. I'm not very good at promoting myself, I guess. I just keep on doing my thing. I think they should at least check out what I'm doing. I've never had anyone to take care of that side of things for me, you know, like an agent or secretary.

TO Have you ever felt the need to?

RZ I'm just beginning to because I'm going to be sixty next year and at some point I would like to retire, and so I would like to make some money, although I can't imagine retiring. If I had set this whole thing up in New York, I think it would be different at this point. I think this work would be much more known. Out here [San Francisco] it's like, in a sense, the boondocks. It's like a little town in a way... I'm not a hustler and don't go after it ... maybe having a book out will make a difference.

TO What made you write a book about the one month 'trainings' which you conduct twice a year?

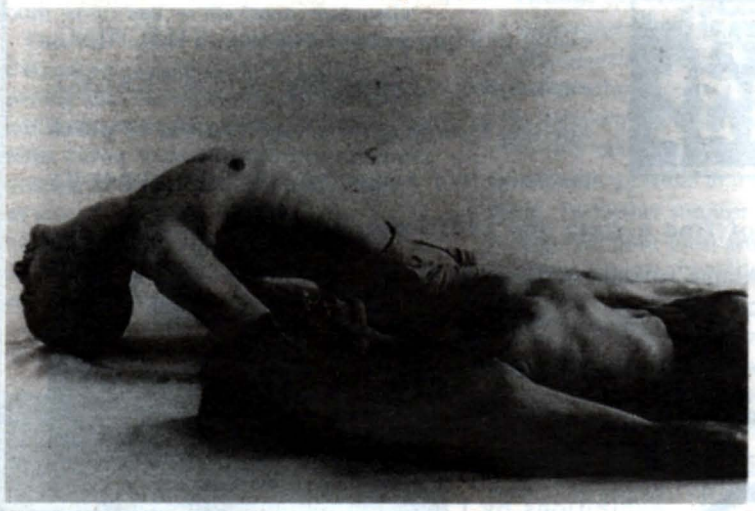
RZ For about ten years I've been wanting to write a book about this work... because I think it's really useful and I felt like for me to just hold it for myself was very selfish in a way. I don't feel like it's mine. I feel like I worked this out with all the people that have been working with me for the last fifteen or twenty years. It just got too big for me to hold as my private stuff. I know that I probably work with a couple of hundred different students every year and I know that a lot of them go back and teach this work in their own way. In order to protect the integrity of the work I wanted this book out so that they could have that.

Action Theatre: The Improvisation of Presence *is published in the U.S. by North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California.*

What they do better than anyone else

Eleanor Brickhill talks to Norman Hall about the impulses behind a new dance double at The Performance Space

NH I've had an idea in mind for quite a while to do co-productions, to work with other independent artists. As a complementary program to Aida Amirkhanian's *Credo,* for three women, and as a contrast, it was practical for me to do a program with two men, called *Two Men.* The men are very different, experience, technique and personality-wise.



Derek Porter and Patrick Harding-Irmer in *Two Men*

EB Is that what interested you in them?

NH They both have dedicated many years to dance work, Patrick Harding-Irmer for twenty-five years, and Derek Porter has been dancing since he was about 13 and professionally since 1990.
But more and more I am interested in individuals, because you have got to have strong performers, or very individual performers, people who can actually work with material and not just have it put on them, who can integrate it. That seems to come with experience.

Superficially, I think Derek's talent is in his incredible flexibility. I have often wondered if he had average flexibility, how that would affect his performance. And I still think he would have that incredible stage presence. He is so focused on what he is doing that it comes across, even without those legs and that very supple back and the things he can do with his body that just amaze people.

EB With Patrick there are similarities, they share that same clarity of line and focus.

NH I think both of them are so intent on what they are doing that the audience would have to be asleep to not be drawn in. As far as the program is designed, they do two solos each and two duets, so you have a chance to see them in work that brings out different qualities. Derek is doing a piece called *Divine,* to a mass. Very dancey, although not in the usual way. It's more fluid and organic. I try not to make steps.

The second piece is *Toilette,* from the Dance Collection '95, a totally different work, more of a sculptural piece. People find it quite whimsical. We got that basically roughed out in about two weeks, working an hour three times a week, because all we were doing was working with shapes and images. It was a nice foil to some of the more serious works.

Patrick has made *Birthday Card* to celebrate his 50th birthday, and he is also performing a solo from a work by Siobhan Davies called *Bridge the Distance.* She made that in 1985, when Patrick was 40. There was a BBC program about it, about the mature dancer, and this was before Jiri Kylian formed Nederlands Dance Theatre Three, the mature dancers' group. Over the last five years, in particular, the focus on the mature dancer is coming through.

EB How might that maturity manifest itself?

NH I don't think all people of that age have it. It goes back to the intent, the focus, the performance strength. As people get older they start to appreciate all the training they have, all the fine tuning, from performing, from life, over many years. It's the fineness, the delicacy, and a kind of subtlety of meaning, doing more with less. You suggest without doing big things.

EB So the whole aesthetic quality becomes quite different, doesn't it? The whole point is different.

NH Jiri Kylian said you don't ask of these older dancers what it is they can't do anymore, but what it is they can do better than anybody else? I spent a lot of time with that company, NDT3, and I saw younger choreographers who haven't realised what it is all about.

EB Until you get there, you don't know what questions to ask, what material to work with. But that is one of the beauties of the independent dance world. When you are able to use that wealth of experience, it is always very much an individual statement.

NH I think independent dancers and choreographers are actually producing the most interesting work at the moment, and doing it with very little support. I like to do small, very intense pieces. I call them 'boutique pieces'. Something like *Toilette* could be done in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, as a self-contained work. It wouldn't need any lighting, just take the prop there, and just do it. And of course, I actually enjoy making smaller, more personal works rather than doing the grand production where the detail of the dance just gets lost.

Credo *by Aida Amirkhanian with Elizabeth Cameron Dalman, Paige Gordon & Aida Amirkhanian, percussion by Andrew Purdham;* Two Men *produced by Norman Hall with Patrick Harding-Irmer & Derek Porter, musician Patricia Borrell. The Performance Space, Sydney, Thursday Dec 14-17.*

Ephemeral incarnations: dancing poetry

Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman delineate for Keith Gallasch the impulses behind Tasdance's new work, the epic *Thursday's Fictions*

KG Your work is distinctive on two fronts. First is the the role of voice. Second there is a narrative interest which is not typical of a lot of contemporary dance.

KP Richard and I both feel very strongly that dancers are not dumb and that means both that they are not stupid and that they are not mute, that the voice is a part of the instrument known as the body, and the body is the instrument that you have to work with in creative dance. With voice we have tried to develop a language as sophisticated as the physical. The level of writing for the voice has to match the level of choreography, and vice versa.

KG How do you get that quality of voice you need in performance, since from the earliest days of a dancer's training the focus is so much on the body.

RJA I was chatting last night with a guest actor in our latest show and he said, sort of jokily, "I'm not sure you really need me, because all of you dancers are so good at speaking and dancing. Most actors couldn't do the physical things they do and be so clear." That was a nice comment. In the ten or more years Karen and I have been working together we've developed both conscious and unconscious ways of training the body so that you can use the voice fully as well as the body fully. There is a sense of freedom in the use of the voice.

KG That's fine for you, but what about for a relatively new company?

KP When we were auditioning we looked for great dancers and we had more than enough to choose from. Then we asked them to speak. First of all they had to be willing to speak, willing to open their mouths. Dancers are so often trained to be quiet. It is very much a part of dance culture, especially in classical training and that is a way of showing your respect.

KG Not questioning the choreographer's intent?

KP The first thing an actor has to do is to ask "why", and that is the last thing a dancer ever does. We are now getting dancers to ask us why, and it certainly pushes the thinking of the choreographer.

RJA If the choreography can't be discussed, then it can't be pushed further, particularly in this case where we are creating physical and verbal characters. It requires a full understanding by the dancer-actor, of why they are doing what they are doing.

KP We look for dancers with clear, simple speaking voices, unmannered and malleable, which is a similar thing to what we look for in their bodies, that their years of training haven't left marks on them that have to go.

KG Presumably, Richard, you compose this text that is to be spoken well prior to the rehearsal process?

RJA I've been writing *Thursday's Fictions* for three or four years. It's an epic poem and part of the process has been to make a stage adaptation of it. We went through a creative development period with a whole series of guest artists from Tasmania and Sydney, working with us on imagining different ways of staging this text in performance.

KP The creative development project was part of the PAB-funded *Time and Motion* project allowing us to bring in Don Mamouney to work on the acting, Mémé Thorne on the Suzuki approach and many others from Tasmania and beyond. We had Scott Grayland working at the cross-roads of aerial work, dance and acting. We had Theresa Blake and Dan Whitton from Desoxy at the nexus of acrobatics and acting. Everybody brought ideas to the process. Don stayed on as co-director.

RJA Ultimately, Karen was the dramaturg, creating 'with the knife'. We worked on it together, and I'd say, "Yeah, that sounds good, but put *that* back in!"

KP We had a lot of help also, Greg Methé and Ruth Hadlow of Hobart's Terrapin Theatre were involved in the creative process both on design and dramaturgy. Their design background makes the question always come up, "Do we need to say this in words. Can't we say it physically or visually?"

RJA To me this was, in a way, a workshop for defining what is a performance script. It's is not a traditional play, and it is not a poem anymore. It is now a performance script, and that was a lot of hard work and a lot of discussions and a lot of actual trying out.

KG How much of Thursday's Fictions *is driven by the narrative, how much by dance's sense of the moment?*

KP It's structured by the narrative and it is also character-driven in the sense that each of the sections offers a quirky individual around whom we can centre our images and ideas. While it is a very rich and fascinating plot, it doesn't move at the speed of lightning. It goes off from side to side, in a sense, and gives us horizontal views into the minds of these people. The dancers play several roles. They play the poems, Thursday's poems, which are this central object passed from hand to hand. They play the left and right half of Friday's brain. A set of triplets, all named Monday, run a funeral parlour. Later on, they torture Tuesday on the rack. Three dancers combine to play a large blue spider, looking like a cross between a praying mantis and a chandelier.

KG What about the choreography, Karen? Are you going off in any new directions?

KP I think there are some new directions. One of the places that modern dance has got stuck, in a way, is in the development by individuals of dance vocabularies that they call their own. So you can look at a dance and know immediately that it is a dance by Martha Graham, or a dance by Russell Dumas. I feel those vocabularies—like Trisha Brown's—are wonderful, and they are rich, but they have a limited range of emotionally expressive possibilities.

KG You immediately know what they are saying?

KP Right, and when we get into our idea of narrative, where have the full spectrum of psychological and emotional vocabularies to work with, we are in a sense trying to let the characters develop their own vocabularies, rather than the choreographer work on his or hers.

RJA That doesn't mean that we don't create it, but it does mean that we are trying to create specific vocabularies that suit those characters in those situations.

KP There are moments in the dance where you might look at it and say 'Martha Graham' because one of the things she was really strong on was torture. There is a section in which I am tortured and I am really trying to make myself think in terms of very hard, bound, striking movements, as opposed to soft flowing gliding actions, which are completely inappropriate for torture, even though they are things which I personally enjoy doing.

KG Given that Thursday's Fictions *is character and narrative-driven, what role does ensemble dancing play?*

KP A significant role in the sense of ensemble acting. There is no corps de ballet here at Tasdance. We have really selected people who are very distinctive. They look different, they dance different, they talk different.

RJA It is a company of soloists, a complementary mix rather than a sort of bland sameness.

KG Language is central to the work, what about sound?

KP The composer and sound designer Andrew Yencken is using live musicians, recording them and manipulating the sound to evoke travel through time. He has references from moments in music history. He is also working with radio mikes on us, the performers, and he is modulating our sounds and words into the sound design as well as we perform. There's also a pre-recorded radio component (involving a number of Tasmanian actors) which plays a surprising role.

KG You say Thursday's Fictions *is a fairy tale, but its themes and sometimes graphic violence and sexual content make it definitely not for children.*

KP The theme of the work is the power of art to live on past us. The question at the heart of the work is, "Is it possible for a human to create something better than themselves?" Kids just aren't going to be interested in that. I think it is adult also in the sense that it requires a very attentive audience. It's also the question of whether the language of dance is universal in the sense that people who don't speak your verbal language could easily understand your dance language, including children. I have a lot of problems with that.

KG Richard, why the interest in re-incarnation?

RJA I am personally very interested in yoga and Buddhism but *Thursday's Fictions* isn't a work of religious instruction. It is a spiritual work in the sense that it deals with issues of where we are and what our lives mean. I don't think people are going to walk out of the theatre thinking this, but if someone was to reflect on it for a long time, they might decide that at a deeper level they've experienced a dialogue between a western spiritual vision of heaven and hell, and an eastern vision.

KP In the first instance, we are creating a spectacle. If people can come to it without deciding in advance what dance is or what theatre is, then they will get a lot out of it.

RJA I hope that people will come out delighted and intrigued and chuckling.

KG Is the work ultimately about creativity through words? Is it about the poet?

KP No, but do I think that dance is the most ephemeral of art forms, and poetry is one of the least ephemeral artforms. Dancers disappear and poems don't.

RJA There is another medium in *Thursday's Fictions*, other than dance, acting, design, sound and radio, and that is print. Thursday tries to get her poems buried with her, so she can pick them up and keep writing them in the next life. In the end, you never hear the poems on stage, but the program contains Thursday's 24 poems. And you can take them home with you in the innovative Paper Bark Press publication which doubles as program and poetry volume. You see these poems in the performance buffeted through time and history, and different people care about them or not, and by some miraculous chance they end up on your lap.

Tasdance, Thursday's Fictions. *Text—Richard James Allen. Dramaturgy, direction, choreography—Karen Pearlman. Don Mamouney—co-director. Andrew Yencken—composer and sound designer. Dani Haski—costume designer. Greg Thompson—lighting design. Simeon Nelson—rack designer. Ben Little—radio producer. Karlin Love—music production coordinator. Dancers—Joanna Pollitt, Gregory Tebb, Kylie Tonatello, Samantha Vine, Richard James Allen, Karen Pearlman. Actor—Michael Edgar. Earl Arts Centre, Launceston, Dec 7-10; Peacock Theatre, Hobart, Dec 14-17.*

Book review

Dance, Modernity and Culture: explorations in the sociology of dance
Helen Thomas
Routledge, London and New York, 1995

Sociological approaches to the study of dance are few and far between, and Thomas makes a most significant contribution to the development of this relatively uncharted terrain. The book focuses principally on American modern dance of the early twentieth century; plotting the connections between a metamorphosing cultural context and the beginnings of what is now the institution of modern dance. Thomas proposes that through investigating such connections, and through closer analysis of artistic practice—Martha Graham is the primary consideration of Thomas' case study—new understandings of modern dance may be provided through sociology. The relationship between dance and its context is further refined by a differentiation between extrinsic and intrinsic properties and perspectives; that is, examining dance from an external sociological viewpoint as well as investigating the cultural symbolism of a movement language.

From a comprehensive theoretical framework which acknowledges the influence of cultural studies, feminist studies, anthropology, philosophical theories of dance, poststructuralism and postmodernism upon sociology, Thomas canvasses the historical significance of early theatrical dance in America. Of particular interest in the second chapter is her account of the controlling forces of Puritanism and Protestantism upon the freedom of performers in the theatre and initial cultural encounters with ballet.

By providing an overview of conspicuous figures in the pioneering of modern dance in America—including Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St Denis and Ted Shawn—as well as more detailed analysis of *Iconoclasts from Denishawn*—Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey—Thomas traces a history of the modern dance movement which is embedded within the elaborate socio-cultural history of twentieth century America. Thomas' final examination of Graham's *Appalachian Spring* (1944) is the culmination of the study, demonstrating how the symbolism of movement may represent a more expansive, reflexive cultural voice for its context.

Julia Postle

The persistence of memory, chaos and precision in performance

Robert Lloyd checks the time

It's Friday afternoon and I'm sitting in the Joseph Post Auditorium at the Sydney Conservatorium waiting for the performance to start. The pianist on the left and the percussionists to the right face their instruments. Upstage, brass, woodwind and string players face the wall. As the performance progresses they slowly turn and one by one begin to play, and we see the interesting mix of new music and performance techniques that makes up the tools Peter Weigold uses in his workshop performances.

Weigold is the director of the Guildhall Ensemble, at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, and is in Australia spending one week with selected Conservatorium of Music students to create this once only performance.

The compositions are for chamber ensemble of woodwind, strings, brass and percussion. Weigold conducts from his electric keyboard centre stage. In several pieces the musicians stand or sit in a semi circle.

The first work, developed from improvisations on fixed motifs, drives the players on. They move into the centre of the circle to solo against the driving riffs—like flamenco dancers with saxes. Weigold then demonstrates with the musicians some of the processes they experimented with to arrive at the works they played (games like pass the sound around the circle—changing it as you go).

This playfulness makes the performance a lot of fun for the audience as well as the musicians. For the last composition, *The Persistence of Memory,* we are shown a poster of the famous painting by Dali of the same name and Weigold explains that, to him, Dali's melting clocks represent two of the most powerful concepts in twentieth century art: digital precision on the one hand contrasted with chaos and nature on the other. These two elements are in a sense represented by the structured and improvised sections in this composition.

The musicians have the bare bones of written material to play in some sections and the opportunity to improvise with solos on modal scales in rhythmic sections. The effect is of a large organic work with musicians playing tightly controlled riffs—like a jazz band—and then floating orchestral writing that for me occasionally evoked Gil Evan's scoring on Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain.* On occasion solo horn and electric keyboard would play in subtle duet, then riffing woodwinds would accompany a violin solo, punctuated by violent stabs of piano and bass drum across the front of the stage.

I suspect the players derived much out of working with Weigold. The opportunity for the students to fuse inspired orchestral writing with jazz styled improvisation and physical performance was a joy to watch. This all looked like great teaching to me—music making, visual art, performance skills and an inspired teacher all having a voice together. The performance was organised by Youth Music Australia as part of their ongoing support of new music.

Robert Lloyd is a Sydney based composer. His CD Nullabor *is available on the Move label.*

Determined indeterminacy

Chris Reid introduces Adelaide's new music collective ACME

New music is flourishing. If you are interested in it you might know Adelaide's offerings through the airplay given to the ACME New Music Company on the ABC Classic FM program *New Music Australia,* or through their frequent live performances.

ACME New Music Co. is an Adelaide-based collective of about a dozen composers and performers, assisted by some of South Australia's finest musicians and covering a wide spectrum of compositional philosophy, perhaps the most interesting of which is the use of indeterminacy, with its roots in the theories of John Cage.

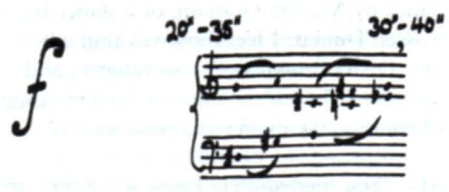
ACME co-founder David Harris uses a variety of devices—canon, isorhythm, palindrome, chance, rotation, durations of different length, as well as polyphony and indeterminacy. Harris does not try to achieve a particular outcome, but to experiment. His work was featured at the five hour concert *Not An Hour* at the Hartley Room, University of Adelaide on September 17, and included, for example, the meditative 83 minute work, *Indeterminate Composition with Nine Voices* for two pianos. During the performance of a work like this, you are not focussed in the same way as you might be during a Mahler symphony. Here you drift around, mentally, and possibly physically. In other concerts Harris has worked with visual artists to create an appropriate environment.

Percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson in concert at the Interactive Port O'Call Gallery, Adelaide

Jason Allen's work for synthesiser and two short-wave radios was premiered in the same concert. His music is based essentially on experimentation with motifs. In a work for two electric guitars, performed in the Composer Profile Concert at ABC Studio 520 on September 12, the guitars were tuned to two different keys. The performers tapped on the guitars to create harmonics, using time bracketing to structure the work.

Allen no longer explores tonality, but uses all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. The base material he employs might be a single chord, which is manipulated into different forms, the outcome varying each time but exploring the same essential musical element. It is, he believes, the base material from which the aesthetic value of the work arises.

Phil Noack is concerned to bridge the gap between J S Bach and John Cage. Both were concerned with structure, both took an idea, a tonic note or a chord for example, and developed musical sequences from it. Noack has developed a synthesis between the randomness and indeterminacy of Cage and the melodic quality of Bach. This makes for music which is, he says, 'ordered within its disorderliness'. Whereas Bach's time structures were fixed, Noack uses time brackets with flexible boundaries.



© Phil Noack

Noack writes his motifs intuitively and then adds by design the structures which bring out this material. He is concerned with assonance achieved with a variety of techniques such as vertical sonority, repetition, the use of intervals that correspond with other intervals or by emphasising a similar motion. Out of this diversity emerges a unity. More composer intention is evident in Noack's work than in Cage's, but different performers will still have much scope for interjecting their own ideas or feelings.

Noack was the subject of a composer profile concert at Collinswood on October 10 1995. The fragment of music shown below, from his *Variations III* for three pianos, performed at that concert, indicates the notes to be played and gives approximate starting and finishing points. Each musician will have fragments like this to play, but they all commence together and finish together.

David Kotlowy is an ACME composer influenced by Zen philosophy and the traditional Japanese approach to music-making. His recent live to air performance on ABC Classic FM of *Music for Zen Musicians* required performers in Adelaide, Sydney and Perth studios to perform simultaneously, while Kotlowy himself sat at the console and brought the elements together. Indeterminacy was employed in requiring the performers to choose the order in which they performed each element of the composition. The instructions to the performers were based very much in Zen practice. Each sound was given its own emphasis, and the listener, unable to see the performers, related to each sound as an entity as well as to the whole piece. Temporality then collapses and each moment becomes self-standing. The melodic linearity of the music is discarded so you focus on the 'space' between the notes, on the tone and timbre of the instruments, and on the music's expressiveness.

Not all ACME composers use indeterminacy—Michael Griffiths' work, for example, leaves nothing to chance and is structured more on traditional counterpoint. Traditional compositional techniques are also found in the work of Saam Edwards and Lyndon Northeast.

ACME includes performers as well as composers. Vanessa Tomlinson is an internationally-known percussionist and a regular performer with ACME. She has recently recorded a CD of John Cage's work and regularly attracts large audiences to her concerts. Tomlinson gave a spellbinding farewell concert in Adelaide on September 10, before embarking on postgraduate study in the US. She performed percussion works by Brian Ferneyhough, Kurt Schwitters, ACME's David Harris and Jason Allen.

ACME represents a heterogeneous approach to composition and performance but one united by experiment.

Chris Reid is an Adelaide writer and an associate of ACME.

The boundaries of rigour and chaos

Hobart composer Raffaele Marcellino discusses Pipeline and the Hobart New Music Festival with Simone de Haan

Pipeline is 'resident' at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music. Its artistic director Simone de Haan has had a distinguished career as a performer of new music and as a champion of Australian musical creativity. Pipeline is, in de Haan's words, "a loose collective organism that continues to go out in different directions". At the aesthetic heart of Pipeline there is an ensemble made up of Christian Wojtowicz on cello, Daryl Pratt on percussion and Simone de Haan on trombone. Wojtowicz comes from the classical tradition with craft and precision of interpretation. Pratt combines a background in the new music tradition, jazz, compositional skills, improvisation and interactive technology. De Haan combines ensemble experience with a broad experience in improvisation.

Pipeline is interested in unifying the roles of composer and performer and endeavours to explore the boundary between improvised and notated music. It is this 'fissure' where most musicians trained in the Western Art Music tradition are unable to explore without improvisation and improvisers are lost without the expertise of interpretation of notated music. Pipeline is able to freely move across the known musical landscape so that there is a natural fusion of performance skills and creativity.

The collaborative process has not usually been important to new music creation. Simone de Haan emphasises the importance of collaboration by "developing relationships between players and, through this, deveoping relationships between sounds". Through this notion of relationships Pipeline has had many successful collaborations with Australian musicians like Richard Vella, Paul Grabowsky, Michael Smetanin, Leigh Hobba and Phil Treloar, resulting in explorations ranging from jazz and classical fusion to technology based events to music theatre. It comes and goes from event to event, "musics without hierarchy, as satellites orbiting the galaxy of sound".

Even though the trio has had some 15 years' experience performing together such a disparate and varying organism risks fraying at the edges. Ironically it is this risk that is necessary for maintaining an edge to Pipeline's projects. It is through this risk that Pipeline explores the boundaries of rigour and chaos. No risk, no intensity, no point.

Pipeline is not interested in applying old paradigms to musical creation, "it just doesn't create any meaningful musical product or experience". De Haan observes that most times "players don't even get to the sound, grappling with the notes on the page and not considering the musical issues at all. The problem at the first stage of encounter of performer with music is that all meaningful communication may be lost. It is just as important for the performer to understand the creation process as it is for the composer".

"Performers need to know where the composer is coming from. If performers don't know why they are making the music or don't have the time to talk and work through the music, rehearsals are just a mechanical process. This takes you right out of the creative mode." An analogy for this situation would be someone reading a poem in a foreign language knowing the sounds of the words but not what is being said.

Pipeline's next event will be the New Music Festival in Hobart in April 1996. The Festival is a collaboration between three organisations—Pipeline, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music. This contemporary music festival will involve some sixty musicians including the core trio, the TSO, Eric Klay, Jane Manning, Stuart Campbell, David Tully, Stuart Favilla, Greg White, Alain Trudel, Calculated Risks Opera, Greg Schiemer, Artisans Workshop and Machine for Making Sense, performing music as diverse as any that Pipeline has been involved in. Concerts, music theatre, improvisation, sound installations, street musicians—Hobart will become for two weeks "a resonant performance space that people can enter and explore—our theme is 'City as Performance Space'".

Pipeline wants to challenge the concept of 'contemporary' music, defining the term through practice. "We're not going to talk about it, we're going to do it". For de Haan contemporary is "where new things can evolve now rather than just accept European or American models. The festival is about musicians living in Australia making music together. Pipeline's interest is in reflecting the state of musical affairs in the community, reflecting the diversity of music already practised in Australia".

People never quite know what to expect at a Pipeline concert.

CD reviews

Naná Vasconcelos, *StoryTelling*, Hemisphere, 1995, 7243 8 334 442 0

Brazilian percussionist Naná Vasconcelos has created a beautiful collection of sound pieces that moves through cities, along highways and village roads, pushing out towards the Amazon, gathering songs and laughter and samba rhythms, into its spiralling momentum. He builds a series of percussive frames through which his voice dances and delves, pushing itself against ungainly timbres, sounding across and becoming birds and chants and insects. Each piece marks out a different passage from song to territory, from rhythm to texture; and everywhere, little dissonances, tiny ruptures, open up between the percussion patterns and the exuberant melodies. "A Day In The Amazon" inches its way through a strange undulating combination of chants, cries, children's songs, and pulsing percussion sounds inside a densely packed cluster of vocal potentiality. "Night of Stars," a song that winds along a loping bassline and pizzicato strings, folds back across the other works, encompasses the richness of Vasconcelos's compositional style with its piercing cross-rhythms, the inventive chants, and layers of 'local' colour complexes that skirt along the edges of chaos, that gather around points of possible silence and then collapse into a temporal void. NG

Barney Mcall, *Exit*, ABC Records/EMI, 1995, 4798192

So this is where jazz is at: a mish mash of styles, shades of Horace Silver, combinations of this and that, played well, but...? So this is where jazz is at: the standard hard bop repertoire given a little burst of cool, sweet melody, shades of Keith Jarrett. So this is where jazz is at? In a sense, jazz has a problem. It can't be anything or everything. Thinking like this only ever means a naive relativism or ill-conceived postmodernism. And relativism always extends from a myth of the people, of a form that reconstitutes the street, the voice, that implies a relation to a certain kind of freedom as the essence of its expressive contours; and so does postmodernism. This is the point at which free jazz began to parody its own impossibility. All of life became contained, constrained by what a musician had 'to say'. The trouble was, music is not speech, cannot be reduced to a symbolic system as such. So personal statements are out, at least for the time being. So where does that leave Barney? His playing on the ballads is exquisite, but...again, it's a case of a paucity of musical ideas or, more to the point, a lack of a conception of what jazz might become, now, given its obvious current attachment to a profoundly conservative musical aesthetic. This CD is close to being only an exercise in showmanship. Prince, on *Sign O' The Times*, worked through the history of American pop music in one way or another: and there was something about his conceptual power which laid pop music to rest. Mcall tries to encompass rather than invent, to embody rather than exceed. You end up wondering where it's going to go ... all over again. NG

Sound Traffic Control, *The Throne Of Drones*, Sombient, 1995, Asphodel 0952

This is music embedded within cinema; it takes hold of the image of sound that runs through ambience—the desire for soundscapes, but as part of a far denser, outer zone of implied movement. It really does drift, but in a way that makes drifting into a material concept that designates a specific form, a temporal shape, rather than a hazy metaphor. While the sense or momentum of each piece is part of an overall throbbing pulse—the titular drone—what makes *The Throne of Drones* one of the more interesting collections of ambient soundscapes is the minute or molecular divisions of the beat, textures that at first seem secondary or arbitrary, that in fact work to establish less obvious divisions, manipulations, conversions, to mark out the possibility for the transformation of time itself. Gregory Lenczycki's *Retina Volt Stream* acts on the expectations of synthetic immersion by slicing through a conventional ambience sound bed with a vast metallic crust. *Sound Characters*, by Maryanne Amarcher, sets off a thick, corpuscular stream of resonances that seem to barely escape the time of their production. The final *Segue*, by Naut Humon, pushes the work towards the next Sound Traffic Control collection(to be reviewed in RT11) called *Swarm Of Drones* and sets the scene for more dissipating, abandoned sonic forms. NG

Stephanie McCallum
Notations
Tall Poppies TP 037

An engaging piano album, with works by Australian composers plus European ring-ins Boulez and Xenakis. The general tone is modernist: acerbic, spiky. This ranges from pioneering Australian modernist Margaret Sutherland to the neo-modernism (elsewhere dubbed 'new complexity') of Chris Dench. Yet these works are leavened with a lilting, rippling Moya Henderson piece, and two multi-faceted Nigel Butterley compositions. The first of these, "Uttering Joyous Leaves", is a sprightly blend of low chords and zig-zag runs. MaCallum's playing resounds with authority, switching easily from the brittle to the robust. The cerebral tenor of the album is encapsulated in the works by the European modernist masters. Boulez' *Deuze Notations* of 1945 are brief and episodic: a diversity of concise ideas. A less complimentary judgement, however, would regard them as technical exercises. Xenakis' *Herma* is a work derived from his mathematical procedure, but, as performed by McCallum, is far from statistical in its vigorous clustering. There is no safety in numbers.

As a final remark, the track listing on this CD is somewhat unclear due to the twelve-part Boulez piece; this inconvenience is offset to a large degree by the informative notes by Peter McCallum. JP

Marshall McGuire
Awakening
Tall Poppies TP 071

The harp has a regrettable profile in popular consciousness: it is the celestial instrument plucked by angels, or perhaps the basis for a musical interlude played amid mayhem by that divine fool, Harpo. So an album of contemporary Australian compositions for solo harp may seem at first an odd proposition. This CD by Marshall McGuire will be a very pleasant surprise for anyone unfamiliar with the potential of the harp in contemporary music.

There are some astonishing sounds on this album. Some of the compositions, like Helen Gifford's *Fable* and Barry Conyngham's *Awakening*, explore the possibilities of the instrument. The sound of a twanging bass string is particularly startling. Elsewhere, Peggy Glanville-Hicks' *Sonata For Harp*, with its cascading melody, offers a more conventional approach; while two Peter Sculthorpe works, adapted by McGuire from the guitar, present a style redolent of that lesser-stringed instrument.

Marshall McGuire has compiled a selection of works that is consistently interesting; his playing is sensitive throughout. This CD will always demand attention with its range of unusual sonorities. JP

Howlings, eternity, freedom

A brisk survey of great radio replays for the holiday season

Thematic continuity (social justice and human rights) abounds in *Radio Eye's* December programming. Tony Barrell's *Don't Forget Nagasaki,* which was a winner of the United Nations Media Peace Prize this year, returns on Dec 3 at 8.30pm. is followed by *Noam Chomsky—The Great Powers and Human Rights,* in which he focuses on the plight of East Timor. Tony Barrells' other powerful prizewinner, *Tokyo's Burning* (Special Prize, Radio Jury, Prix Italia 1995), is replayed Dec 10 and followed at 9.30pm by part one of *Propaganda,* Matthew Leonard's account of Australian war-time racism in "The Jap As He Really Is" ABC radio talks in 1942. The second episode is about the 'constructions' of radio documentary reality including the use of actors "who played everyone from the aircraft worker through to Winston Churchill" (Dec 17, 9.30pm).

Nick Franklin's *An Old Seaside Town Far Away* (Radio Eye, Dec 17. 8.30pm), is a frightening portrayal of the hostility to live animal exports that sweeps an English seaside town, Brightlinsea, uniting animal liberationists, vegetarians, socialists and conservatives, often against the police. Franklin bravely fronts the parties with his microphone and technical producer Stephen Tilley guarantees a frightening intimacy with interviewees and angry crowds.

Also on December 24 at 8.20pm. Radio Eye introduces *Howlings in the Head,* the first of a six part series of refreshingly spontaneous Melbourne spoken word performers working to music, using collage, cut up and special effects in five minute works. The Howlings in the Head are Lisa Greenaway, David Macken (the producer), Jim Buck and guests. Greenaway says that they rarely repeat programs and between March, when they started out on RRR, and the Melbourne Fringe, when they mounted the live gig *Howlings in the Slaughterhouse,* they had amassed some 80 five minute programs. Their *Radio Eye* series commences with Jim Buck's darkly langorous and dead witty poem *A Long and Wet Road* hauntingly juxtaposed with Peter Gabriel singing "Summertime" in the distant background. Short and bitter-sweet and nice of *Radio Eye* to give the group some national exposure.

Highlights from *The Listening Room* in December include Robyn Ravlich's *The Eternity Room* (Dec 25 10.05pm; Dec 26 5.05pm). For many years, Arthur Stace inscribed 'Eternity' in chalk copperplate across the city of Sydney. He remains pretty much an enigma, but the power of the program is in its evocation of an era (or two) and an artistic milieu, captured in the voices and recollections of Dorothy Hewett, Martin Sharp, George Gittoes and others. Stace appeared as a figure in numerous literary works (including Hewett's) and was played by Martin Sharp in Esben Storms' *In Search of Anna* and Jim Sharman's *The Night the Prowler.* Sharp wrote 'Eternity' on a footpath for the recording of this program.

Tony MacGregor's *Hybrid Wrestling* (Dec 27 & 28) is a personal account of a trip to Japan in which he is joined by the voices of others experiencing the culture, along with a gallery of curious sounds. It's a spare, reflective almost spiritual (in tone) essay on travel. *The Voice is the Muscle of the Soul* (check press for broadcast date) is a harrowing and liberating account of voice work in the Roy Hart Theatre based in France, Hart's influence is spreading—to a recent Adelaide's Fringe Festival workshop, for example. The program digs into the pros and cons of the method and you hear Hart and students going through what sounds like agony, splitting voices in two, recovering sounds lost in growing up, yielding new range and intensity. One of the best, but definitely for the earphones—the neighbours will suspect murder.

Saturday Eye, 3,30-4pm, is the other *Radio Eye* slot. In January it's featuring *Blacklisted* (Jan 6,13,20,27), a four part documentary saga about Gordon Kahn's battle with the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) and the FBI for the rights of the 'Hollywood Ten', movie workers charged with being Communists. It's an old-style American radio documentary with dramatisation, slickly presented with a kind of authoritative deadpan. But, like those novels on cassette it does the job, partly because it's a personal story rather than a collective overview, partly because of the actors playing the key roles—Stockard Channing, Ron Liebman (as Kahn), Carol O'Connor (as Edgar J. Hoover), Julie Harris, Eli Wallach and Martin Mull.

Listen out for *Uluru* (Jan 13, 20) on Radio National from the *Awaye!* program. "By tomorrow the rock'll be missing. Aboriginal people will take it away" jokes one of the Aboriginal speakers at the 'handback' of Uluru to the Anangu people, while an aeroplane circles the event trailing a banner saying "Ayers Rock for All Australians". Broadcast October 21 1995 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the handback on Oct 26th, *Uluru* captures the historical, mythological and political dimensions of the handback in a range of fascinating voices including Aboriginal (translated as spoken), old newsreel voices accompanied by militaristic music (a shiver-inducing nostalgia), and bitter, defeated Northern Territory politicians.

Highlight of the season is *Freedom Ride* (in two parts Dec 30, Jan 6), a raw 1965 radio classic from the ABC Radio Archives. "The people at Walgett are the worst kind of white people this side of the black stump", cries an Aboriginal woman opening the program. Next we're in Sydney where the Reverend Tedd Noffs offers a prayer as the Freedom Ride bus sets out, a group of supportive black Americans singing "We shall overcome". As the bus moves town to town seeking out racism, it's not long before it's found—"Walgett, Australia's disgrace" the protesters' banners declare. The town is divided and an Aboriginal woman delivers a long, powerful, apparently un-edited tirade against white arrogance and sexual hypocrisy. This is outside the police station after the bus has been almost driven off the road by white harassers. In Moree, in a tense, unnerving piece of verité radio, the swimming pool administrator refuses admission to Aboriginal children led by one of the protesters—"How am I to know if these children are clean or otherwise?" His cyclical, evasive delivery could have been scripted by David Mamet. Produced in 1965 by John Cassidy, technical production by Tom Hall, it's a reminder of a different kind of radio experience, with an immediacy long gone save for glimpses in the polished works of *Radio Eye* or the political acuity of *Background Briefing.*There's certainly nothing like it on television. Not to be missed.

KG

Illuminating the dark

Julia Postle ventures into Rock'n'Roll Circus' *The Dark*

"The dark is like a conjurer's handkerchief, one thing leads to another in an unending, outlandish chain." Director Gail Kelly cites A. Alvarez's conceit in her program notes for Rock 'n' Roll Circus' latest incarnation, *The Dark*. This is a whirling, shadowy multitude of images and sounds so dense that what remains afterwards is a blurred continuum of lusciously wicked, sexy, virtuosic and psychotic moments. As Kelly observes, the narrative is not the linear stuff of traditional theatre, but rather an ostensibly disjointed series of explorations and evocations.

Ponch Hawkes

Certain characters appear repeatedly within the fragmentation of *The Dark*, their stories ripening and over-ripening around a solid ominous core, like once glorious now decaying summer stone fruit. Other personae occupy a more transitory or marginal position within the work. As the different tales of movement and sound overlap dangerously with each other, it is obvious the characters not only share the performance space, but are also unequivocally connected through a theme of darkness, and the associations which the dark arouses.

A lovesick songster emerges and re-emerges (and re-emerges again and again); his lamentation is that timeless tune—"Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do. I'm half crazy over the love of you ...". Those poignant words are still ringing in my head, another nightmarish memento of *The Dark*. With a gun, a loaf of bread, a bottle and a blow-torch, 'Daisy' colonises the stage with his voice alone, in between eating the bread, forcing another person to eat the bread at gun-point, and setting things alight.

Annabel Lines' equally maniacal creation, a punkish nurse in vibrant silver boots, raises knives and meat-cleavers to the light in a quest to expand her collection of amputated hands in glass jars. Matt Wilson, either descending from above singing "I'm in the mood for love" or plummeting onto a huge mattress in the shape of a love-heart, is the subject of her murderous intentions. It becomes obvious that this crazed nurse is committed to her role as a healer and nurturer when she pushes out a refurbished wheelchair complete with a "decapitation chamber". When her victim walks backwards into the contraption, his head enclosed in the chamber, Lines proceeds to enact a gruesome lobotomy. She chisels his head from above the four-sided compartment, removing handful after handful (and mouthful) of jellied matter, delighting in the procedure.

Derek Ives plays another more pathetic character in this collage of darkness. As a suicidal salesman, Ives makes numerous attempts at ending his own life, and with each failed effort he becomes increasingly pitiable. He embellishes his ineffectual hanging method with wretched little gasps as if this would somehow make the manoeuvre effective. The character reappears in ever more ridiculous suicidal scenarios. At one stage Ives wanders blindly from the performance space, dragging his suitcase on a rope behind him, his head jammed inside a shiny metallic toilet bowl. He later points a gun to his head and fires, but it seems there are no bullets. He shoots his foot instead.

Countless acrobatic spectacles merge with the eccentric characterisations. Kareena Oates puts a new twist on the '50s hula hoop craze. While moving slowly in a circle, she guides the hoops over her bare torso, first in a group around her waist and then, miraculously, separating the circles so that one rotates around an arm over her head, one glides around her neck and shoulders, and others spin on her waist and legs. Without apparent effort, Oates steers the hoops back to her waist. Later she returns with a single hoop, which is set alight by 'Daisy'.

Oates' singular fusion of confidence and expertise surfaces again in an enthralling trio with Matt Wilson and Rudi Mineur. Oates balances, heels in one hand and cigarette in the other, with one foot fixed to Wilson's head. Mineur moves to stand in front of Wilson, and Oates 'walks' from one man's head to the next. Wilson and Mineur seem to play with the illusion, as they fluidly reposition themselves.

In a more absurd moment, an ensemble of five glowing skeletons samba on an operating table, do the conga around the space, then all cram onto a bike and ride around the stage. It's the fun side of darkness; straight out of a Disney Halloween episode and served up with South American rhythms. Comical scenes like this balance the other more sinister manifestations of darkness *The Dark* projects the wonders of circus performance into a new dimension.

The Dark is programmed for the 1996 Adelaide Festival Centre's World Theatre season.

A new look at the new

Maryanne Lynch at La Boite's *The Shock of the New!*

The Shock of the New! is a week-long Brisbane festival, now in its second year, which "aims to create an opportunity for the presentation, promotion and development of new performance work". Performance work includes "drama, dance, music, technology and the visual arts". The emphasis is on 'new', with, this year 'cultural diversity' as a festival 'theme'.

I have an interest in the concept of the 'new' and in the role of festivals in the 1990s vis-a-vis the arts and vice versa. I see the two as related in the context of *Shock* and the other festivals large and small breeding like flies around the country.

Stacey Callaghan in *Still Raw* Andrew Hodges

'Newness' is part and parcel of the rhetoric of most current Western (read Anglo) art practice. It intersects in interestingly problematic ways with other ideologies of 'difference'—'multiculturalism' and the 'information society'. In *Shock* the 'new' was defined as 'work which challenges prevailing practice'. This definition, underpinning many Australian arts festivals, immediately raises the questions 'whose practice?' and 'how is it challenged?'

In the Australian context I identify 'prevailing practice' as those art practices that have been around for at least twenty years (ten? five? two?), and further discriminate between 'traditional mainstream' and 'traditional alternative'. The latter is, for artists like myself, 'heritage'; the former 'history, mate'. This distinction, whilst simplistic (and increasingly blurred by the work of, for example, Barrie Kosky), offers a vocabulary immediately understood by those who speak it and formed the sub-text of the *Shock* selection of festival works.

The second question arising from *Shock's* definition of the new, the form of the 'challenge', was answered, implicitly, as the subversion of the 'traditional mainstream' and the continued redefinition of the 'alternative'. What if, however, even a redefined 'alternative' seems to exclude arts practice that isn't informed by the latest offering in theory, technology and aesthetics?

Both parts of the *Shock* definition of newness sat uneasily with the theme of cultural diversity, when 'cultural' was read as 'ethnic', and in practice there was an almighty collision between the terms. Despite the presence of two 'cultural co-ordinators', appointed to work with non-Anglo artists and audiences, and the earnest efforts of the festival co-ordinator and the selection committee, *Shock* pieces were mostly within the 'traditional (Anglo) alternative'. There were a number of pieces by non-Anglos, but this didn't alleviate the problem. The audiences too were in the main resolutely inner-urban, cafe-chic etc.

The issue was illustrated by Suspiros *de la Luna,* a successful application incorporating Flamenco dance and guitar, the Indian sarod, South American percussion, Arabian vocal work and the recital (in Spanish) of Lorca's poetry, all of this directed by an Italian-born, Flamenco-trained woman. Whilst the piece brought together these different art traditions (which are not themselves static), it didn't seem informed by the theories of contemporary Anglo-American cross-art. At the same time it contained the potential, in the ethnic communities represented, to redefine art forms and/or the role of the artist. The question became who and what is new and for whom?

'Difference', the second and broader interpretation of the theme of cultural diversity, survived the Shock experience a little better, probably because this is part of the 'alternative' tradition. Shows like *still raw,* a powerful one-dyke show combining drag, stand-up, Shakespeare and stereotypes, certainly brought in audiences that 'wouldn't be seen dead' in La Boite otherwise—and shook them up! But is this enough of a measure of success given Shock's broad intent?

The problem with *Shock,* one that its organisers fully understood, is the incompatibility of various current ideologies. It may be that Australian festivals should become what they mostly are: celebrations of middle-class Anglo culture. Yet, this seems to deny the importance of, say, Shock as a developmental strategy and an event in Queensland performance culture. It also falls into the trap of making Anglos into the baddies, and of denying differences other than those of ethnicity.

A more diffuse problem highlighted by Shock is the widespread uncritical acceptance of 'newness' as an ideology. What is the *context*—the aesthetic/ political/ ethnic/ historical etc. considerations—that in each and every instance needs to be brought to bear on thinking 'newness'? This is not an argument for doing away with 'newness', but increasingly the concept seems to be a surrogate for junk-food attitudes to art on the part of artists, audiences and festival directors—i.e. eat it and eat again quick!

Shock is a significant event for Queensland artists, but more importantly, it raises questions for us all.

The Shock of the New! Festival, *La Boite Theatre, Brisbane, 16-21 October 1995. Maryanne Lynch was a member of the 1995 Shock reference group.*

Casula, comin at cha!

Caitlin Newton-Broad does the Hiphopera thing

You've heard the saying, "Think before you open your mouth"? Well, there are alternative versions, like "Think *with* your mouth" or "*Freestyling*". Speaking out, off the top of your head, straight from your experience of things, straight from your anger and joy. It's like tossing up the coin. Which side lands? Which side falls?

The Hiphopera Project, produced by Death Defying Theatre, has brought together experience and people to mount a show which includes all the forms and rhythms of expression bound to the Hiphop Thing. Graffiti, acute lyrics, hard noise, video and breakdancing. The binding force, when you listen from the outside, is the sense that these performers and artists are writing from *some place*. They are coming from The Western Suburbs, drawing out their diverse cultures, shaping their own centre.

Casula, comin at cha!

Over three and a half months, the group of over 50 kids, teens and adults, worked in different workshops, writing and performing hip-hop, cutting original tracks, getting in some graffiti practice, learning video production and breaking in dance workshops. The project spanned from Auburn to Sydney's South West. The project included special hiphop workshops at Minda Juvenile Detention Centre in Lidcombe, culminating in a video clip, and a great track. Each song during the two hour long performance has a sharp specificity about it, and most have a highly politicised edge. The songs talk about black deaths in custody, teenage nihilism, the etiquette of hiphop, jail, love, violence and racism.

Black in the house

Digging their bodies like a scoop, hitting out, ducking up and down like bolts, currents, charges, causing shivers to go up and down my spine as Creed open with a cool harmony. These girls are kicking.

Closing moments. The performers are all freestyling, passing the mike from hand to hand, thinking on their feet, dab poets, shaking their bodies. Hitting high and deft. A moment later, to the heavy bass of hiphop, a circle forms and dancers spinout on the floor, the crowd pools around. Appreciation and awe. They are stoked.

Hiphopera, *Casula Powerhouse, Saturday Nov 24 : Pier One, the Rocks, Sunday Dec 3.*

Theatre doesn't have to be a blood sport

Virginia Baxter at the Playworks tenth anniversary festival

Saturday opens with an address by Rose Shelley (Judy Farr) a character from Alma de Groen's monologue *Invisible Sun* standing in for the writer herself who doesn't enjoy looking back, "Much of my theatre history seems like a form of aversion therapy...too much of the time I was the bad fairy at the christening—'Oh God, not the writer again!'"

The fictional Rose is replaced by the real Katherine Thomson, recollections falling from pages of scripts: "When I wrote *Barmaids* I was on my own". *Mobile phone rings* "Yes?" *Live camera picks up director Angela Chaplin in the audience.* "What do you mean 'on your own?'"

Change of topic. "I thought I'd talk about survival." Tobsha Learner on the importance of being produced ("seek production aggressively, whether it means producing your own work or deliberately tailoring for mainstream production houses"); on second seasons ("essential for the development of all elements of the play...far too many works appear and disappear like tragic shooting stars...a constant turnover of one-hit wonders") and finally (as she has recently) directing your own work ("the experience of dealing with physical space, the actual carving out especially of the text, the tension between the actors, the choreography of those emotional journeys has re-enthused me and reminded me why I got involved in theatre in the first place.").

Enter Nikki Heywood singing from Britten's *Rape of Lucretia.* Song becomes voice-over as Nikki's body remembers her grandmother Jean "who saved brown paper and lengths of string, crocheted coathanger covers for the Red Cross and willed herself to die". Thus sleeps Lucretia, crossing paths with Jenny Kemp.

"I want to liberate the audience from the constraints and conventions of time, to provoke imaginative and associative engagements with image and words so that memory, dream, fantasy, desire, myth, imagination all play more active and creative roles. I want to lift the constraints of linear time, create a feeling of timelessness, to build a form that reveals the complexity of a single moment." Video images of *Call of the Wild, Sweet Dreams* and *Remember*—for many of the audience, the first they've seen of Jenny's work.

As the writers speak, timekeeper Colleen Chesterman plays Patience.

"I hate well made plays. I loathe and detest them with a bitter hatred. I almost hate realism as much", says Dorothy Hewett in an onstage interview with Margaret Williams:

"I'm always writing three endings—I'm always wanting to go on and say something deeper. I'm very keen on the use of music. Music is a way of structuring a play. It will lead you on and on. All those little scenes...clunk, clunk. Music is a bridge. It will lead you in a circle...You're trying to create that perfect thing from inside yourself, and you never do, except for two days after you finish a script. Then you look at it, and realise that you haven't. You're trying to create on a stage an imaginative, extremely fluid open ended world in which there is a central female character who is articulate and courageous and in there. It doesn't interest me so much whether she wins or loses. What matters is that she is trying to get what she wants.
MW: Any advice to young writers?
DH: Women flower in a supportive environment. Theatre doesn't have to be a blood sport. Hang in there kid.

A standing ovation.

Dorothy Hewett Heidrun Löhr

At the clockface table, timekeeper Marion Potts prepares artichokes.

Andrea Aloise falls into a pool of light, an orange in her mouth. Music: Bernard Herrman. She stands on one foot. "I can't move. I have lost faith."

Noelle Janaczewska walks to the microphone. Resisting the autobiography of difference and the writer-performer model she heads for other destinations: theoretical and abstract ideas, rejects the head-heart opposition of intellect and emotion and works with an associative, poetic logic rather than a dramatic logic of character journeys, plot development and conflict, back flips to anthropology, weaves a surrealist ethnography taking in the domestic in the philosophical, the semiotic in the kitchen, writing for theatre and elsewhere speaking and singing.

The live video screen catches Jane Goodall making sandwiches at her desk.

"Noelle, it's not often you get to interrupt a writer. Maybe the options are opening up at last. Usually I sit here quietly in the dark. Now don't get me wrong. I don't resent that. But I do like the options to be opened up. When I came here to see your play *The History of Water* a few years ago, the audience was over half Vietnamese and they opened up the options quite a bit. They brought their kids with them. Little kids, who roamed about the auditorium and occasionally went to explore outside it to be corralled by parents and grandparents. What I don't like about the theatre is being shut in."

Another artichoke heart in the jar.

Sunday: Timekeeper Anna Messariti pairs a mountain of socks.

Deborah Pollard in sarong and basket balanced on her head stands in an island of coffee cups, a clove cigarette smouldering of each saucer. "Problem, no problem, none whatsoever. Saya masih gembira tidak apa apa. Only occasionally like yesterday, bad pang but now, just fine. Know what's what. Fine. It's been ah, it's been ah, it's been ah six hundred and seventy five days but I always forget. Saya selalu lupa."

Kretak cigarette smoke hangs in the air as Paula Abood speaks quietly and strongly about the representation of Arab-Australian culture and her 1994 choreopoem *The Politics of Belly Dancing.* A voice from the dark: Where are you from? PA: I'm Australian. Voice: Yeh, but where are you *really* from? Jacquie Lo removes her veil and talks culture with Paula Abood across the divide between audience and stage.

Venetia Gillot reads from her laptop computer ("Sorry, no time to print") a decade of South African politics and her theatre work in Australia. "1994. First free elections in South Africa. Darwin. Ululation. Celebrating victory with Tanzanian actor Sheila Langeberg. We create a scene in the lobby of a Darwin hotel. Theatre for me is surrogate 'mother' country and surrogate language, a landscape against which to tell stories, a place to speak a common language but where am I located in the area of writing?"

Victoria Spence sits dripping wet at the table: "It's like going to the movies and accidentally putting your popcorn under someone else's seat and when you reach it, it's not there. It's there, you know it's there or at least you think it is but you've put it somewhere and all of a sudden somewhere is not the place and you don't know if it's yours any more or if it ever was and then you wonder if you can look for it, if you're allowed to, and you're not sure what you're going to find when you go looking and so all through the movie the sound of everybody else's popcorn rings in your ears like some sort of primeval torment".

Suzanne Spunner delivers a paper on paper. Meredith Rogers reads from Suzanne's work, Lisa Dombrowski delivers the text of her paper while Suzanne sits cross-legged on the floor laying out a ream of white paper like a croupier. "The beginning and end is paper. In the middle is not the shadow but the spotlight on the show where the paper must not be revealed but marked by performance like a balaclava on a hold up merchant as if there never was any paper. Words must come from lips as if never went in through eyes, bodies move with words as if handling weapons for the first time. Gingerly off the paper the words rub and bump."

Marion Potts *Timekeeper* Heidrun Löhr

The taped voice of Amanda Stewart cutting through the air—schizoid, operatic, personal pronouns, mercurial tirades, fractured English, phonemes, calls, statements, outbursts, stutters, mouth sounds, 'concrete nouns', parallel speech setting up for the audience modes of listening that constantly switch between fields of shape and suggestion.

Fax to Playworks: October 25 "Playing With Time was a true festival—exuberant, celebratory and with a great spirit of collective affirmation. Playworks is a genuine pioneering women's organisation. Pioneering in the 1990s? Sure. This emerged in discussions with some of the long term campaigners like Dorothy Hewett and Katharine Brisbane but also in the cross-cultural initiatives being taken by Noelle Janaczewska, Andrea Aloise, Tes Lyssiotis. Retrospectives among explorers are always that much more interesting than they are amongst celebrities: how did we get here—and where to next? The questions are still leading the way." (Jane Goodall)

Papers from Playing With Time *including the full version of the above will shortly be available from Playworks.* Playing With Time, *Playworks' comprehensive survey of the decade of women's writing for Performance, is also available from Playworks Ph: 02-262.3174 Fax 02-262.6275*

Shorts

Critical Mass—reported by Julie Burleigh in Melbourne: My friends and I went to the first **Critical Mass in Melbourne**. Described as 'the first pollution-free traffic jam this century', it is a show of strength by cyclists in a large group. Large enough not to feel threatened by cars. On the last Friday of every month, in over 60 countries, cyclists come together and ride 'en masse' through the city. The 'corks' (bikes that block on-coming traffic) had signs like THANK YOU FOR WAITING to soothe irate motorists. Some militants were disappointed by the slow pace and lack of fixed political agenda. Others saw these as major attractions of the event. Look out for Critical Mass handbills in your city.

Sensible—until December 17 at Curtin University School of Art. Graduates Daniel Argyle, Barbara Bolt, Andrew Britton, Aadje Bruce, Andre Cornford, Susan Flavell, Donna Fulton, Irena Harper, Graham Hay, Cassie McDonald, Lorna Murray, Marc Renshaw, Rachael Salmon-Lomas, Imswang Somchai, Jessica Spaven, Martin Tabor, Michele Theunissen and Bilyana Vujcich. Between 10 and 5 daily at the Sculpture Building (203.158) Manning Road entrance, Bentley WA.

Sideswipe Productions go green on Sunday afternoons at The Dispensary Cafe, 84 Enmore Rd, Enmore NSW. *the Oracle,* a save-the-planet musical written by **Terry Burgan** and **Alex Broun**, directed by **Arthur Barrett**, starring **Pat Powell** (Buddy Holly Show and Kylie Minogue backing vocals), **Lisa Spence**, **Joel McIlroy** (Henry V, Splendids, Home & Away) and **Alexia McIlroy-Kelly** (ATYP and Australian Youth Choir). Dec 3, 10, 17; Jan 7, 14, 21, 28. 4pm

Gray Street Workshop exhibition until December 14, 482 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, (Brisbane) **Tue-Sat 10-5**. Contemporary jewellers **Sue Lorraine**, **Catherine Truman**, **Leslie Matthews**, **Julie Blyfield**

Made to Move—**dance across australia '96**—year long festival of dance—wealth of dance—intelligence, athleticism, fluidity, exuberance, sophistication, enchantment, rapture and poetry—a thesaurus for dance publicists as a 'cross section of Australia's premiere dance companies' sets out to tour nationally presenting performances, workshops, residencies and forums. You'll see them coming.

SKid is on at St Martins (Melbourne) til December 10, **Bookings (03) 9887 2551**. Developed by 12 long term unemployed working with theatre professionals as part of a LEAP (Landcare Environment Action Program). Directed by **Chris Thompson** and **Bradley Hulme**, SKid is about homeless kids in a future Melbourne, living in sewers and stormwater drains under spotless streets.

Stick this on your fridge...**ACCA** (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art) Dallas Brooks Drive, South Yarra (Vic) has a group show called **The Object of Existence** from December 8 to February 25 (closed Dec 23-Jan 22) Artists are **Amanda Ahmed**, **Lauren Berkowitz**, **Cris Fortescue**, **Sione Francis**, **Fiona Hall**, **Jason Hartcup**, **Terry Hogan**, **Bill Lane**, **Margaret Morgan**, **Callum Morton**, **Deborah Ostrow**, **Rodney Spooner**, **Andrew Wright-Smith** and **Anne Zahalka**. Curated by **Clare Williamson**, this exhibition looks at domestic equipment and accessories: 'At a time when life can seem more virtual than actual, when data reigns and illusion suffices, everyday objects have taken on a new importance as evidence of a shared human experience.'

Voice: A photographic exhibition at FAD (14 Corrs Lane, Melbourne) Thursday to Sundays until December 17. Ph: (03)9639.2700

Theatre is Moving—Sydney Summer Intensive Training **Workshops** with **Leisa Shelton** aimed at 'embodying the actor' after the dramatic movement vocabulary of Etienne Decroux. January 15-March 6 three mornings a week. Call (02) 212 5738

AFI Best Short Film Award winner, *The Beat Manifesto* is part of this year's ABC TV special, **The Australian Collection**, screening **January 25** at 8.30pm. **Daniel Nettheim**, AFTRS graduate, director and co-writer of *The Beat Manifesto,* says the film is a simple, savage satire about a rural poet who, en route to New York, has his beatnik dreams shattered by a has-been mentor. Other AFTRS graduate films included are **Robert Connolly**'s *Mr Ikegami's Flight*—a tale of divided loyalties—and **Sam Lang**'s *Audacious*—a daring journey to the other side of sexual satisfaction.

Ever so mainstream—Australian Multimedia Enterprise Limited (AME) backgrounds itself in a recent media release: AME is a public company incorporated under Australia's Corporation Law with an eight member independent board and offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. Financing multimedia products for mainstream platforms including CD-ROM and on-line services, AME will also manage private funds, build consortia between international and Australian multimedia practitioners, educate the community, expand marketing opportunities and advise government. So far it has handed out $3.5 million for three multimedia projects dealing with children, sport and the family.

Film West Open Air Movies in the courtyard of the Parramatta Riverside Theatre, cnr Church and Market Sts, Parramatta NSW. On Friday Jan 26 at 8.30pm see *Bliss,* (1985 from Peter Carey's novel) directed by **Ray Lawrence**, produced by **Tony Buckley** and starring **Barry Otto**, **Lynette Curran** and **Helen Jones**. On Saturday Jan 27 also at 8.30 see *Shorts Under the Stars,* Australian short films. Program info: (02) 774 2043

babel—the Fringe Writer's Festival (Sydney) Paddington Town Hall, Sunday January 14. Guests include **John A. Scott**, **Tom Flood**, the **Young Sydney Poets**, **berni janssen**, **Paul Kelly**, UWS students, performance poets, authors, publishers, launches including **Sabrina Achilles**' first novel *Waste* published by Local Consumption Press. Info from **Lisa Herbert** (02) 332 4581

Flagshipmates—Sydney Symphony Orchestra announces its 1996 Subs Season. Browsing through the deceased male composers in the Philips Masters Series, the Philips Mozart Master Series, the Great Classics, Beethoven Times Four, The Piano Series, Great Performers, Tea & Symphony and Music for Spring, we come to the **Twentieth Century Orchestra** series to find it includes some living male composers: Roger Smalley, Ross Edwards, Peter Schat, Richard Meale, Alfred Schnittke. The **Meet the Music** series has Carl Vine, Stephen Cronin, Peter Sculthorpe, Wilfred Leyman and Don Banks. Not one woman composer in the entire 1996 program. We're not supposed to mention it, but ...What's going on ?

Like a Rash it Spreads—a group exhbition at 202 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne presented by **Arterial**, a group of fifteen artists standing for 'innovation, professionalism and participation within the art's community' From December 8 to 31 Phone (03) 9419 7803

Beam me up Spotty—**Space to Cyberpunk** at the Post Master Gallery, National Philatelic Centre 321 Exhibition Street (corner Latrobe) Melbourne. Phone (03) 9204 7736. An exhibition including space toys, space food, model scale rockets, Topo the robot, the Australian 'Lorikeet' rocket missile, comics, costumes and memorabilia. Oh, and over **600 space stamps** from 298 countries. **Beam me up Spotty** from December 2 to March 10 1996. Mon-Fri 9-5, Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5

Looking for 35mm slides. **Roland Manderson**, **Canberra Youth Theatre** Director and **Elizabeth Paterson**, sculptor, puppet maker and performer extraordinaire will be with the **Song Ngoc Water Puppet Company in Hanoi** in January 96. They are working on a joint production to be run by CYT with performances early in 1997. Roland is looking for 35mm slides of 'exemplary Youth Theatre activity' to illustrate some presentations he and Elizabeth will give in Hanoi. Contact them at PO Box 127 Civic Square ACT 2608, phone (06) 248 5057. The trip is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs through the Australian Embassy in Hanoi.

Canberra Youth Theatre 1996 Program includes football, fiery spectacles, poor theatre, touring shows, multi-media. Enrol by Feb 7 (06) 248 5057. Have a look at *No Fear!* a theatre project for the National Museum of Australia Jan 15-27 and *The Maze* by Niamh Kearney, funded by the PAB, touring secondary colleges in February and if you're quick, *Icing Vo Vos in the Valley of Death* end of year spectacle December 7-9 at 7.30pm, **Gorman House**.

Contemporary Music Events Company—producers of *Metrodome, Composing Women's Festival, Earwitness, Sound Shows* and *The Garden of Joy and Sorrow*— is inviting **proposals from curators** for music events in 1997. A CMEC event is a curated series of performances, forums or installations, under the umbrella of a theme or issue, featuring music of this century in all its forms: concert, cross-art, music theatre, improvisation, world music etc. The applicant curator (individual or team) should present CMEC with a brief outline of the event's prospective theme, participants, venue ideas and presentation style by **Feb 28, 1996.** For details of brief, fee structures and CMEC objectives, tel: (03) 9427 7702 fax: (03) 9417 7481

Hats off to **SBS Independent** who have produced **Passion**, a series of half-hour plays by women writers (**Tobsha Learner, Jennifer Compton, Jean Kittson, Linden Wilkinson, Lissa Benyon, Joanna Murray-Smith**). The plays, originally presented at The Griffin Theatre in 1994, screen over three Sunday nights at 8.30 pm starting **Sunday December 17**. For further information: Ph: 02-430.3915

And don't miss **Hell Bento!** Anna & Adam Broinowski's witty and self-aware journey into the Japanese underground on **The Cutting Edge December 12 SBS**

Sport

TOOTH AND CLAW

with Jack Rufus

Cricket is with us again, and there's no doubt about this summer's hero. Forget Warne, forget Waugh—the true star of the long hot season, the little bloke with the biggest influence of all is...the mini-camera.

Channel 9, having pinched spin-cam from its pay-TV rival, lines up this ingenious device with its patented stump-cam. Now we have an extra angle on Shane Warne's mystery-ball, as its diabolical spin bedevils its hapless opponents. It's only a matter of time before we have boot-cam (for the extra-low view); ump-cam (attached to the official's head); key-cam (for the moment when Tony Greig inserts his car-key into the pitch); cloud-cam (mounted in a patrolling chopper, on the alert for malevolent storm-clouds); and seagull-cam (providing an alternative viewpoint for the animal lover.)

Why stop there? Let's use comb-cam and toothbrush-cam to reveal the private lives of our superstar cricketers. And why not a Christmas special, with tree-cam, chimney-cam and stocking-cam? Revel in the joyous bounty as our heroes partake of the festive table. Let's hear it for turkey-cam, pudding-cam and ham-cam!

TEE OFF

with Vivienne Inch

Getting in some much needed putting practice on the sweeping broadloom of the Sheraton Parkway, setting for the (very hush hush) IMZ *Music Through Walls: Arts and the Media in the 21st Century* Conference, I was distracted by what sounded like a swarm of bees inside the Regal Room. It turned out to be the Australians in the audience of international guests muttering like a bunch of caddies at a golfers' convention:

Q: Given your reservations about technology should we continue to produce art for television? (Avril MacRory, BBCTV)
A: You should tickle the audience, stimulate them to see the real thing (Philippe Genty)

Resisting the urge to take a nine iron and send my ball flying at the panel, I took instead to the microphone. "Excusez-moi M. Genty, but here in Australia, we have been practically tickled to death with snippets and excerpts! How would you like to be nibbling on endless hors d'oeuvres in down time while the world banquets on complete works in prime? Spare us another series of *The Bill* Ms MacRory and see how long it takes for us to develop a taste for contemporary dance." The guest we had come to see, Hans Peter Kuhn (sound artist, composer and Robert Wilson collaborator) smiled wearily. Like golf, conferences can be static and you need to make your mind dynamic. With the other artists who had left the room, I hauled my clubs to the video library where the real game was going on.

Michael Bates

PACT Theatre's *The Oedipus Project,* directed by Chris Ryan and designed by Samuel James, Oct 11-29, proved to be a night of a hundred catharses, as the tale we know so well was splintered across roles, gender, race and the displacement of the audience through the performing space from tutorials to car accident site. After an all too choral beginning looking much too like the old half-dancey youth theatre we love to hate, *The Oedipus Project* burst into astonishingly adept solos, duos and trios. For all the physical challenges involved and the plethora of distancing devices, the movie-ish stomach-rumbling soundtrack and the sudden taking on of roles without the prop of narrative continuity, the young actors invested their portrayals with psychological richness, whether playing Oedipus or themselves. The meta-theatre jokes were too familiar and the big climactic ending of falling flats and screens ran counter to the production's persistent dismantling of the big story into critical moments we can all relate to, or try to. Similarly, the penultimate image of the naked man strung upside down looked a touch too private and singular an Oedipus fantasy after all the marvellously lateral transformations of the classic. The vocal work was clever, sometimes requiring demanding overlaying and intercutting. Youth theatre companies in Sydney are consistently proving that they can provide Sydney audiences with theatre of skill and substance.

KG