

REALTIME

FREE

Issue 1

**THEATRE , PERFORMANCE
AND THE NATIONAL ARTS**

PERFORMANCE

**Karen Finley, BITCH! DYKE! FAGHAG! WHORE,
Rose English, DUMB TYPE**

THEATRE

**Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane
and the Festivals**

MUSIC

**Stevie Wishart,
Machine for
Making Sense,
Jon Rose, Australysis,
Chambermade Opera
and Steve Reich**

DANCE

**Gallotta, Forsythe,
Morris**

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN PERFORMERS Survey

VISUAL ARTS

Techno-arts, Adelaide Installations, Zona di Transito

FESTIVALS

Adelaide, Perth, The Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras

PLUS

the Very Small Sports Column, Eating Way Out & At Short Notice



INSIDE REAL TIME

Performance Angharad Wynne Jones' vision for The Performance Space.
Catharine Lumby puts visiting New York performers Karen Finley and Susana Ventura in perspective. Noëlle Janaczewska reports on the UK's Rose English. **pages 3-4**

Theatre and performance Vision and style in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth and Brisbane.
Interviews with Ros Horin, Sue Rider, Chris Johnson and Tobsha Learner. **pages 5-7**

Eating Way Out Nikki Gemmel on Swingers' Cafe, Alice Springs **page 7**

The Adelaide and Perth Festivals at a glance. Choreographers Mark Morris and William Forsythe, Kyoto's Dumb Type, Harvey & Ackroyd.
Visual arts in Adelaide plus Julie Anne Long on looking for Degree Zero with choreographer Jean Claud Gallotta in Melbourne. **pages 8-11**

Bosco Rung **Has His Say** on new arts efforts out of SBS and Radio National. **page 13**

McKenzie Wark celebrates **Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras** and finds a Queer Peace. **page 14**

Jane Goodall **Reviews** Anne Marsh's history of Australian Performance Art and Trevor Hay offers a surprising reading of *Red Azalea*, a biography from a former Red Guard film star. **pages 15-16**

Performing Women Barbara Campbell, Lyndal Jones, Clare Grant, Michelle Andringa, Sherre DeLys, Vicki Spence and Deborah Pollard **page 18**

The Sound of Musics John Potts talks to the Machine for Making Sense. Annemarie Jonson sounds out Australysis and Chambermade Opera. Michael George Smith investigates the marketing of new music. Jon Rose goes interactive. Stevie Wishart experiences Steve Reich's *The Cave* in London. Robert Lloyd drums in Jakarta and Tony MacGregor pursues Sound Culture in Kobe. **pages 18-22**

Plus Wark on the WIRED and MONDO 2000 techno-hype.
The Jack Rufus and Vivienne Inch **Very Small Sports Column, By Design** and **At Short Notice**. **pages 22-23**

EDITORIAL

Call this the violin issue of REAL TIME — it features the avant gardists of the violin, Jon Rose and Stevie Wishart, photos of David Branson bowing for Vicki Spence and Deborah Pollard in their performance *Fall of the Roman Empire* and Anna Broinowski fiddling in the Yiddish Dream Theatre of Timothy Daly's *Kafka Dances* for the Griffin Theatre Company. Kronos, Balanescu and the Brodsky String Quartets get a look-in and, analogously, the new director of The Performance Space, Angharad Wynne-Jones, tenses her crossbow. This fortuitous profusion of violins and bows signals the ambition of REAL TIME to place performance and theatre in the context of the new musics, dance, visual and techno-arts, sound, radio, popular culture and the performative elements of everyday life.

The 90s are an astonishingly rich time for the arts, a richness barely acknowledged. The quality, diversity and proliferation of work, the ragged beginnings of effective national touring, the burgeoning work of performance, new opera and the techno-arts, and a dynamic interplay between forms are seen everywhere. A surge of new arts journalism countering the paucity of newspaper and television reportage will hopefully be sustained (watch out Melvyn Bragg!). On the down side, funding does not match the quantity of talent, reviewers in the mass media (even where sympathetic) can't find the words to grasp the new. State and federal funding are prone to falling out of kilter, spurious fears are about that image-based work is expanding at the expense of theatre, that too much money is going to project and development grants (at the expense of larger companies), and there's a worrying desire, a fear of the artist, to replace artistic directors with producers and managers, plus there's the predictable carping aimed at an Australia Council remarkably supportive of innovation in theatre and performance (perhaps too supportive for some within it).

The tired old Sydney-Melbourne debate — most recently Sydney actors being described by someone who should know better as 'sipping their chardonnay while waiting for the jobs to come in rather than getting out there and making theatre like Melbourne types do' — is kept up instead of recognising the volume of new and original work produced by a large number of companies and artists in both cities and the nation, but rarely seen by each other. These gaps have been exacerbated by the lack of a national picture, a reliance on newspapers and the negligible attention to the arts by television. Touring through Playing Australia must be coordinated with the funding timetables of the Australia Council and initiatives to survey the national arts, like REAL TIME, SBS's *Imagine*, the new Radio National arts program and others, must open out the arts (and a greater range of the arts) to larger audiences.

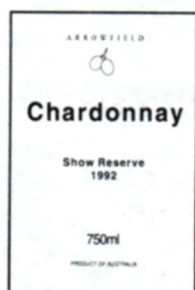
The formation of a new committee within the Performing Arts Board to fund new work that has emerged over the last decade is long overdue: earlier attempts were aborted. Its focus will presumably be on cross artform, multimedia, image-based work (often erroneously assumed to have no interest in language). It is a direct response to new developments in the arts and to the successful work of established and new companies in the performance field, most receiving their support from the Drama Committee but lobbying that their existence (they are not theatre companies in the usual sense, they do not do plays, and often have very different skills) needs at least philosophical acknowledgment from the Council. Like REAL TIME, these companies and artists see the performative in many art forms and spaces, in ritual and in the everyday.

The first edition of REAL TIME opens up the possibilities for writers and artists everywhere in Australia to contribute to the spread of information and ideas across art forms and distance.

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REAL TIME Performance in Australia

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WOMEN WITH ATTITUDE

Catharine Lumby keeps herself nice as Finley and Ventura give lip

After almost a decade in storage, Politics, like flares and eyebrow tweezers, is once again an essential accessory in the art and performance world. The homeless, AIDS, queer rights, racism and feminism are back on the agenda and, rather like the concurrent revival of 1970s fashion, there's often little to distinguish the rhetoric from the original product.

Karen Finley, a high profile, New York performance artist set to tour her latest full length performance, *A Certain Level of Denial*, around Australia this February, is a case in point. While Finley has been performing her highly politicised work for the past decade, it's only in recent years she's achieved international standing. Her aggressive blend of the visceral and the ideological is now perfectly in tune with the post-yuppie zeitgeist.

Finley's performances sit comfortably in the tradition of body art, performance art and 1970s happenings, dealing with process rather than objects. Since graduating from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1982, she has taken a consistent stance against the art market, choosing to perform in nightclubs and other non-gallery venues. Performance art, she says, is about upsetting preconceived boundaries of art. 'Static art work is primarily concerned with being bought and sold [and] it's removed from the people and created for the purpose of an academic aesthetic history for the rich', she says. 'Performance art has the power of providing ritual in a society that only believes in the power of consuming'.

Her personal politics reflect a similarly retro rhetoric. As a feminist, she is an unflinching essentialist. Her philosophy, as told to a US reporter, is based on a belief that society is driven by a fear of female power. Of the male and female, she says, 'the female is more apt to listen, be instinctual, use the "sixth sense", nurture and heal'. Men, in contrast, she says, deal with suffering by 'thinking about it instead of feeling it'. Not surprisingly, her performances reject a coherent, intellectual framework in favour of the emotive, the visceral and the quasi-mystical.

The body which resonates throughout Finley's performances is the abject, abused and socially unacceptable, and primarily female, body. Disease, incest, eating disorders, domestic violence are her symbolic stock in trade. In one famous performance piece she covered herself in chocolate, candy hearts, sprouts and tinsel. Her description of the performance illustrates the perceptions driving Finley's rage: 'I use chocolate because it's a visual symbol that involves eating as well as basically being treated like shit ...



Susana Ventura

Then I stick little candy hearts all over my body — because after we've been treated like shit, then we're loved ... Then I add the alfalfa sprouts (symbolising sperm) because in a way it's all a big jack-off — we're all being jerked off ... we're just something to jerk-off onto, after the "love". Finally, I put tinsel on my body, because after going through all that, a woman still gets dressed up for dinner'.

More recently, Finley has expanded her focus to embrace people with AIDS, the homeless, homosexuals and other marginalised groups. In *We Keep Our Victims Ready* she drew a parallel between Nazi Germany's treatment of the Jews and contemporary US society. Her script ran in part: 'We kill people by not doing anything. And allow death for

no apparent reason. It's just that our ovens are at a slower speed'. *A Certain Level of Denial* is an anguished monologue describing the physical deterioration and neglect of a friend with AIDS which she contrasts with the media fuss over George Bush's brief collapse at a dinner in Tokyo.

Finley's language, both performative and literal, draws heavily on taboo areas, more commonly found in pornography. Shit, vomit, sperm and explicit sexual acts, as well as nudity, feature heavily in her pieces. Her 'obscenity' has led to right-wing attacks from redneck US Senator Jesse Helms and a withdrawal of funding by the National Endowment of the Arts. Finley responds that her own language and performances are sedate

compared to the brutality with which the state treats its marginalised. It's a standoff which highlights both the extremes of US social politics brought to a head by a decade of conservative government and their failure to graft here. And it is ultimately this contrast which may prove the most interesting aspect of Finley's performance for many Australian spectators.

If Finley attacks the right from her own high moral ground, Penny Arcade aka Susana Ventura has little truck with either. With her performance art work *Bitch! Dyke! Fag! Whore!* Ventura has earned the wrath of both feminists and fundamentalist Christians. A former Warhol satellite, she surrounds herself with a troupe of scantily clad male and female exotic dancers and preaches what one reviewer described as 'post-Reichian sexual, personal and social liberation'. Lesbians are denounced for thinking 'if you're bisexual you're not trying hard enough'. Anti-abortionists are lambasted for acting as if 'life stops at birth'.

The chief focus of her confessional/obsessional monologue is to force people to confront their prejudices, whatever their political persuasion. A favourite target is the puritanical streak in 1990s feminism to which her real life go-go dancers present a direct affront. She comments that *Bitch! Dyke! Fag! Whore!* was partly a response to 'the downtown arts scene with its hypocritical component of the politically correct movement' in which people were 'doing things with go-go dancers, but actually being a go-go dancer was a no-no'.

Like Finley's, Ventura's show focuses on the AIDS epidemic, but unlike Finley, Ventura relies on humour and irreverence rather than rage to drive home her points. Philosophically, she is an earthy humanist with the traditional commitment that implies to theatre: 'The phenomenon of theatre is being in a group', she told an interviewer recently. 'We don't go to church anymore. Here it's very ritualistic, very tribal.'

Doubtless, some spectators will find neither performer's rhetoric appealing, heavily laced as both are with different versions of the North American ethos. Nonetheless, both shows are certainly worth catching for no other reason than they provide an opportunity to see the spectacle of US grass roots politics in action.

Ventura is touring the Sydney and Adelaide Festivals, Finley is playing Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane in February.

WYNNE-JONES TAKES AIM AT BIGGER TARGETS FOR TPS

Keith Gallasch interviews the new Director of Sydney's The Performance Space

Sydney's The Performance Space is already showing signs of new life: remarkable when you think of the expanded vision and energy, the range of programming and events brought to it by Sarah Miller (now Director of Perth's Institute of Contemporary Art). Angharad Wynne-Jones doesn't display Sarah's palpable energy, but her calm is experienced as a clear-eyed intensity. She's an artist who produces epic, environmental, site-specific works with taxi fleets (*In Sea and Air*) and boats (*Hydrofictions*) for large audiences, and yet performs intimate solos in the Ivan Dougherty Gallery with the sculptural and threatening beauty of a cross-bow (*Margin For Error*), or public pieces like *A Bird In My Mouth* in Martin Place for the sur-

realism exhibition: she peels off layers of pink underwear to Lou Reed's *Vicious* to reveal a skin of small latex clitorises and penises, stands on a platter of icecream and invites the audience to share it with her.

Why environmental works?

'Because they're outside theatre spaces and galleries. Because they create an unusual contract between audience and artists. Because audiences are more willing to participate than they are in those closed spaces. I worked with Industrial and Commercial Theatre Contractors in the UK for ten years on this kind of work, moving from performance to directing. The solo works meet a need for intimacy and the freedom of creation. The big works mostly occur in meeting rooms and

involve coordinating and encouraging a large number of artists to generate their own performances.'

Is it a tricky time to take up this job?

'For the venue, but not for what The Performance Space represents. Post Arrivals are performing in the Horden Pavilion at the Royal Showgrounds. The Sydney Front have killed themselves off. Open City is to play in galleries. Entr'acte did *Waterborne* at the Maritime Museum. I did *Hydrofictions* on Sydney Harbour.'

What does that leave you with?

'A lot of dance, and dance hasn't been as rigorous in investigating itself as performance has been, but Russell Dumas (with what he calls his "ongoing architectural involvement with the space"), Sue Ellen Kohler and Leisa Shelton's *Steps* (10-19 February), which includes a number of innovative dancers, all have shows coming up and they transform the place. Performing Lines is bringing *Handspan* this year. Small multicultural festivals are attracted to the venue. We have our Open Week to encourage new artists.'

But your own work is bigger than this space allows.

'The Performance Space is expanding. We're opening a small studio space. Our

Event Space nights curated by Penny Thwaite will encourage site specific works. We'd like to be more a part of Redfern. We're establishing our own quarterly magazine. We're taking on a part-time marketing manager.'

Yes, but most directors have ended up as managers here, having to forget their own work for two to three years, quite unlike, say, artistic directors of theatre companies.

'You take on the job knowing that.'

Can you envisage yourself creating a large site-specific work as part of your job?

She smiles ...

'We'll see.'

I can feel the walls of The Performance Space expanding. Performance is changing, reaching out more substantially to public spaces, museums, galleries (part of performance's origins) and technological spaces. I'm sure I'm not the only one who believes that The Performance Space director should continue as a practising artist while in office and that Sydney, having been passionately attracted to the new ways of seeing their home offered by her work, should not miss out on a distinctive vision that also implicitly encourages the work of many.

PLAYBOX

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: **Aubrey Mellor**

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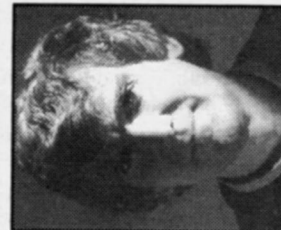


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FURIOUS
The author of the smash hit *AWAY* tells an explosive and confronting story of a family secret, a terrible betrayal and a haunted writer's obsession to recreate the past.

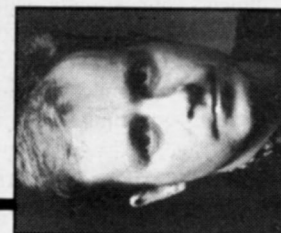
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David Williamson
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Australia's most popular playwright gives us the riveting account of a top Australian journalist who has made an unprincipled bargain with the American political establishment.



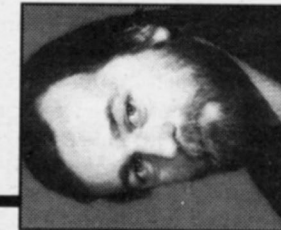
Michael Gurr
UNDERWEAR, PERFUME AND CRASH HELMET
Following the spectacular success of *SEX DIARY OF AN INFIDEL*, Gurr returns with a contemporary thriller that is funny, unsettling and bizarre.



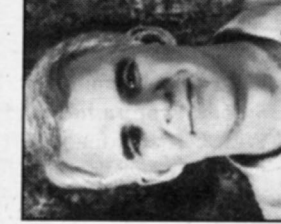
Hannie Rayson
FALLING FROM GRACE
The professional and personal stakes are high in this compelling drama about women at 40 and power and authority in female hands. Hannie Rayson's first play since *HOTEL SORRENTO* is layered with penetrating intrigue and wit.



Barry Dickins
REMEMBER RONALD RYAN
Renowned for his refreshing insight, Dickins introduces us to the human side of the character at the centre of Australia's last hanging. The question is asked, "Why did Ronald Ryan have to hang when so many others did not?"



Steve Martin
PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE
American comedian, actor and movie-writer, Steve Martin, stages an hilarious meeting between the young Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso at a Paris cafe in 1904.



Tobsha Learner
THE GLASS MERMAID
Tobsha Learner returns to Playbox with an extraordinary drama of suicide and the woman left behind. This sensual work about love, grief, seduction and regeneration makes a dramatic conclusion to the 1994 Season.



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EQUINE EQUATIONS

Noelle Janaczewska

1994 blazes into life and onto television screens around the world, temporarily displacing Eastern Europe's attempts to redraw its borders. In Sydney's Seymour Centre, a tall woman in a blonde wig variously accompanied by a musician and a circus horse, manipulates the conventions of theatre in skilled and unpredictable ways: asking questions about singing, numbers and the formula that keeps everything in place.

Newspapers discuss the New World Order, genetic technology and whether women, (never men) over sixty should be permitted to bear children. Meanwhile, American ice stars skate on very thin ice and *The Sydney Morning Herald* offers a saving of \$5 on an opera double bill with its "reader privilege offer" of tickets at \$103. Is this the New World Order? What exactly is the New World Order?

In 1985, shortly after I packed up and left the Old World for the New, I saw Rose English's performance *The Beloved*. I remember a tall woman in a shabby ballet dress and shiny, black lace-up shoes, a bridge to nowhere and being asked about the word 'abstract'. I remember a funny and intriguing work, a work which acknowledged experience as complex and fragmentary, and language as vital, rhythmic and idiosyncratic.

My Mathematics, English's most recent piece, patterns the evening into recurring sequences with questions repeated like a refrain, so that we end up where we began. Or do we? *My Mathematics* and *The Beloved*, although very different works, both raise questions about performance and that vexed issue of the relationship between theatre and performance (art). Like the question of what exactly is the New World Order, it's a question which also eludes easy answers. Simplistic distinction, which posit theatre as plays with characters in conflict, and performance as bodies in space are unhelpful when it comes to considering a work like *My Mathematics* (and a whole range of other works from Australia and overseas). Such works are concerned with the exploration of language and yet cannot be called plays. They fit into neither theatre based solely on traditional dramatic scripts, nor into the predominantly visual lexicon of performance art.

Rose English talks across boundaries — melding philosophical speculation with everyday conversation, 'art' with 'entertainment' and theatre with performance. Neither transgressive in the avant-gardist sense of confronting and shocking audiences, nor oppositional in contesting the mainstream, works like *My Mathematics* explore the forms, ideas, moods, confusion and shifting terrains of contemporary experience: determining their own place in whichever world order prevails. In other words, works which use performance vocabularies in powerful and imaginative ways to offer layered interplays of languages — some of which are spoken.



Rose English and Charlie in *My Mathematics*

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COMBING MELBOURNE'S FRINGE

Simon Hughes teases out decay and renewal in the Melbourne theatre scene.

So lucrative has outdoor performance proved in this city that flint-eyed entrepreneurs have staked out Melbourne's public places with the zeal of gold prospectors. In the 'garden State' outdoor performance is a naturally attractive idea and on a perfect night it is, well, perfect.

The move into the open air signifies a profound shift in the tectonics of Melbourne theatre. In the perennial hog call to the funding trough, the Melbourne Theatre Company has always come away with the lion's — or porker's — share. And they probably always will. What has changed is the perceived status of the fringe in the scheme of things. Formerly, you got the distinct impression that the federal pig farmers supported the smaller companies more out of compassion than confidence. But overnight, it seems, the fringe has gained legitimacy.

This is best exemplified by the evolution of La Mama. There was a time in the days of rage when the bourgeoisie approached this ancient and tiny former sweatshop with the exact same misgivings as cattle entering an abattoir. You saw it in their eyes. The bill of fare, of course, often gave substance to their worst fears. Now in its 28th year, La Mama, as the flagship of the fringe has become very much part of the establishment. This is not to say that the work is necessarily safe or staid — there will always be the *outré* at La Mama — but the saltpetre whiff of danger has disappeared. In the coming months, the program is eclectic, to put it mildly. There is a work by Marguerite Duras, something called *Paradance #4* (expected space) performed by the splendidly named Tess de Quincey; and Marcia Haufrecht from the Actors' Studio takes up a two month residence from January. There are the usual poeticas, musicas, fiction and play readings. There seems barely an hour in the day when the Mother is not nurturing her brood.

Chamber Made Opera, under the direction of Douglas Horton, has very quickly occupied a niche in the market. Like Barry Kosky, Chamber Made tend to court controversy, often a sign of rude health in the arts. Their performance of Robert Ashley's *Improvement: Don Leaves Linda* last year brought an odd chorus of boos and bravos. Undeterred, extensive tours of the evergreen *Recital* and *Medea* are

planned for 1994. Towards the end of the year they will be presenting a dance opera which seeks to explore the musical interface between East and West. Meryl Tankard's company was to have collaborated but they fell by the funding wayside.

Sadly, there are other funding casualties. Hard luck stories abound. Whistling in the Theatre, for instance, has suffered a fate consistent with such an unluckily named outfit. But it is an ill wind that blows no good for the diaspora has spawned one gem at least: a brave and curious production of *The Blue Beard* directed by Bob Pavlitch. Staged at midnight in a lane in an unwelcoming quarter of the CBD, the piece expands on dark themes wholly consonant with its setting.

Another funding victim is Theatreworks. On the sine curve of a company's life, they are currently at their lowest ebb. Word is that they were brought down by an ill-advised, multilingual, installation style production of *Titus Andronicus*. The attempt to rub the multicultural gland of the money mandarins was, possibly, a shade too obvious. That is the cynical view at least. Suffice it to say, Theatreworks is on the brink.

IRAA Theatre



Photo: Nick Mangafas

PLAYBOX WEIGHS IN HEAVYWEIGHTS

Keith Gallasch discusses the knockout Playbox season with Tobsha Learner

Tobsha Learner looks serious. She says the lineup of writers for Aubrey Mellor's first Playbox season is heavyweight — 'Gurr, Gow, Rayson, Learner, Williamson, Dickens'.

Dickens?

'He's writing about the hanging of Ronald Ryan. Although I write comedy, it's usually in confrontationist terms. I've written about men's sexuality in recent years, this time it's women's.'

Why now?

'Before it seemed easier to deal with older women and younger men but now I think, for example, I can deal with the bereavements I suffered between sixteen and twenty-three when I lost five people close to me including my father.'

In *The Glass Mermaid* for the Playbox Season, there's a dead philosopher father but the wife left behind is mid 40s, much older than you.

'I think women in their thirties and forties are great to explore, they have so much more economic and political power than previous generations and I'm part of them. I'm especially attracted to the enigma of women in their late forties, like Sara in the play, who have to re-define their sexual currency and can have a

new-found singularity. It's a difficult journey and one my mother experienced.'

Are your plays heavyweight domestic?

'I think I write epic in a domestic context. I deal with big emotional issues — death, grieving, sexuality — with an awareness of the world. Sara's grieving is juxtaposed with a Bosnian refugee's loss in *The Glass Mermaid*. And there's a sense of a dangerous landscape in my work.'

'The play's in its fourth draft and will go through more. Luckily, Playbox will workshop it, which is something that still doesn't happen enough. Australia, particularly Sydney, is good at launching new blood, but not so good at the follow-through — the mid career support, second seasons. The opportunity to tour and develop through productions of the same work is essential. Partly it is the tyranny of distance and part of it, unfortunately, is regionalism. David Williamson and I talked about all this on the flight down to Melbourne and also about image-based work versus narrative.'

I suspect I'm in for a slice of the current and erroneous complaint that performance (cross artform, multi media work etc) is plundering drama funding, but no.

Australian Nouveau Theatre under Jean-Pierre Mignon and based for some time now at the Gasworks in South Melbourne is also hanging on for grim life. Normally, ANT would produce four new works in a year but budgetary constraints have reduced this to two: Raymond Cousse's *Strategy for Two Hams* and Mishima's *Madame de Sade*. Theatre, of course, is subject to something like the forces of natural selection (or unnatural when you consider the whims of the Australia Council). So while some groups are headed for extinction, others are flourishing in the shadow of the dinosaurs. IRAA Theatre is one such. Established in 1989 by Italian-born Renato Cuccolo, it has received consistently good press with its productions of Greek tragedy including *The Trojan Women* which toured the Vienna Festival last year. *The Bacchae* is the next in the series and there is to be a work based on Bruchner's *Woyzeck* (something of a favourite with the fringe, a kind of alternative *Rookery Nook*). IRAA would appear to have annexed territory once covered by Anthill.

The \$5 Theatre Company has also recently gained a foothold. Their forthcoming production is a trilogy of short plays comprising work by Millicent Armstrong (20s), Miles Franklin (30s) and a commissioned piece by Pam Leversha to complement the first two. \$5 have not found it necessary to articulate a manifesto, their concerns being more for quality and value for money. So far they've

delivered both.

Despite a lacklustre outing titled *Dazzle of Shadow* staged in a deserted office space, Peter King has made it into another year. He has two separate solo performances planned, the first set in architect Peter Corrigan's jewelled confection at RMIT. They will be based on King's 'spatial' novel which he explains as fictions with no characters only buildings. King professes himself to be 'fucking sick' of the theatre of his time and promises 'the usual poofter stuff'. (Appetite whetted?)

Finally, there are the two major companies: Playbox and MTC. Reversing the usual trend, Aubrey Mellor has descended from Brisbane to take up residence at the Playbox. What is more he declares himself happy with the decision, commenting: 'I have been waiting for this opportunity for about twenty years'. Not only is he proud of the nearly exclusively Australian program but is stimulated by the efflorescence of new writing. 'Somebody's got to commit themselves to it', he says. 'There is certainly the potential.' Even MTC is getting in on the act. *Hotspur* by Geoffrey Atherden is the forerunner of commissioned works promised in future seasons. There is every sign that the old love is loosening her corsets and that can't be a bad thing. If there is still the stench of economic rationalism (an oxymoron if ever there was one) in funding criteria, a wind is blowing through the hulk of traditional theatre, breathing new life across the spectrum.

'Our narrative skills need the follow-through new plays coming out of Europe and particularly America receive, and no one's doing anything about it.'

Was it a heavyweight launch?

'Aubrey cleverly placed each of us in context: Hanny was witty, David was nervous and humble (he didn't know he had to speak until I told him). Barry was obscure but droll. Michael Gurr was suave, Michael Gow was ... cryptic'.

You?

'I spoke about the play, about Bosnia, about being a migrant and I mentioned my Polish origins. I was then besieged by excited artists speaking Polish which I don't speak. There was a nice feeling of temporary camaraderie especially given the geographical distances and the tyranny of competition between us. It felt a good lineup to be in.'

SYDNEY ST THEATRE SPACE

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THE VIEW FROM THE WEST

Des James surveys the West Australian theatre and performance scene

Looking back towards Perth's skyline as I climb the impressive staircase of the Rechabite Hall, I am struck by the contrasting symbology of cultural achievement. I am in Northbridge, the cafe fringe of this remotest of capitals, inspecting a ramshackle, dilapidated, and to be quite honest, dangerous old building which is proposed to serve as a performance space for the emerging performance company Red Desert.

Pigeons mutter from their perches acknowledging the invasion of their large and empty space. 'It'll only take \$30,000 to make it safe', enthuses veteran actor Bill McClusky. His workshop production of *Derelict Angels*, a dark and poetic, scripted work, introduced audiences to this potential performance space, and to the company's eclectic vision.

There are many original voices within Red Desert: musicians, visual artists, writers and poets. Co-founder, Marguerite Lingard, is equally positive. She believes Red Desert's style is characterised by an open spiritedness with no preconceptions or fixed ideas. Their experiments and collaborations cross forms, and creative choices are now crystallising and foreshadowing a style for the company, pending funding.

Academic and artist David Williams would sympathise. His Ex-Stasis Theatre attracted both funding and a spot in the 1992 Festival of Perth on the basis of his adaptation of Deborah Levy's novel *Beautiful Mutants*. The work, performed in a large pool of water, displayed the company's evocative visual and physical style, and its intention to experiment with dramatic conventions. The development of Ex-Stasis' next major work (which I under-

stand to be about artist Frida Kahlo) has been frustrated by a slower than hoped for response to funding requests made by the company. Although short on experience in some areas, Ex-Stasis has a growing reputation as a company of imagination and invention, and is keenly regarded in the West.

So is Fieldworks, a movement-based, peripatetic collective guided by the creative vision of Jim Hughes. His choreographic, film, and theatre background is central to the creation of the company's multi-artform performance works. Fieldworks is not theatre, nor dance (although most of its artists have movement backgrounds). It is performance — combinations of themes, patterns, obsessions, and ideas. Through improvised movement, invention, and a group process hinging on Hughes' infectious vision, performers sustain ideas from single performances over a series of works. Funding support from the Performing Arts Board for 1994 will enable Fieldworks to consolidate its ensemble, and explore new works.

The Australia Council and the West Australian Department for the Arts are not ungenerous in their support of performance in the West, but for experimental work less so. However, a far more substantial, and broader base of funding is made available to artists by the State Government than almost anywhere else in Australia. Although this support is couched in the language of incentives, and notions of art 'paying its own way', a progressive decision has been made to steer away from the creation of yet another State Theatre Company.

Andrew Ross asserts that the work of Black Swan has effectively shifted the ground

defined as 'mainstream'. Convention has determined the margins in the past, but for years, audience taste has demanded a grittier and more relevant fare. Black Swan's mixed casting policy, and its production and development of new Australian plays is only extraordinary in the sense that few mainstream theatres have been adventurous enough to acknowledge significant shifts in Australian culture, and offer a confident programme which reflects it.

This may simply be a matter of perception, but the current runs deep. The continuing success of the national tour of *Bran Nue Dae* bears Black Swan's thesis out. You still get the classics, and a new play by Dorothy Hewett, but more significantly, work which is created and performed by Aboriginal Australians for Australians in general.

Black Swan is not the only performance company to focus on Aboriginal artists and ideas.

Deck Chair Theatre, the Fremantle based company shaped by the impressive skills of Angela Chaplin, touches many cultural bases. With solid but limited funding, Deck Chair has created an extraordinary range of work including the highly ambitious, multi-artform, Aboriginal opera *My Spiritual Dreaming*, *Emma*, and the much performed *Barmoids* by Kath Thomson. Angela Chaplin's collaborations with women artists have produced some of the most interesting 'theatre' based work in the country. A collaboration with Robyn Archer, and a new work by Graham Pitts, *Factory Girls*, continues Deck Chair's imaginative sourcing of material from its working class heartland.

Back in the heart of the city, in the shadows of the massive towers which stand sentinel to the past glories of failed entrepreneurs, is SWY Theatre, quietly working away at the well-made Australian play. In SWY's small and dark studio theatre Heather Nimmo's new play *In Retreat* will shortly come to light. Artistic director, Alan Becher, continues to lay the foundations for a writers'

theatre. Playlab, and its select group of writers and directors, will workshop and showcase new West Australian writing throughout the year.

In Subiaco, the Theatre Centre, once identified with the Hole In The Wall Theatre Company, now merely operates as a venue following the departure of the failed State Theatre Company. It has, however, been repopulated by the Barking Geckos (formally Acting Out, a long established young people's theatre company) who will present a significant theatre-based programme this year. The West Australian Aboriginal Youth Theatre is also based at the centre. Originated as a project by Paul McPhail, the WAAYT, through its suburban outreach activities, and the creative work of its young Aboriginal organisers, will hopefully develop as a significant player in youth and Aboriginal culture.

Venues, like everywhere else are always a pressing issue (if you can afford them at all). There is of course, PICA (Perth Institute of Contemporary Art). This gentrified centre for experimental arts practice is becoming increasingly important to the changing nature of performance in the West, but as many financially strapped practitioners protest, PICA is either too expensive to use, or is perceived to be elitist or exclusive. This paradox may be resolved by incoming director Sarah Miller whose vital style of programming (The Performance Space, Sydney) may open the door to artists who would normally look elsewhere for venues for their work.

PICA is, after all, becoming synonymous with the increasingly successful Artrage Festival. In Northbridge, during October, PICA comes alive with performances, exhibitions, and a fomenting of ideas and interactions between artists. While the so called 'Fringe' continues to celebrate its collaborations and imagination in this growing, lively, and independent festival, the future of performance in WA remains bright. Even from the Rechabite Hall with all its problems, the view looks good.

THE LIE OF THE LAND

Comment on the exhibition: 'Nyungar Landscapes: Aboriginal artists of the South-West — the Heritage of Carrolup, Western Australia'.

Melbourne, touring nationally

Peter King

In 1945, Noel White was appointed headmaster at the reopened Carrolup School, a compound for Aboriginal children who slept there in dormitories, and whose families could camp on the fringe. White noted that the children were good at drawing. He noticed a child, Parnell Dempster, drawing on scraps of paper and soon provided him with better materials, watercolours, pastels, crayon books, sheets of paper. Within weeks the children were producing complex geometric designs and naturalistic, local landscapes.

White was no artist: his knowledge of materials and the codes of naturalism was part of the general, low-grade proficiency of a primary teacher. He seemed not to direct and claimed not to interfere. He made more time available for art activities: in the first two months he dispensed with a formal timetable and let the children improvise in art, song, dance, and drama, on whatever they recalled of, or proposed for, their culture. Later he encouraged after-school work and led night classes. The children responded enthusiastically — being forbidden a night class was regarded as quite a punishment — and made what White called 'many beautiful expressions of art'.

The work was exhibited, at first locally, at Katanning in 1946, then, promoted by Florence Rutter, in many capitals and regional centres of Australia and New Zealand. Rutter wrote of 'unbelievably beautiful designs' and of finding 'a good market' for the children's art applied to 'materials, curtains, carpets, wallpapers, etc'. In 1950, the Carrolup art was exhibited at the Overseas League, London. *The Daily Mail* judged the children's landscapes 'and inevitable kangaroos' to be 'pure, and as easy to read as the face of heaven'. After another London exhibition, *Teach-*

ers World thrilled in italics: 'They were not taught!'.

Teachers World went on: 'These children ... living under desperately miserable conditions, absolutely untaught ... given paper, produced absolutely naturalistic pictures ... Everywhere evidence, in fact, of an almost universal capacity for realistic picture-making'. This is to propose that for all cultures all innate tendencies towards the practice of art, if left untaught and subsisting, will flower into naturalistic representations, artworks comprehensible and attractive to the cultured bit of a minority but dominant culture. The Carrolup art is hardly evidence for that: the children were taught by that culture, indeed, their own Nyungar culture had been wrecked by it.

The history of that wrecking — relocations (it is likely that the children had never seen the Carrolup landscape before), poor dietary and living conditions — is detailed in John E Stanton's excellent catalogue. Fifty-eight works are exhibited, works from White's headmastership and more recent works of contemporary Nyungar artists. The abstract pieces, the geometric designs, are not on show. They might be evidence that abstraction as well as naturalism was used by the children in the making of their minor art ('minor art' would have resonances with the 'minor literature' identified by Deleuze and Guattari, a subverting practice of a dominant language — eg German — by a user from a subculture — eg the Czech Kafka — in which the language is made to stutter and wail. The Nyungar landscapes wail for a untaught lost language that braided the people and the land). Two 1948 watercolours by Reynold Hart are titled *Imagined Corroborees*: were there no dancers or dances left?

BELVOIR

Festival of Perth



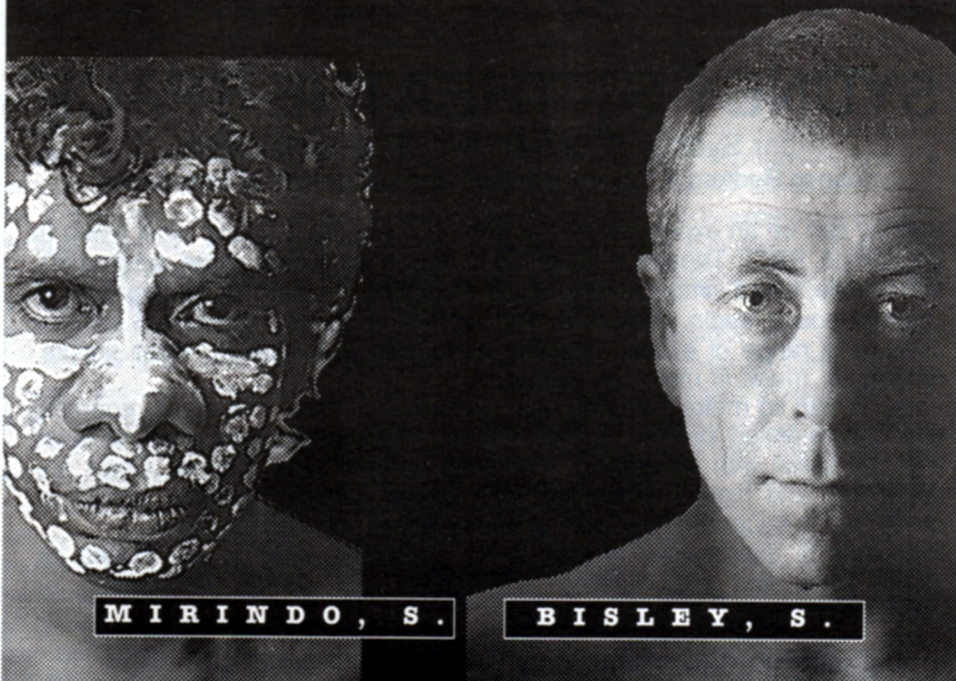
DEAD HEART

by Nicholas Parsons
Directed by Neil Armfield

Starring Steve Bisley, Mitchell Butel, Jack Charles, Peter Francis, Mort Hanson Snr, Gillian Jones, Geoff Kelso, Angie Milliken, Stanley Mirindo, Trevor Parfitt, Kelton Pell, Kevin Smith, George Shevtsov, Michael Watson.
Directed by Neil Armfield. Assistant Director: Michael Leslie.
Designer: Edie Kurzer. Lighting Designer: Mark Howett

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ALICE'S RESTAURANT

Nikki Gemmel eats her red heart out at Swingers Cafe

There is a cafe in Alice Springs called Swingers and it's just about the only place to go. There are a lot of places to do a lot of drinking in Alice Springs but not a lot of places for eating. The town has a population of 24,000. It has 72 grog outlets, ranging from five-star hotels to petrol stations and corner stores. It has about six cafes, a handful of good restaurants. Or there's a 24-hour truck stop or just about everything in the way of chain-store fast-food. That is why just about everybody who lives in Alice who wants to eat decently is into cooking in a very big way. Do it or starve. Or go to Swingers, again and again and again.

It was a bit of a novelty when it first

opened. This is the town that got its first traffic lights in the early 80s. And there was a local media campaign telling residents that when the light hits amber, you slow down ... and now Swingers. Opening early for muesli and yoghurt and fresh juices, and steam-rolling into the day with lentil burgers and focaccias and embarrassingly enormous salad sandwiches. There's also a blackboard menu of Gado Gado or Laksa or whatever else is in the Moosewood cookbook, a collection of American vegetarian recipes that's in just about every kitchen I know in Alice. Plus earnest, but nice, cakes like carrot and orange poppy-seed and drinks like mango smoothies to appease the visiting Darwinians

who've wandered in by surprise ... 'THIS sort of place, in Alice?' Prices a bit on the expensive side, but the costs of actually getting things to the middle of the continent mean that everything's a bit on the expensive side in Alice. It's about the trade-off for 'a better life' those city people tell me who came to Alice for a month, twelve years ago.

The cafe's run by a woman called Andy Davey. With a fierce band of Amazons behind her. They make you wait, but it's the only place in town so to speak and it's worth it in the long run. I have this theory about the local women which fits the group at Swingers. Alice is a women's town. They're strong out there. It's an important area for Aboriginal women. It was their sacred site in the Todd River bed the Northern Territory Government wanted to put a bulldozer through several years back to make a dam. It was the women out there fighting the politicians. It was the women who stripped down to their skirts and painted their breasts and

marched through the streets several years ago, pouring the grog down the gutters to stop their men ripping apart their families. The women did it again last year, coming into town from as far away as the WA border, marching, making demands and they're not finished yet. And there were non-Aboriginal women beside them, just as tough. You arrive in town and it takes a while to be welcomed. The women, they size you up, check you out, ascertain the politics and decide. And the men of Alice? I dunno, softer somehow, strange. It's like the women are stronger than the men, that there's not an equilibrium. Several men have told me they ALWAYS have to wait longer to be served in Swingers. Paranoia? I couldn't say. All I know is that early on I was told by a local 'this town is good for women, you find yourself', and yeah, I think I have.

Sometimes the wait at Swinger's can be too long and sometimes I've left before I've been served. But I always go back.

EASTCOAST HOTLINE

Keith Gallasch works the phones to get the latest from the Griffin, QTC and La Boite.

Ros Horin is a worrier — a creative worrier — so when I talk with her I accelerate, inform, assure, debate (as I did as co-dramaturg with her on *Kafka Dances*). I say to myself, 'Slow down, listen'.

Ros, describe your style as a director.

Directors used not to like that word — 'style', but she's unruffled.

I've got a penchant for the quirky. I'm not inclined to naturalism. I like plays that already suggest a strong visual and theatrical world.

If you've seen her accounts of Hilary Bell's *Fortune* or Timothy Daly's *Kafka Dances* you'll know this.

Why the quirkiness?

Silence, then ...

I like to play with space and with physicality.

Are you a repressed choreographer? (I've always enjoyed this impulse in her work.)

I suppose so, but you need plays that offer movement, you can't impose it.

The movement — recurrent circles, triangles, right angles accentuated by live music and chanting — was remarkable in the tiny *Stables Theatre* for *Kafka Dances*.

I wanted more space.

Now you've got it with the *Sydney Theatre Company* season of *Kafka*.

There'll be more air around the 'choreography'.

Won't you lose the claustrophobia that is part of the play — the oppressively noisy family life, the closed world of the writer, the nightmare Yiddish *Dream Theatre*?

It'll breathe but we might close the Wharf Theatre stage in a bit.

It has looked pretty big lately for the likes of *Angels In America* but designer Stephen Curtis is familiar with it.

I'm not pursuing an aesthetic. The morality of *Kafka Dances* is tough — do you choose the tortuous life of a writer over a desirable social life — and it's in Timothy's words and the rhythms from scene to scene.

It's musical?

Yes, and I use music too because it can be tough and then suddenly lyrical and transcendent.

Okay, back to why. Why non-naturalistic, spatial, physical, choreographic, musical? Why (not the right word) 'multicultural'?

She's directed plays Russian, American, South American, subjects Jewish and Chinese. A pause ...

Because of my European Jewish background. I'm not comfortable with the idea of doing 'Australian' plays in the way that used to be understood. I feel a mix of cultures in myself and the work I do.

As a founding member and long time director of *Playworks* you've supported many women playwrights (as the *Playworks Directory* attests) and women figured prominently in your *Festival of New Works* at the end of 1993, will there be ...

'A lot of work by women will be seen on the *Stables* stage in 1994!'

I 'phone Sue Rider, artistic director of La Boite. Reviews, articles and press releases claim 'a distinctive style', so having just tossed around the subject with Ros Horin and recalling Sue's work in Adelaide, very physical, pared back, sometimes 'environmental' (one work put the audience in a concentration camp setting). I asked ...

What distinctive style?

It's hard to define, but it entails two directions. First, there's the dynamic of the performer as opposed to spectacle theatre where, say, design usurps performance. There has to be an interaction between performer and design. The design can't just be a backdrop. The second direction is imposed by venue. It's a delightful imposition. La Boite is in-the-round with four banks of fifty seats. It doesn't have to be but I've kept it so that we exploit it and maintain its difference from other spaces in Brisbane. It's also very intimate, generating a theatre of equality, a 'circular energy' with the opportunity to shift quickly from big to small playing. We don't pretend that the audience isn't there. And I'm interested in the juxtaposition of elements.

Do you have any physical training for your performers?

It's early days. We don't have an ensemble, we're running a venue, and I feel an obligation to have a turnover of actors to meet the needs of the industry here.

So, perforce, you have to play the auteur?

To a degree, but there are recurrent collaborations in the production team.

What's your dream?

For La Boite to be a centre of innovation for Brisbane and for Queensland, to nurture local works (with an excellent young dramaturg, Louise Gough), to bring in the best plays from the rest of Australia (Nowra's *Così* is in the 1994 season) and to host off-beat works like Doppio Teatro's *Filling the Silence* last year and William Yang's *Sadness* this year.

Space, physicality, juxtaposition, and the kind of guest performers suggest the fading line between theatre and performance or a dynamic interplay between them. Of course we didn't discuss narrative but I'm sure it's implicit in Ros and Sue's concerns, all the elements directed towards realising it where it might not be in the real time and cumulative imagery of performance work.

A second call to Brisbane, this time to Chris Johnson, new artistic director of the Queensland Theatre Company. It had been rumoured that QTC was going the way, currently tempting others, of appointing 'non-creative artistic directors'. I was relieved and pleased to hear of Chris' appointment.

What happened to your work in the time



Kafka Dances

Photo: Robert McFarlane

with the *Chung Ying Company* in Hong Kong?

It took me totally outside of my Australian context. I was lucky to be with the company as it moved to its full cultural maturity away from its British origins. It had a small group of Chinese 'actors' with an extraordinary range of traditional opera and dance skills playing supporting roles to British actors in plays for the British. There was no equivalent to NIDA. They were left to their own devices to mount their own productions in sports arenas or housing estates for Cantonese audiences. And the work was good. I think I was consciously selected by the board and the company as artistic director to break from British tradition, to forge a connection with Australia.

It was a generous time for the company and me in which its reputation was secured both in Hong Kong and overseas, significantly in Canada with the biggest Chinese population outside of Asia. I learnt a lot, though I was careful to begin with text-based work we could share because we spoke different languages. By the time I left, the company was performing in its own language. We had learned to work around, over and above language with a very physical, rhythmic, group energy, putting language aside so that the performers could use their vocabulary of movements, sounds and instrumental skills, creating original works.

What really transformed the company was Tiananmen Square. It was a powerful trigger for a company often regarded as youthful and entertaining. A nervous Hong Kong Arts Festival hosted our commissioning of an untried writer who had performed with the company and now directed it in a sell out season.

You advised him?

I didn't have to. It was a work about being Chinese. It said we are already going

back to the mainland, not just waiting for it to happen. Acknowledge it, take the responsibility. The work had pride and poetry. I couldn't have directed it however well I knew the company, it was outside my context. The audience laughed as always but there was also a stillness like never before.

You were executive director as well as artistic director of *Chung Ying*.

It gave me access to government, to policy, to working with the actor on the floor. It wasn't mediated through one general manager, not that there aren't good general managers.

So you've carried this over in some way into the QTC? You've got various executive officers.

One for finance, one for production and touring (it's a big state and you can't just visit one or two places recurrently), and, critically, one for policy and planning. The company has a responsibility to the state. And there's a marketing consultant, but as I learned in Hong Kong, though I must say it seemed to surprise people here, that person is better placed working outside the company advising the whole executive team. The restructuring was covered by the financial pages of *The Courier Mail* which augurs well.

It was too early to be asking Chris whether the *Chung Ying* style and concerns would be felt in her first season, but state companies aren't what they used to be (as Chris Westwood's programming for the State Theatre Company of South Australia shows — owing not a little to her Belvoir St years). They need not constrain the vision that comes out of an Asian experience, and the wisdom of Chris Johnson's managerial strategy reasserts the capacity of artistic directors to be managers as well at a time when some would prefer these companies dissolved and their funding passed the way of independent producers.



Frankfurt Ballet

DANCE AND BEYOND

Keith Gallasch talks with dancer and choreographer Kim Walker about the influx of great choreographers for the Festival season

Ten am, Darlinghurst, Sydney, and it feels like one hundred per cent humidity already, but in the pause that refreshes between choreographing the very physical realisation of Tim Winton's *That Eye The Sky*, directed by Richard Roxburgh for that actor's new theatre company, Burning House, in Sydney and the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* in New Zealand, Kim Walker beats the heat in his express desire to get to Adelaide to experi-

ence the riches offered by William Forsythe and Mark Morris. In Christopher Hunt's 1994 Adelaide Festival there are two programs by Forsythe, an American directing the Frankfurt Ballet, and three by another American, Mark Morris, with his own company and including a dance-driven version of Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. This is a festival with dance at its centre.

When he first saw Forsythe's work in the

mid 80s, Kim, no stranger to the demands of modern dance in the Sydney Dance Company, was 'absolutely astounded and startled at the sheer individuality of the work, at the power of the ideas and imagery, that a ballet company was working like a contemporary dance company'.

I was astounded too. Chance took me to Forsythe's *Slingeland* at the Chatelet in Paris, 1990. It was a giant work, a fantastic journey: dancers' heads sprouting through small holes in the stage floor, a monstrous clawed foot consuming the theatre, lighting that was not afraid of the dark, un-camp dancing across ballet gender lines. It was a night of great theatre, not a soul from four years of age to eighty left before the end, much to the chagrin of the standing-room-only crowd. Forsythe is reputed to have said that the theatre is dead: well, he's kicking it back into life. Thanks to Leigh Warren, Adelaide got a taste of it, and, it is to be hoped, a taste for Forsythe in 1992 with his *Enemy in the Figure*. That work will be seen again, this time as part of *Limb's Theorem*, the two hour work on architecture, light and philosophy to which it belongs.

Kim says dance has changed enormously over the last decade — audiences are now used to responding individually to demanding works and making their own meanings. There are choreographers, including a number of Australians, who are not afraid, who can create huge works and intimate ones, and works like Morris' version of the *Nutcracker* that disturbs as much as it entertains.

What Kim likes most is the very idea that a ballet company like Forsythe's is at the cutting edge of dance, and expects — and gets — a new, wider audience. It's a visit, he says, that will also confirm just how good Australian dance is. It confirms the capacity for ballet and contemporary dance not to be insular, to give dance a place, for example, in opera (a word changed forever in the late

twentieth century) as in Meryl Tankard's integral participation in the Australian Opera's *Orpheus and Euridice*, and to re-frame the way we see and experience our bodies. Forsythe's dancers seem to lead from the most unexpected parts of their bodies, inventing new spaces.

Virtuosity is distributed across these ensembles and not safe-guarded for a few stars, generating both a tribal feel in the big works and an acknowledgment of each performer in the collection of curious shapes, skills and ages of idiosyncratic dancers. They create performances for audiences to work at, choosing where to look (you can't take it all in at once), who to follow, who to desire, and yet, suddenly, pulling you forwards into a powerful central image. You don't have to like dance or ballet to face the exhilarating demands of Forsythe and Morris, theirs is performance at its most powerful. You'd be mad to miss seeing them. You'll be a little less sane when you do.

Before Kim heads out into the steam, reflecting on his experiences in Java with traditional dancers and the One Extra Dance Company (and the subsequent *Dancing Demons* in Sydney), he happily observes that contemporary dance is fuelled both by its latest rapport with Asia (Chrissie Parrott's *Satu Lingat* at the Perth Festival being the most recent example) and its own phenomenal energy, a capacity to re-invent itself both as pure dance and as an intensely theatrical experience (lucky Perth also has the remarkable Belgian Anne Teresa de Keersmaekers' *Rosas Danst Rosas and Achterland*). Working in dance, opera and musicals and not feeling a stranger in any, the experiences slowly shape Kim's own next project as far away as he feels it might be. In the meantime he's not going to miss out on Morris and Forsythe in Adelaide. We both wish we could afford tickets to Perth.

WALLS, STEEL BLADES AND A TAFFETA DRESS DUMB TYPE AT THE ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

Colin Hood on the not-so-Dumb Type

The concept of performance (as a quasi-theatrical medium on the fringe of other media) remains constantly in flux owing to our technologically mediated perception of the theatricality of everyday life. One cannot 'exit' from the alienating machines of theatrical illusion to touch base with a more concrete life-world (the home of happenings, street theatre and other 'grounded' performative idioms) when that life-world is already enmeshed in the networked virtuality of techno-culture.

In *PH*, a work performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1992 (as well as in Europe, Japan and North America), Dumb

Type created a machine environment engaging performers, spectators and technicians alike. The perverse mix of cultural, ethnographic and image repertoires was played out — and I pinch a phrase from Kurt Vonnegut Jr here — like a "snaggle-toothed thought machine [... whirling with the jerky, noisy, gaudy pointlessness of a cuckoo clock in hell", while the choreographed movements of the more human elements reflected the style of American minimalist dance and task performance (Teiji Furuhashi — founder of Dumb Type — cites Meredith Monk as an influence here).

It would be tempting to compare these

painstakingly blue-printed works to the architectural precision of Oskar Schlemmer's Bauhaus Theatre (where the mapping of moving geometrised bodies in co-habitable space was a prime component). True, one of the principle motives of the Dumb Type collective project (founded in Kyoto in 1984) is to bring artists, architects, designers and performers together in the production of new utopian environments.

But the debt to European modernism (in my mind at least) tilts more in the direction of the fabulous techno-fictions of Raymond Roussel and Marcel Duchamp, where a collision of sex, biology and imagined machines is more indicative of a crisis in the cash flow of consciousness than 'the shape of things to come'.

The Japanese blending and conspicuous consumption of technology, pornography, violence and other cultures is often judged as a culturally specific and de-politicised mode of cuteness and kitsch. Dumb Type's latest work, *S/N* (signal/noise-scape) — to be performed at the Adelaide Festival (in a world premiere from March 8-15) will certainly move more to the political edge — engaging

with those 'dependable' oppositions ('vice and virtue', 'normal and abnormal', 'safe sex and good sex', 'straight and queer') which shape both global and local responses to present scenarios of oppression, racism and the AIDS epidemic (which in spite of its obvious presence, has received very little public attention in Japan).

S/N will explore and explode some of the barriers which shape the mind/landscape of what Dumb Type describe as 'human system interaction'. For the new work (which had already gone through a number of permutations as an installation in Brussels, Vienna and Tokyo), Dumb Type anticipate an acting out of 'the countless possibilities and failures of interaction between the active "motions" of the system as a whole and the lesser reactive "emotions" of its unit components — redrawing visions of the future upon the imagined wall of our millennium'.

We can look forward to seeing something like a high-tech drag show drawing a critical eye and ear to those constantly mutating assemblages of post-industrial life-support and cultural systems.

DANCE DEGREE ZERO JEAN CLAUD GALLOTTA IN AUSTRALIA

Keith Gallasch talks with Julie Anne Long about workshoping with the internationally renowned French dancer-philosopher Jean Claud Gallotta.

'He has extremely intense, unblinking, blue eyes and an unbelievable memory.'

Julie Anne Long (Associate Director of The One Extra Dance Company and long time collaborator with the Open City Performance Company) is describing Jean Claud Gallotta at work with twenty-two choreographers from Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

In the initial exercise he asked us to read each other's bodies as maps, looking for a detail to spark a memory. The next day he

remembered exactly what we'd done. His feedback to us was individual, perceptive and detailed with no throw away comments.'

I'd seen a piece of Gallotta's shown on SBS' *Eat Carpet*, a group of twelve or so overcoated dancers in a field on a chill, sunny morning stamping the churned earth, momentarily bird-like, horse-like, moving individually and then with a sudden collectivity without any musical prompting, just as suddenly struck, as if by a virus, falling into the earth. Like the best

postmodern dance, here was everyday movement made strange by unapparent motives, possession, alternation between individual preoccupation and group forces. It was not surprising then to find that the likes of Long, Cheryl Stock, Chrissie Parrott, Leigh Warren, Sue Healy, Jane Pirani, Maggie Sietsma, Jim Hughes and Page Gordon signed up to work for two weeks with Gallotta in Melbourne in January.

'His background is in the visual arts and he came to dance late. He's a philosopher of dance in search of "degree zero", encouraging us to pare down movements to an almost neutral state, free of any embellishment. Even the tiniest everyday gestures' — she reaches for a cup in progressively simpler moves — 'are overlaid by habits and personal style.'

In the mornings we were dancers learning a vocabulary for the afternoon workshops. This was a bit much, but like the rest of the process, people got into it because it was sustained. I liked the afternoons. Gallotta would

outline a bizarre story and we'd each have time to choreograph and perform our solo or duo version of it. 1—You arrive in a malicious manner. (I was never quite sure if he was being translated correctly.) 2—You see a book. 3—You eat it. 4—You are in front of the fire curtain. 5—You touch your head to it. 6—The curtain goes up. 7—You enter the stage. 8—Use a phrase from the morning class vocabulary "as a memory". We'd perform and he'd give his response which, to me, added up to a dramaturgy of movement focused very much on timing and rhythm. You still had your own language of steps and movements but you had new ways of dealing with them.

We'd absorb his astonishingly detailed comments and take them into our work on a new story the next day. In many ways it was about responding to and understanding external rhythms internally. Gallotta's focus on the interior is something not often offered dancers. I was very attracted to it. It was a good group experience and a great individual one.'

WISH YOU WERE THERE

REAL TIME glances over the Perth and Adelaide Festivals

Adelaide and Perth are furiously beckoning the rest of Australia especially with dance: Perth with de Keersmaecker and Parrott, Adelaide with Forsythe, Morris and Bangarra. Performance works abound with theatre taking second place in Adelaide, but traditional theatre of ritual, myth and the court (including Wayang Kulit, Kyogen, Bunraku in Adelaide and the Drummers and Dancers of Kandy and the Drehu Kanak dancers in Perth) is strongly represented.

Performance in Adelaide includes: Sarah Miller's *Mixed Relations* program for Artists' Week, *Bitch! Dyke! Fag! Whore!* from New York, the UK's Rose English in *My Mathematics*, Doppio Teatro's *Filling the Silence*, William Yang's *Sadness* and from Japan, Dumb Type: *S/N*, Daisan Erotica, and the Hakutobo butoh company.

Perth offers new opera — Chamber Made's *Recital* and Smetanin and Crogan's Kafka adaptation *The Burrow*. On the theatre/performance front there's *The Lift* from the UK at PICA (35 seats/performance only), the freeway spectacle *Topolino* from the Netherlands, Astrid Hadad (fantastically beyond description) from Mexico and Jon Rose's *Violin Music in the Age of Shopping*. The big breakthrough in Perth is the street offerings: the photographs are enough to want you to take to the streets to see the alarmingly everyday Les Hommes En Noir, the lifelike Les

Voisins and the army of street cleaner-warriors, Les Pietons.

Perth offers mostly conservative music from remarkable musicians — why not have Bashmet play the Schnittke Liturgy for Viola & String Orchestra? The relatively progressive stuff (Bartok and Ligeti) is left to young British pianist Rolf Hind (who also performs live with de Keersmaecker) and Roger Smalley. Adelaide focuses its energy on an excellently conceived 'Two Worlds' Music' for over a week in the Town Hall with Japanese and Australian music, composers and musicians. The Adelaide bonus is that some great Handel and Purcell will be played live in conjunction with Mark Morris' choreography.

There are more plays in Perth (Playbox's *Lear*, Gate Theatre's account of Marivaux's *The Cheating Hearts*, Cheek by Jowl's *Measure for Measure*, Black Swan's *Dead Heart* by Nicholas Parsons, Mamet's *Oleanna* and Singapore Theatreworks's *Lao Jiu*) while Adelaide, always in a more contemporary Australian frame of mind, limits itself to White's *A Cheery Soul* with director Neil Armfield in the expressionist mode that made *The Ham Funeral* work, Gow's *Furious* and the Taylor-Devenish Playbox collaboration *Disturbing the Dust* — both breaking the well-made play rules.

Adelaide is still Australia's premiere arts festival offering radical programming of music and dance while Perth is good in bits, very attractive bits..

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL 1994. 344 PERFORMANCES 1 GREAT PARTY



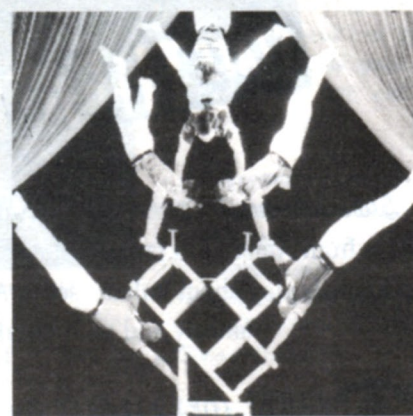
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REALTIME

10



WILDHOUSE

Linda Wallace

An unassuming Perth duplex doesn't know what's about to hit it.

This "renovators dream" property is set to become a dreamhome/ nightmare, as UK installation artists Heather Ackroyd and Daniel Harvey start work for the Festival of Perth. Dreamhouse? — maybe, if you feel at home in a lounge room full of mushrooms, moulds, crystals, and grass sending itself up the wall.

Heather and Dan have made a name for themselves turning derelict houses in Europe into living wonders.

Dan says of their work, "We create a series of situations which allow simple, natural things to happen, that is where the beauty lies."

They started years ago in sculpture and theatre, moved into growing grass skirts for the likes of fashion guru Vivienne Westwood,

and 'living set' designs for film directors Derek Jarman and Peter Greenaway, and then moved into planting grass on the sides of buildings, carpeting them with a fresh springy green. People have even been known to make love against the lush walls....

Of late, the pair's motto seems to be, *if it lives, install it*. And no space is the wrong space — evidenced by the range of interiors elaborately transformed by their green thumbs.

One of the corridors beneath the Palais de Chaillot in Paris was planted with barley and then 1500 locusts were introduced to eat the strange garden. Another corridor had 1500 books with grass planted between their pages, and mushrooms and moulds sprouting everywhere. They say that some people find the work disturbing, while others are more humorously engaged.

In northern France, the artists used an old caretaker's cottage at a deserted leisure centre to create the installation *Implanted Spirit*. A month prior to opening they coated the bathroom with a thick solution of flour and water, planted the floor with earth and mushroom, threw in a rotten grapefruit for good measure and then sealed the room.

According to Heather the bathroom grew the most extraordinary moulds, vivid blue-green, pinks and yellows, and, as she says, "people couldn't believe the state of it".

"We were playing with all things which are hidden from view in our culture - moulds, decay and rot - but at the same time, the bathroom was incredibly beautiful - people were mesmerised by the transformation".

She speculates that our mania for cleanliness points to an active repression in our psyche of the natural order, and how "very few people can relate to nature in its fecundity and wildness".

To get reacquainted with abundant nature pay a visit to 89-91 Lake Street, Northbridge, Perth from 21 Feb to 7th March.

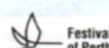
festival of Perth



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FUTURE SPEAK AT THE ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

Linda Wallace

Norrie Neumark will morph (or at least, she'll talk about it). Allucquere Rosanne Stone will talk of desire, vampirism, memory and multiple entry from the standpoint of cultural and transhuman theory. Linda Dement wants your body bits, and Minksi will take you on a mouse-sexy hyperware tech tour. Ready?

The day is February 26; the place: Elder hall, Adelaide; the event: *Future Languages*, as curated by VNS Matrix, four cyberfeminists with attitude.

The members of VNS Matrix end Artists' Week in the future: "from cyborgs to VR, life in the 'developed' world is increasingly mediated by technological devices. How will we experience ourselves and others in the future?", they ask. "Who will be in control?"

Future Languages, with the help of a host of international and Australian artists will investigate the challenges of high technology culture. The first challenge of the day will no doubt be Simon Penny, beamed as a welcoming telepresence live from his seat as the first Associate Professor in Art and Robotics at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA. Post-Penny, *Future Languages* starts talking.

Queenslander Glenda Nader is fascinated by the voices/languages of answering machines and other recorded messages as private/public, differently sexed, telepresences. During *Future Languages*, she'll discuss the techno-anatomical body as aesthetic model. Nader, an artist and writer, says she has a compulsion to seek out the points of rupture in the 'informatics of domination' (to quote Donna Haraway). This compulsion has taken the form of research into "how women can/are making themselves in cyberspace rather than see ourselves as we have been seen in the old media."

One artist who will be remaking women literally, and inviting participation, is Linda

Dement. Throughout the day she'll be co-ordinating the workshop *Cyberflesh Girl-monster in the tradition of Mary Shelley, Idemikit and Hélène Cixous*. Dement asks that you 'donate your bits - whatever you can scan in will be what she is made of.'

The workshop will be an opportunity for women to put their own flesh and thoughts into cyberspace as a bodily presence, using languages of gesture, skin, muscle, fantasy, flesh and words. Participants will be able to take the bodies of data away on floppy disc for further manipulations.

Dement says that the workshop is to be a women's representation in the new techno realms: something other than Macplaymate, Virtual Valerie, calender girl screen-savers and online porn.

Maria Fernandez will discuss technology in the colonial and post-colonial cultural inflection, Sally Prior, an Australian computer artist will explore the possibilities of interactive multimedia through an artwork set in a Tunisian context, and Ken Wark will talk about computer games in techno-speak.

Sadie Plant, from the UK will deliver a paper called *Cybernetic Hookers: Women, drugs and intelligent machines*. From W.A., Zoe Sofoulis is on the same panel, called *Cyborg Surgery*, and will present a text dealing with women artists and technology, cars and prosthetics.

Ian Howard, an artist and academic from Queensland, has for more than 20 years concentrated on an investigation of the relationship between military and civilian populations. For *Future Languages* he poses the question 'Wailing over spilled milk: the legacy of the military century, what might have been?'

At the end of the day, we may be in a better position to know what will be.

[RE]

An Adelaide ARI (Artists' run initiative)

Julianne Pierce

Gray St is a quiet street in a quiet part of town and is a fitting name for this narrow passage-way through Adelaide's almost deserted semi-industrial western corner. Amidst this barren landscape dwells one of Adelaide's few artist run spaces [RE]. Situated in an old shoe-factory shop front, the space is currently in its second metamorphosis, having begun life as Post West in January 1992.

Post West was initiated by Adelaide artists Paul Hewson, Linda Marie Walker, David O'Halloran and Alan Cruickshank. The four funded and curated the space for one year and their program of local, national and international artists caused a major ripple in Adelaide's art scene. Post West was an energetic and critical site which injected bravado and euphoria into the contemporary arts establishment.

The momentum continued with the five new directors who took over Post West and changed the name in February 1993. Thom Corcoran, Rachel Moss, Monica Corduff, Angus Meek and Matt Simon were recent graduates from art and media courses who saw [RE] as an opportunity to curate and manage their own alternative arts space. With more enthusiasm than experience, the five embarked on a diverse and spontaneous program which has seen twenty four exhibitions in ten months. With shows ranging from one night performance events to two week installations, the turn-over is intense.

Described by one of the directors as 'the Switzerland of the Adelaide art scene', [RE] has shown a broad selection of mainly Adelaide based artists. It is a neutral zone where

higher profile artists can explore ideas and where emerging artists can exhibit for the first time. In the tradition of Post West, [RE] has become notorious for its openings where artists and students drink and mingle with contemporary art space directors, critics and the occasional passer-by.

When asked about their programming strategies, the directors confessed that it was largely dictated by the publishing deadline of Adelaide's popular contemporary art magazine *Broadsheet*. Some exhibitions are curated and others from artists proposals, but the program is generally planned two-three months in advance, just in time to take advantage of the free gallery listings on the back cover of the quarterly *Broadsheet*.

One of the first [RE] exhibitions, *Six Nights, Six Openings* showed six artists in that many days with a group show on the seventh night, and perhaps their most ambitious project to date is the 1994 Festival exhibition *24 Artists in 24 Hours*. Quality may be sacrificed for quantity in this marathon exhibition, but with 98 Gray St being handed over to the next directorial team at the end of March, the current directors wish to make a grand last stand.

The incoming curator is likely to be David O'Halloran, artist and current director of the Australian Network for Art & Technology. As an original member of the Post West team, David may return the gallery to a more formal curatorial structure. Whatever his direction may take, 98 Gray St will remain as a focal point for Adelaide artists and continue to provide a critical arena for the presentation of diverse art practices.

ZONA DI TRANSITO

Virginia Madsen researcher on the project talks with Ama K



Zona di Transito

Photo: Dennis del Favero

I met Ama K and her parents on one of those first apocalyptic days in January when houses burned down across Sydney and helicopters came like dragonflies, scooping water from the lagoon to dump it over the ashes of the Royal National Park.

We were in stinking hot Liverpool talking about exile and the K family's flight from their home in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina some eight months before. I said, (small talk), attempting to let some of the heat of the conversation escape, 'What an introduction to Australia ... these must be your first fires'. Even Ama's mother had understood my faux pas and was smiling. They all were. And then they were looking at me and through me to all the fires, 'their' fires of Mostar, 'their' city splintering under the intense heat.

First fires, faux pas ... but ... I could be forgiven because of the heat, and because these faux pas, false steps, are at least a part of the journey in. Exile is as much a crossing of borders as it is to be spurned, excised from one's home.

Ama escaped twice from her home in

Mostar. First, she left with her Croatian friend and neighbour who said she was his daughter, while handing the Serbian troops his real daughter's birth certificate.

The second time she left without her Croatian neighbour's help. He saw her, she said, but this time he saw someone else, not 'his' daughter. 'He was a stranger suddenly, he acted as if he never knew us'. I'm now listening back to Ama on the tape-recorder and she is saying this word, 'stranger'. She then speaks for her mother who says, 'These are the people who don't know how to cherish something, these are the murderers, the foreigners'.

Ama is speaking to me from her other country, the one she no longer recognises but still inhabits. She is trying to speak in English, to speak to a 'you' and to fully inhabit this space, this zone of transition we call exile or 'being a refugee'.

An important part of being a refugee is not so much being in flight but rather, being outside of time, of moving out of a geography and into a place which really doesn't have a temporal dimension, a place in between times, a twilight zone, a "Zona di Transito".

Dennis del Favero

Zona di Transito (the joint project of Dennis del Favero, Tony MacGregor and Derek Nicholson) is a multi-site installation, one of a number of works commissioned by the Adelaide Festival and the Art Gallery of South Australia. Zona uses two main sites to explore the landscape of the refugee. Three rooms in a derelict warehouse in Adelaide become a holding camp for the refugee experience (*Picta*). A radio feature (*Diaspora*) reweaves the soundscape heard in the warehouse. Ama's voice is the one I'm hearing now. A voice, cool and steady, a voice of 18, in flight and yet in limbo. 'We are still living with Mostar in our hearts and our baggage still has the shape of that old bridge. Even though that bridge is destroyed, we still like to think that metamorphosis can exist again and somehow our luggage will be the luggage of return ...'.

Zona Di Transito opens in Adelaide on 22 February. The Gerard and Goodman Building, and can be heard on ABC FM's *The Listening Room*, on March 21 at 9.30 pm.

ADELAIDE INSTALLATIONS

Linda Wallace

Shift your subjectivity — get embodied in somebody else's experience with *Adelaide Installations* — the closest thing to Art VR.

Over 26 artists from our time zone are to be brought together for this happy collusion as part of Artist' Week at the Adelaide Festival, from February 22.

From Australia the artists include Gordon Bennett, Paddy Carlton (Joolama) Gajirra-woong, Aleks Danko, Dennis Del Favero, Pat HOFFIE, Fiona Foley, Geoff Weary, Simryn Gill, Molly Napurrula Martin and Dora Napurrula Long.

Doreen Mellor, one of the three curators, is Visual Arts Co-ordinator at Tandanya (National Aboriginal Cultural Institute). She believes that the future, as both a reflection of the past and a widening of horizons, can be identified as a significant element in the series of ground installations by Aboriginal artists to be assembled at Tandanya.

The specific cultural resonances will all be extremely different in the works of the eight artists from North and South East Asia.

These range from such diverse practitioners as Montien Boonma from Thailand, Japan's Toshikatsu Endo and Lu Shengzhong from Shandong, China.

Indonesian artist Heri Dono believes art is for everyone, and that distinctions between art and life are false. His *Kuda Binal*, produced in Yogyakarta in 1992, included puppets, music, dancers working from the old horse trance dances of Java, reactivating an old tradition in contemporary form (to be performed on Feb 26, 7.30 pm).

The collaboration of local artist Fiona Hall and Malaysian-born Simryn Gill (the once local artist who recently moved from Adelaide to Singapore) looks at the movement of plants across borders and cultures, and variations in their use and meaning in different settings, involving a consideration of not only diversity but difference.

To increase the feeling of total immersion in the site-specific environment, keen art-lovers can walk from installation to installation, with a detailed walking map available at each site.

BAM55B SBS014

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In a new weekly program SBS goes beyond the canvas to find art in the most unusual places. Tune into 'IMAGINE' Fridays 7.30pm from February 18th.



BOSCO RUNG HAS HIS SAY

Rung scales the hype as SBS and Radio National lift their arts game in 1994

SBS is set to rival ABC TV's *Review with Imagine*, another whole half hour a week devoted to the arts in a country whose 'cultural life is thriving' says producer Veronique Bernard. But apparently not thriving enough to warrant more than half an hour a week for probably half of the year. And, again, like *Carpet Burns*, requiring a little help from the Australia Council (just like *REAL TIME*). Of course, commercial television offers the arts nothing, so we are inclined to be supinely grateful to SBS because it's braver than the ABC. The press release for *Imagine*, thrice iterating its interest in 'design and creation', promising to 'ask people behind the scenes where their inspiration to "create" [sic] comes from' and 'to reach the wider commu-

nity', sounds a bit too close to *Review*.

Not so producer Janne Ryan and presenter David Marr of the hour-a-day new arts program for Radio National. They're out to re-define arts journalism and journalism across the board and without a press release: 'highly political' says Ryan over the 'phone, 'we'll investigate the processes of power in arts and culture ... we've got to stop seeing art as separate from the rest of our lives ... a creative program with its own experiments in sound ... it's not only the arts that are performative'. She's got the same team (Portus, Rigg, Jelbart, Wakely, Prior, Short) who fronted and produced the last round of programs as reporters and commentators this time.

Won't that reproduce the same caution and

pedagogical inclination of the past?

'We've had reactive programs, now we'll create. Now David will interact with our team and we'll be bringing in independent commentators who feel they've got something to say.'

She's picked the right time as theatre and performance engage more directly with the world than any time since the 70s.

As for *Imagine*, it's rumoured to be more impressive than its press release and includes reporters like Pippa Bailey and Paul McGillick with inside arts experience. With a forbear like *Carpet Burns*, a remarkable cumulative document of Australian performance and curious collaborations, it does have a lot to live up to. Let's hope it gets a better deal than *The Bookshow* and

that it gives some room to the work that *Review* simply doesn't or can't cover. That would be start.

Both SBS and the Radio National team promise a creative edge. Ryan has commissioned short, original works (a rarity on ABC radio) from Sherre DeLys, Virginia Madsen, Open City and newcomers out of the University of Technology Sydney's media course. Patrick Gibson and Daniel Grafton. *Imagine* offers 'vignettes shot to intrigue and entertain; performance pieces from the fringe exposing some of the most creative artists around'. Hate that word 'fringe'.

We live in hope that media managements will allow both shows to develop, that Ryan realises her vision with *Arts Today* and that *Imagine* has one.



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A QUEER PEACE CAME OVER ME

McKenzie Wark

'Once man loses his faculty of indifference he becomes a potential murderer'

EM Cioran, *Genealogy of Fanaticism*

I'm watching a transexual in a black bodysuit winking diamantes, dancing with self-conscious pride. This is what I love about the Mardi Gras Ball: it marshals in one place, for a temporary moment, all the techniques of glamour our culture has acquired. Here are all glamour-tech ruses of survival, packed in a joyous art form. Techniques which not only embody the art of refined pleasure but also the promise of a non-violent world.

The Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is Sydney's festive contribution to the global polysexual culture. Every year the leading talking head from the fundamentalist movement, the Rev Fred Nile, prays for rain on Mardi Gras night. Every night, so far, the weather has been just fine. Late February is when summer heat cools and dancing in the streets seems like a fun thing to do all over again. A million people crowd around Oxford Street to watch the parade. An effigy of the Rev Fred's head will pass by to wild cheering, in amongst Sluts For Jesus in string bikinis and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, an order of gay male nuns. Apart from a few distressed and distressing looking teenage boys mouthing foul bigotries, the crowd are relaxed, drinking in the streets, enjoying the spectacle. Straight couples reflexively hold hands. Masters with trailing slaves get their dog leads tangled on the street posts. The police stand around with their hands in their pockets.

The parade ends at the showground and the Ball. I love the Ball! This is an alien zone where certain rules about bodies and their

surfaces, signs and their bearers, are suspended for the duration. I am dancing along with everyone else, each a singular assemblage of movements, all woven together in time. And I feel like I am dancing Nietzsche's dance. Like everyone else, I dance and dream, the whole of my human and animal past threads together in movement, endless repetition of movement in trace. Then suddenly I am awake amid the dreaming, but I am awake only to the fact that I go on dreaming, dreaming and dancing, dancing and dreaming. I am dancing, dreaming, thinking, but thinking only that I want to continue the dream, play my part in the ceremony. I see in my lucid moment that we wear masks that maybe hide our animal selves, but sometimes too they are what name our animal selves. I am conscious of the essential nature of appearances. They are all there is that one can call one's own. A queer peace comes over me, in motion in a milky way of masks upon masks, the endless procession of becoming.

In my lucid dreaming, lucid dancing, I see the fabulous she-thing wrapped in the black bodysuit. I think I saw her earlier in the parade, strutting her stuff with Sluts For Jesus. Her long legs and narrow hips shimmy in sheer black stockings. Her slender torso snakes with unadulterated sex-power. What a masterpiece of appearances! To call her a deception is not high praise enough. The whole creation speaks to me, nibbling whippers at my ear: 'I am what I am! My own creation!'. It looks this instant as if this show-ground was made for her alone, and we mere extras, cast for her spectacle. What I love about her is this calculated staging, these promiscuous images, this loquacious laciness

— the body as a sentence or a song.

The problem with the Ball is how to get home afterwards. The streets can become the hunting ground for vicious little packs of bashers. These self-appointed tribunals insist on policing wayward bodies like hers, and mine — and maybe yours. They cannot abide the thought that all is not what it seems. Any deviation of the signs the body displays, however rare and beautiful, must be punished. They are the nightmare of reason: they judge you guilty at a glance of a truth presumed concealed. They take you at your word to be a confession. They turn a body's well-turned phrases and lines into a life sentence.

The ghost of Walter Benjamin walks by in the shadows, a melancholy witness. He says bashers are self appointed fraud squads who exemplify his strange theory of violence: 'A cause, however effective, becomes violent in the precise sense of the word, only when it bears on moral issues.' The moral issue is fraud, he says, the deviation of the sign from the body. He should know. When those vicious little packs of bashers who became the Nazis took Paris, Benjamin, the Jew, killed himself with an overdose, in fear of falling into the Gestapo's hands. He knew a thing or two about the enemies of peace, and their policing of the body and its signs. Yellow stars, pink and black triangles — alienating signs, a violent imposition of an alleged truth.

Anyone who acquiesces to the beat of the Ball at Mardi Gras acknowledges an alien rule: that the signs of sex are free from the burden of representing anything, they are set loose for promiscuous play. Walter's ghost speaks to me in the darkness, in a moment of the danger. He says this is why the Mardi

Gras is non-violent: 'The exclusion of violence in principle is quite explicitly demonstrable by one significant factor: there is no sanction for lying'. My glorious transexual Slut for Jesus is free to appear as whatever she likes. Her glamour belongs, like all forms of glamour, to a promised land of non-violence. 'This makes it clear that there is a sphere of human agreement that is nonviolent to the extent that it is wholly inaccessible to violence — the proper sphere of "understanding": language.'

But once outside the alien zone of understanding, once outside the orbit of the beat, the bashers lurk in the shadows, ready to attack the gap between sign and body. This then is the double-sided life of the lie: as beautiful simulation, freed from the moral order of representation; as punishable deviation, prey to fundamentalist violence.

Only when lying and deception would be promoted as a sign of the flourishing of autonomous self-creation can there be a possibility that we can dance and dream in peace. When set free to signify whatever its will desires, not only is the body freed, but the thought of peace can awake. The minute the ecstatic delirium of the body is forced back into the mould of the moral law, violence is inevitable. Creating the space of agreement for dissimulation is also the creation of the techniques of peace. A space which is not the overly, indeed literally familiar image of peace, but rather an ecstatic orgy of transgressive but con-sensual energy, an alien zone of desire outside of all-too-human orbits. A moonscape of unknown pleasures, seduced by the strange attractor of the rhythm, for as long as it lasts. Hurtling towards Bethlehem to be reborn.

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Presented by Queer Screen, highlights of this exciting film event include an opening night presentation of the screen adaptation of Randy Shilts' controversial 1987 book *And the Band Played On*, and the Channel 4 adaptation of Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City*.

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*MG & I: concessions for Mardi Gras and industry members.

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PLAYING UP WITH MADAM MAO

Trevor Hay

Anchee Min.
Red Azalea, Life and Love in China
Victor Gollancz: London, 1993

I began reading this book with a mounting sense of irritation at the clumsy translation and careless editing. In fact, the language sometimes benefits from its raw originality of expression — bad translation is sometimes curiously close to good poetry — and the writing is frequently superb, but there are almost as many times when it simply sounds daft.

Nonetheless, this is a remarkable book which should be read by anyone interested in modern China, and that strange business usually described as the 'Cultural Revolution'. Its proper title was 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' and, as such, it grew out of, and was sustained by, propaganda, polemic and massive proletarian cultural activity, including the 'eight model operas' of Jiang Qing (confusingly referred to as Jiang Ching throughout the book). The author, Anchee Min, gives an extraordinary account of her life

during this period, as a 'rusticated youth', sent out into China's countryside to learn from peasants and workers. Her story is a very tough, harrowing and illuminating account of the spiritual and cultural desolation of it all, but the most absorbing aspect is the author's affair with another woman, and the shocking intensity of psychological warfare underlying every activity at Red Fire Farm. Anchee Min is finally plucked from this hell-hole by scouts looking for the right type to play the proletarian heroine Red Azalea in a film beloved of Jiang Qing. At this point, she enters into another sexually ambiguous affair.

Red Azalea echoes, in many ways, old Chinese operatic themes — a woman stands outside a screen imagining her own lover have sex with someone else; women are really men, men are really women, and so on. It's all very current in the West now too, with *M Butterfly*, *Liaison*, *Farewell My Concubine* also exploring these old Peking Opera themes. The most fascinating thing about this tale, however, is its mile wide trail of clues that Anchee Min's lover in the second

half of the book, her film studio 'supervisor', is none other than Jiang Qing herself — Mao's wife. This person, who is supposed to be a man, but looks like a woman, has played the part of Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, as Jiang Qing did, photographs peonies, as Jiang Qing did, knows by heart the screenplay of Western movies (Jiang Qing particularly loved the 1933 MGM Greta Garbo film *Queen Christina*, which also contains the classic theme so beloved of Chinese tradition, in which a woman disguises herself as a man and is thrown into very close proximity with the object of her affections), provides intimate revelations about Jiang Qing's life with Mao, and so on. And, at one point in the book where Jiang Qing and the supervisor are supposed to be in the same place at the same time, the author is not herself present, so it is always possible for Jiang Qing to assume the identity of the supervisor. To cap it all off, this 'supervisor' (never named) appears to live in a place where there is a stone boat — just like the Summer Palace of the former Empress

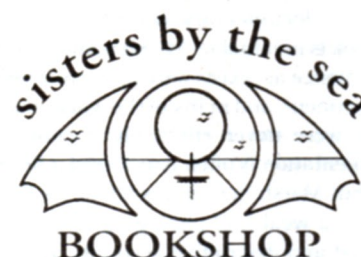
Dowager Ci Xi. Not surprisingly, Anchee Min is rescued from misery and oblivion by a sudden interest from 'upstairs'.

The author has not been subtle about this, and it amazes me that no review I have seen has mentioned the identity of the supervisor. It may be that the writer is using a kind of symbolic representation of the complex, bewildering sensuality of this extraordinary woman who was both villain and victim in a feudal and patriarchal society, or it may be that she means us to think she really did have an affair with Jiang Qing, but didn't know it at the time. Maybe she's just toying with naive foreigners who don't know much about China. There is a certain classical Chinese artifice about it all. But the most important and engrossing thing about the book is its chilling portrait of Jiang Qing as a woman who was passionately sensitive to human individuality and yet driven to use a vicious 'proletarian culture' as the ultimate weapon against it. In this, however, she is exactly like the other women trapped in the barren, salty fields of Red Fire Farm.

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IN THE FLESH

Jane Goodall

Anne Marsh.
Body and Self: Performance Art in Australia, 1969-92
Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993

Art works 'talk amongst themselves', to adapt an old adage; and while the artists who create them may be closely attuned to particular dialogues, a different kind of attention is involved in picking up on the wider patterns of conversation. One of the critic's jobs is to pay this kind of attention — and, hopefully, to start some kind of productive new lines of dialogue in the process. While journals like *Art + Text*, *Photofile*, *Art in Australia* and *Agenda* have kept the critical circuits buzzing around experimental and performance art, nobody thus far has attempted to give us an overview of what has been a very vigorous field of activity.

Anne Marsh's general study of performance art in Australia over the last two and a half decades is long overdue. The sheer volume and variety of Australian performance art makes her task a daunting one, and the difficulty is compounded by the need to distribute the coverage across five different state capitals. Although everyone who is interested in experimental art will find examples of crucial omissions (Sydney readers will wonder why the influential work of Sarah Miller, Open City and The Sydney Front is not included), the author must be given credit for organising a vast range of examples in a clear and interesting way.

As a documentary contribution alone, the book is invaluable. Marsh points out that performance art exists only in the moment of its enactment, and many of the works she discusses were never effectively documented. Documentation is often considered a humble task, but Marsh herself has a flair for it, and musters a wealth of photographs, interview material and descriptive accounts. Her own

descriptions are well judged and usually give a good sense of the special qualities of the artist and the work. I especially enjoyed her accounts of the work of Jill Orr and Derek Kreckler. It is only in the case of the work of Stelarc that I found her psychoanalytic approach becoming intrusively judgmental. Stelarc's work tests the limits of our critical parameters in some complex ways, and an introductory study of this kind does not allow much scope for engaging in critical complexities. On the other hand, some of the work done at Inhibidress by Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy seems to call for some up front critique. This doesn't mean to say that the book fights shy of critical issues, but an author whose task is primarily one of introduction is not well placed to engage in polemic.

One of Marsh's most important concerns is to give an explanatory account of major critical shifts that shaped performance art practice. Here she identifies the influential roles played by individual critics — notably Donald Brook, Achille Bonito Oliva, Lucy Lippard and Laura Mulvey — and points to the ways in which the Power Lectures were often instrumental in transforming the critical agenda. The shift from the atavism and essentialism of counter-cultural performance art, through to an anti-essentialist concern with the construction of subjects, forms the main focus of the first part of the book. Marsh is less effective in dealing with the diversification of theoretical and social concerns in the last ten years and might be accused of adhering to the principle of the unified narrative. Here again, though, her own options as a critic are rather severely constrained by the requirements of an introductory study, and if the critical voice in it seems inhibited, this could be partly the fault of an over-anxious publisher. Whatever its limitations, this study should be a vital sounding board for artists, critics and audiences.

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Sun Herald, Sydney.

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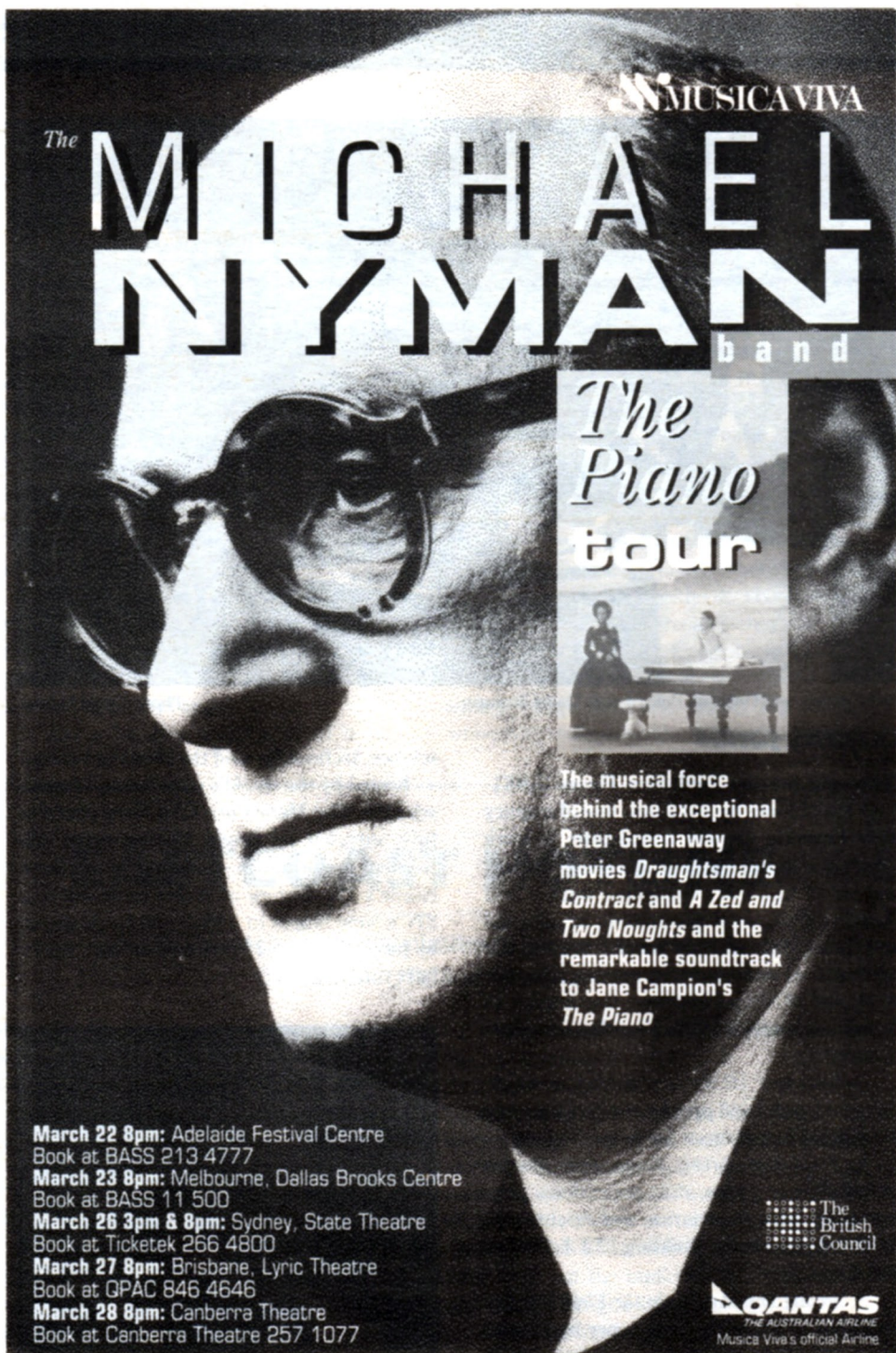
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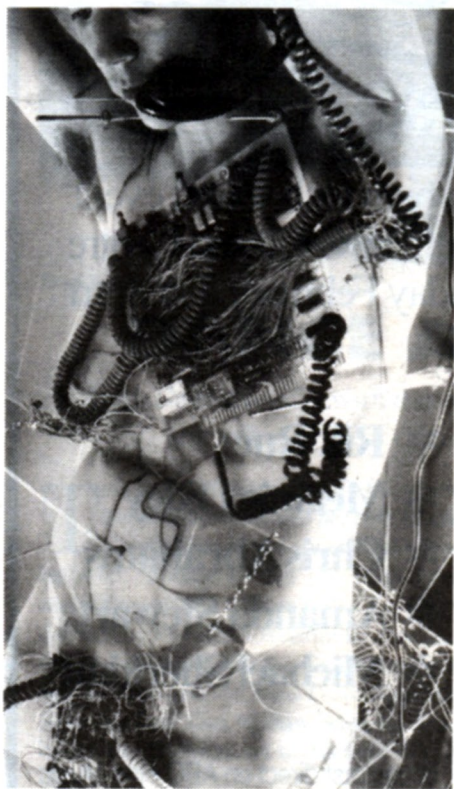
A program of original short works by initiating performance makers

EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD

A survey of Performing Women

Virginia Baxter with Annemarie Jonson & Linda Wallace

The freedom of movement offered by the new performance 'writing' has attracted a notable range of women. In the beginnings of a survey, here are just a few, who are stretching the limits of performance:



Sherre DeLys

SHERRE DELYS

Sherre DeLys has composed and performed audio art collaborations with writers, musicians, installation artists and electronic specialists in galleries and performance spaces, outback pubs, for radio, film and telephone. Interested in the use of sound in lived environments, she is currently employed at Sound Design Studio in Melbourne, working on a range of sound installations for museums, aquaria, zoos and other public spaces.

Concurrently, she is collaborating on a work with artist, Joan Grounds, the initial expression of which will be an installation planned for Melbourne and Sydney gardens. She's also working with writer, Mary Fallon, on an environmental sound design for her forthcoming opera, *Con/struction Site*, an archaeological dig into the ruins of the female underworld. The work, commissioned by Chamber Made Opera, will also involve musician Stevie Wishart and will extend Sherre's earlier work with Mary Fallon experimenting with the use of speech as a matrix for writing with sound.

BARBARA CAMPBELL

Barbara Campbell's *Backwash* is the kind of work that resonates long after it is first experienced — it seems to etch a mnemonic groove that flips now and then into spontaneous replay. *Backwash* weaves a loose intertextual narrative that takes in *Heart of Darkness*, *Apocalypse Now*, the 1937 Stinson plane crash in the rugged southern Queensland of the artist's youth, and Campbell's own recollection of childhood. Through devices such as the fetishistic recitation of lists (childhood scenic highlights of the artist's hometown, the list of all the men from Campbell's district killed in the Great War, the list of men in the Stinson search party) women's voices mark out moments that punctuate time, and remembered spaces of the tragic and mundane.

The tableau Campbell creates is at once melancholic, poignant and celebratory — it evokes that desire to repeat and retrace that is deeply embedded in children's chants, in poetic prosody, even in the organic rhythms of physiology. The 'banal' and 'historical' intersect in this text of retrospection: this is a place where men in boats and planes plunge into the spaces of nature and war to create the signposts of history, while women work the rescue switchboard. The cracked voice of Gracie Silcox tells the story of her role in the Stinson rescue, and Campbell tells how Gracie, after 60 years as district telephonist, had literally carved her own circuit of memory between



Barbara Campbell

Photo: Heidrun Lohr

connections on the switchboard, linking time, naming and space in the same way that memory forges neuronal circuits along which the backwashes of recollection flow.

Backwash, originally performed for the 1993 Australian Perspectives at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, has been adapted for radio and will be broadcast on ABC FM's *The Listening Room*, in May 1994.

AJ



Vicki Spence and Deborah Pollard with David Branson

Photo David Bishop

LYNDAL JONES

Following her 10 Prediction Pieces (1981-91) Lyndal Jones begins a new line of enquiry with *From the Darwin Translations*, a work which juxtaposes the central icons of Darwin and Freud (Darwin's Galapagos finches and Freud's couch) in a questioning of personal and social ideas as they revolve around the act of sexual intercourse eg natural selection in choice of sexual partner, the impact of Freudian concepts of father/mother on sexual relationships.

Following a 10 week residency at Banff, Canada, Lyndal will present this work as part of Adelaide Installations for Artists' Week:

1. *First Translation: Room with Finches* (installation — video, slide projections, photographic images, aviaries and finches) — Gerard & Goodman Building, 22 February 1994.

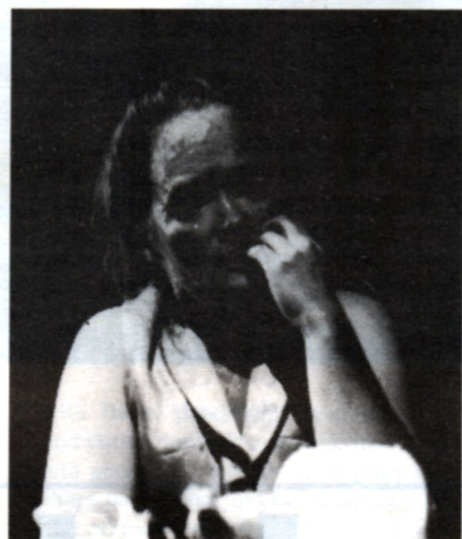
2. *Second Translation: In the Flesh* (on the evolution of sexuality — a paper by Lyndal Jones and Margarita de Ferranti, translation by Anna Schwartz), — 23 and 24 February 1994 at 9.30 pm.

VICTORIA SPENCE DEBORAH POLLARD

The girls that brought *The Fall of the Roman Empire* to the depths of downtown Canberra are back. This time the site is Giles Gym and Bath House at Coogee where Victoria Spence and Deborah Pollard are creatively developing their new performance, *Dripping With Ennui* with 'Mad Woman' Tania Lieman and ex-Sydney Front-er Clare Grant.

Conducting the work in an arena that is both architecturally and culturally idiosyncratic, wearing ballgowns, mouthguards and boxing gloves, they hope to shed new light on the power relations involved in the creative process. To lay to rest any rumours that the Australia Council have funded a summer holiday at the beach, Spence and Pollard invite seriously interested parties to drop in any time and watch them slaving in the salt sea spa.

science, technology and the limits of 'reason' — hosted by the world's most famous female scientist. *The Marie Curie Chat Show* opens in July, directed by Brigid Kitchin (from all-women performance company, Partyline). Noëlle's *The History of Water* (performed at STC's New Stages in 1993) will be produced by Jane Ulman and broadcast on ABC Radio later this year.



Clare Grant

CLARE GRANT

Clare Grant is best known for her work as co-creator of, and performer with, *The Sydney Front* since 1986 in *Waltz*, *John Laws Sade*, *The Pornography of Performance*, *Photocopies of God*, *Don Juan*, *First and Last Warning*, and *Passion*; and for her solo performance work *Woman in the Wall*, written with Mickey Furuya, Nigel Kellaway and Sarah de Jong. As well as directing and dramaturgical work this year with Victoria Spence and Deborah Pollard (*Dripping with Ennui*), Clare will shortly take up the role of Co-Director (with writer-director Sally Richardson) of Playworks, the national network for women writing in theatre and performance.

MICHELLE ANDRINGA

Portable performance work in the digital age keeps Michelle Andringa on the move. Curator and producer of the performance program for TISEA — the international electronic arts event held in Sydney in 1992 — Andringa's own work springs from the information culture, using domestic technologies, live movements and voice.

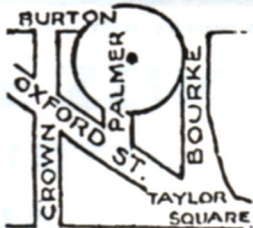
Her latest piece is *Sweet Time*, an exercise in digital choreography, featuring the curious movement work of Virginia Barrat. Video editing on the AVID system enabled the construction of movement phrases through frame grabs, and its elegant fading capabilities. In February *Sweet Time* will be projected with an overlay of red laser line tracing. This Amiga-driven loop will trace an iconic jewel — enlivening the dancer with a 3D type illusion.

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Noëlle Janaczewska

Photo Sandy Edwards

NÖELLE JANACZEWSKA

Noëlle Janaczewska writes across performance, radio, print and installation. New performance works for 1994 include: *Icing on the Cake* exploring (in English, Polish and some Korean) the Cold War, weather, language, cake, department stores and family secrets from the perspective of second generation migrants (Adelaide Artists Week, February 1994); and *The Marie Curie Chat Show*, a commission for the Salamanca Theatre Company in Hobart — a performance about women.



Stevie Wishart

Photo: Heidrun Löhr

MAKING SENSE OF THE MACHINE

John Potts

The Australian music-text group Machine For Making Sense will soon embark on a national tour. John Potts spoke to members Stevie Wishart and Jim Denley about the machine, and about their individual pursuits here and overseas.

"Five lovable mad-cap avant-gardists" is how one critic has described The Machine For Making Sense. While the description is certainly limiting — not to mention patronising — it conveys some of the appeal of this ensemble in performance. Spoken word, spoken non-word, musical improvising and electronics are melded so that no one element dominates. Nothing is predictable in a Machine event, as audiences will soon discover for themselves. The Machine is conducting an Australia-wide tour in April and May.

The Machine For Making Sense is now in fact a six-part entity. The original five mad-cappers are Jim Denley (flutes, sax, voice), Stevie Wishart (violin, hurdy-gurdy and voice), Chris Mann (text and voice), Amanda Stewart (text and utterances) and Rik Rue (sampling and tape manipulations). Augmenting this line-up is Julian Knowles (sound projection and electronics).

Having formed in 1989 after the ARS Electronica in Austria, the Machine first performed in Hungary and England. They toured Australia in 1991, inciting a critical furore along the way. One negative review in a Perth newspaper provoked a barrage of replies, all favourable to The Machine and aghast at the review's narrow focus. The Machine had become a focal point of aesthetic debate: not a bad achievement for a first national tour!

Since then, The Machine's program has been to take one major piece on tour each year. A Machine event is a form of improvised composition — or composed improvisation. With so many sound sources colliding, there is always scope for the unexpected. As Jim Denley observes, the composition is 'stacked up in a certain way, and falls differently each night'. The 1994 tour will include input from a random access, recordable CD, whose chance selections include silences.

Such Cagean elements within The Machine should come as no surprise. John

Cage himself was reportedly such a devotee of Machinist Chris Mann's work that in the last years of his life, his essential reading was the Bible and Chris Mann. An intriguing combination, and one that raises even more intriguing questions. How exactly did Cage read the two works? At the same time perhaps? Did he ever confuse the two?

One of the paradoxes of The Machine involves the notion of 'making sense'. The interaction of spoken language, music, electronic treatments and appropriated noises all somehow comes together: it makes sense for these musicians and writers to coalesce. Yet much of the spoken matter is in defiance of making sense. Amanda Stewart and Chris Mann speak in fragments, shards, non-linear jabs of language. These utterances often make little rational sense, instead probing away in the lateral manner of background consciousness.

Jim Denley and Stevie Wishart, two of the Sydney-based Machinists, both emphasise the importance of Australian speech and language to the Machine. 'Speech is the first inspiration and reference point', Denley says of The Machine. His own solo work, including the 1992 CD, *Dark Matter*, often explores the relation between vocal utterances and musical improvisation.

A similar emphasis forms one of the connections between The Machine and Stevie Wishart's other main interest: mediaeval music. As director of Sinfonye, a British-based mediaeval music group, she has pioneered an innovative approach to the performance of mediaeval music. Taking the text as a starting-point, improvisatory skills are employed, musicians often being taught by ear, as in mediaeval practice. Sinfonye's five albums have sold well; the group's unconventional approach has earned it a following outside classical confines—including a large rock following in Europe.

The connections between mediaeval and contemporary musics are most evident on Wishart's solo album *Wish*, released on the Australian Tall Poppies label. Improvisations on violin and hurdy-gurdy (a mediaeval stringed instrument) are treated and extended with digital electronics. The 1990s shake

hands with the 1200s, and postmodern mediaevalists like Umberto Eco would no doubt thoroughly approve. *Wish* was voted one of the best albums of 1993 in the British music magazines *Gramophone* and *Wire*.

Wishart and Denley spend part of each year in Europe; they have interesting views on the relative merits of the Australian and overseas contemporary music scenes. Both see the Australian environment as a very healthy one for improvising musicians. They praise the sophistication of audiences, the availability of recording facilities, the high calibre of musicians, and the unmatched cross-pollination of approaches. Unlike the more conservative European scene, where improvisatory music grew largely out of free jazz, Australian new music thrives on collaborations and movement across different media.

So why go overseas? Bigger audiences, for one thing. And bigger recording companies, plus the chance to perform at huge music festivals. Plus liaisons with like-minded exponents. The Machine performed last December at Experimental Intermedia in New York, impressing the influential composer Robert Ashley with their work. This year, Wishart will participate in a Swiss symposium of female improvisors. She also points to the stimulating nature of travelling back and forth between hemispheres.

And what can be done to improve the Australian contemporary music environment? Regular music festivals would be a positive start. Oh, and a lift in the quality and quantity of music criticism. At the very least, the upcoming Machine tour should give the critics something to write about.

SYDNEY FRONT

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

They will not rest in peace, for as they made us, their audience, restless with their restlessness, they will, doubtless, each busy themselves at other performative things, spurning the sentimentality occasioned by their casually self-inflicted death, for they had unravelled the workings of performance, bared its bottom and re-dressed it with Desire, and, having done all they could, disappeared themselves as performers into stage managers in their last work *Passion* and then exeunte altogether. They will be missed, but the memories of being herded about, refused seats, undressed, interrogated will not (go missing). In all likelihood they will do a Melba since they never wanted to be a full-time concern in the first place: where's the pleasure in that except to guarantee continuity of funding? As they said often enough, the need to work together, to generate desire and create pleasure came first, not some topic or subject or issue. Appropriately and darkly, the image that stays with me is the moment in *Passion* when a brightly lit transparent surface appears in The Performance Space ceiling, and someone, above, a half-glimpsed shadow, shovels soil, gradually darkening the space, burying us. Part of me would have preferred a boulder rolled across that light to complete our ritual participation in the Christ myth, but there was something transcendently mundane in it so true to the Front's capacity to excite, irritate, move and offend.

A THOUSAND WAYS TO GO

Annemarie Jonson investigates two Australian groups with a penchant for crossing their genres and mixing their media

As the American avant-garde composer and Zen buddhist John Cage had it 'in art, there are a thousand ways to go'. And while his 'deepest desire' regarding contemporary music — 'to hear it all, not successively, but all at once ... Everything together!' — may be logically impossible, Cage's rallying call to eclecticism echoes in the work of Australysis. The performance interests of the Sydney based 'new music' ensemble, established in 1979 by artistic director Roger Dean, include digitalised sound/text/music crossovers, the twentieth century American and European avant-garde, new Australian composition, collaborations involving experimental sound, dance and visual arts, and improvisation. While certain members of Australysis have been known to sport a mean set of flares while playing up a storm on the double bass or keyboards, they might equally be found huddled over a sampler messing with the high range.

Dean describes Australysis' approach to new music and sound as 'pluralist', and both 'modernist and postmodernist' in its preoccupations. According to Dean, the variety of forms of music and sound with which the group engages happily coexist; he brooks no delineation between 'music' on the one hand and 'sound/performance' on the other. For Australysis, contemporary performance works on a continuum, offering multiple tangents for adroit exploration, with plenty of elbow space for technophobes, contemporary 'classicists', dyed in the wool modernists, and outriders on the digital frontier.

The group's recent performance history is a case in point. *Redesigning the System*, Australysis' final concert for 1993, featured a number of works involving the hybridisation, formal play and techno-interdisciplinarity that have come to represent certain aspects of the postmodern — or at least perhaps the modernist avant-garde — in performance. Greg White's Australysis commission, *The Silence of Eyes*, engaged with the multidimensional interrelationships between word and sound

through digital media. Computer generated phrases, gradually building into a bizarre pastiche of quasi-symbolist verse, were spoken, typed onto a computer keyboard, projected onto a screen to be read by the audience, and transformed by MIDI (musical instrument digital interface) into musical phrases. In rendering discrete units of sound simultaneously visual, verbal and musical, the work had a complex synaesthetic and semantic appeal. Martin Wesley-Smith's multimedia song cycle, *Timor et Tremor* (fear and trembling), combined taped voice, image projection, a musical score and the singing of tenor David Hamilton to explore the plight of a young East Timorese musician-refugee. Roger Dean's computer generated tape piece, *Silent Nuraghi*, evoked the imagined sound of the Nuraghi people of Sardinia, inspired by the some 7,000 large tomb structures, remnants of the 'lost' civilisation, which dot the late twentieth century Sardinian landscape.

These experimental excursions into, and reworkings of, modernist idioms of composition and performance help to broaden the scope of what can be sometimes perceived by the non-afficionado as the rigidity and self-referential formalism of some twentieth century music. However, if you do like your musical entertainment a little more on what might be called the 'high modernist' side, Australysis is also happy to deliver. The group has featured programs focusing on Cage, the giant of German modernist composition Karlheinz Stockhausen, and the notoriously difficult, but brilliant Greek composer, Iannis Xenakis. Other major focuses of the group's work include the commissioning and performance of new Australian compositions, and improvisational music making, drawing on the spontaneity and aleatory aspects of forms such as free jazz. The 1993 series also featured a concert almost entirely devoted to compositions by women, (including Sandy Evans, Hazel Smith, Kirsty Beilharz, Jennifer Fowler and Gillian Whitehead) a regrettably rare under-

taking in the milieu of new music composition which remains by and large anachronistically gynophobic.

Australysis' work is available on CD on a number of labels including Tall Poppies and Soma, with three new recordings due for release in 1994, including a double CD set featuring over 60 improvisations, and a text/sound performance-based recording by Hazel Smith. The 1994 performance season comprises three concerts, all at the Sydney conservatorium: *Composing with Improvisors* in February focuses on sound, word and movement, and includes a collaborative work with the dance troupe Kinetic Energy, and *Phasing in*, scheduled for August, features process music from Australia, the US and Europe. The final performance for the year, in December, *The Asian Mirage*, centres on interactions of Asian and Australian music.

The Melbourne-based Chamber Made Opera's 1993 season also ranged across a diverse terrain: from the bravura coloratura of Merlyn Quaife's *Medea* (in the eponymous opera by Gordon Kerry, with a libretto by Justin Macdonnell after Seneca) to the extreme stylistic minimalism of the company's acclaimed performance of Robert Ashley's *Improvement: Don Leaves Linda*. Ostensibly based on Don's abandonment of Linda at a roadside turnoff, and performed in part as *sprechgesang*, a stylised hybrid of speech and singing, *Improvement* is imbued with allegorical references to the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492. Another of CMO's works, *Recital*, which is to tour to Hong Kong, Wellington and Perth in 1994, turns the operatic paradigm on its head: a spectral Diva recounts her artistic life through a virtuosic combination of text, gesture, contemporary sound and the high relief 'quotational' performance of the great operatic arias.

Artistic Director, Douglas Horton, says that Chamber Made, which he established in 1988, seeks to investigate contemporary musical and theatrical possibilities in music theatre and opera. He sees the company as a 'theatrical laboratory' — it reappropriates gestural, sound and textual possibilities of operatic forms and motifs for contemporary audiences, while pushing the boundaries of what constitutes musical theatre, and juxtaposing ideas and influences from many conceptual fields, genres and media forms.

Chamber Made's 1994 season features a

number of new works which involve innovative collaborations between sound and performance artists, musicians and writers. *The Two Executioners*, composed by David Chesworth with a Fernando Arrabal text adapted by Douglas Horton, is described as an experiment in the 'theatre of the absurd', a work in the lineage of the dada/existentialist aesthetic of performance writers such as Beckett and Pinter.

CMO's composer commissions include *Con/struction Site*, by the sound/performance artist Sherre DeLys, with a libretto by the writer Mary Fallon. Set in three sections including the wonderfully mordant *Matricide — the musical*, this piece promises to be a productive excavation of the (often repressed) underworld of the feminine and maternal in culture. Deploying a range of technologies including CD-ROM to explore its formal and conceptual premises, the work addresses the critical relationship between the sound environment and the development of human communication, including the subtle discovery of the imbricated texture of sounds, words and spaces that develops in the formative convocation between mother and child.

Tresno, a 'dance opera', is a new work which explores the scope of voice in its purely sonorous manifestations. Jacqui Rutten, the work's composer and librettist, has developed a textual language which is semantically 'empty': correlating with no known language, it relies on the brute sound of vocalisation for its emotional effect, and links sound with gesture through physical and vocal counterpoint and harmony. The score also manages to combine the influences of the Italian baroque and Indonesian musics.

Horton says that Chamber Made aims to combine the tradition of experimentalism — 'pushing the envelope' of ideas and forms — with the kinds of 'professionalism' in production more often associated, by the theatrically-inclined punter, with mainstream/large scale opera and theatre. With an irreverent appreciation of the classical opera and the theatrical avant-garde (Horton cites Pina Bausch as an influence), and a range and orientation which fosters the contemporary and collaborative dimensions of intermedia, Chamber Made is one opera company which offers something to both the inveterate *La Traviata* victim, and the pixel-entranced generation X-er.

THE OCCIDENTAL TOURIST

Tony MacGregor goes in search of Japanese sound culture and James Joyce

Late one Friday night last November, I spent two hours wandering around Osaka's Uehonmachi district in search of the Finnegan's Wake Bar & Box Gallery. It was cold, I was hungry, tired and frustrated, straight off the Shinkansen from Tokyo (heading eventually for Kobe). Every set of directions sent me off on another fruitless circuit of the same narrow alleys and indecipherable laneways. Around and around in the cold night, searching for a Japanese bar that advertised itself with the words of James Joyce: 'the noise downstairs wake they up' and, the flyer goes on to say, 'architecture, construct and context by Toru Arima; sound art by Yukio Fujimoto'.

It was the sound art and the reference to Joyce that got me going — after all, I was in Japan for the sound: two separate-but-related audio art events were being held in Japan in November 1993. At Xebec Hall in Kobe, the *Australian Sound Art Meridian* featured performance and installation by Ion Pearce and Joyce Hinterding, with an audiotheque of work by some twenty other Australian artists

(curated by Alessio Cavallaro). And in and around Tokyo, *Sound Culture Japan '93* was a mix of performance, installation and discussion with artists and others from Japan, New Zealand, the US and Australia.

Microphone and tape recorder in hand, I covered both events, wearing many hats as a co-founder of the original *Sound Culture Festival* (in Sydney in 1991), a member of the Australian organising committee and producer with ABC Radio's audio art program, *The Listening Room*.

Sound art inhabits the cracks and crevices of the Japanese art world. Without the commitment of a state funding apparatus and in the absence of access to the airwaves, the Japanese works occupy small gallery and performance spaces — musicians working with sculptors; one-off events with loads of portable hi-tech in small galleries. There are also a growing number of larger scale public works — sound objects in parklands, sound sculpture in railway stations.

In this context — in any context — Xebec Hall in Kobe is remarkable: a state of the art,

purpose-built complex for the development, recording and exhibition of sound art. Xebec was set up and is run by the TOA Corporation, a manufacturer of commercial public address systems, and is actually located on the ground floor of their corporate headquarters on the Port Island in Kobe Harbour — a mix of gardens, low rise offices and apartment buildings surrounded by container terminals. TOA see Xebec as part of their Research and Development commitment, and to Australian eyes (and ears) it's pure luxury — 15 staff, hot and cold swinging doors, everything that opens and shuts, and a cafe on the premises that really only serves coffee, beer and hot-dogs, but is a good place to sit and talk.

And the work? Austere, scratchy, simple but complex, technical and poetic, low tech and historically rich. The works of Joyce and Ion are very different but share a sense of scale and 'home-made-ness'.

Sound Culture was more dispersed, less easy to pin down to a key space or key moment, strung out as it was along a series of train journeys (my primary memory of ten days in Japan, training). In the shuttling back and forth I missed most of the Australian work (by Nigel Helyer, Rod Berry, Chris Mann), and caught glimpses of the Americans and Japanese (just like a tourist, I suppose), going by train again an hour or so out of Tokyo to the town of Kiryu. At the Yuri-kan, a 400 year-old rambling, ramshackle complex of wooden buildings that was once a sake and soy sauce factory, but is now a gallery space, half a dozen Japanese and one expatriate French artist formed the installation core of *Sound Culture '93*.

In one large room, was a collection of iron instruments, some 'played' by various motorised arms and wheels. In another, 60 or so little speakers activated by photo cells at the end of fine tails of electrical wire — the whole diffused 'eco-system' buzzing away according to the shifting intensities of sunlight through two high windows.

My visit had to be brief (this was the same day I was catching the bullet train to Kobe, getting off at Osaka to search for Finnegan's Wake Bar), and as I headed out towards the street, all the staff sitting in the courtyard, taking the winter sun stood and bowed, bidding me farewell. And I finally found the Bar & Box Gallery. On my last frustrating circuit of the same laneway, a small unmarked doorway opened, and half a dozen Australian sound artists fell out into the streets. They had given up waiting for me and were on their way home. I had to stay — I couldn't leave after all that searching. The last train to Kobe left in 30 minutes. There was time for one drink.

The Finnegan's Wake Bar and Box Gallery is no more than 2 metres wide and perhaps 5 metres long. A tiny bar, four small tables. The walls are lined with tiny wooden drawers with little brass handles. Artists leave objects in the drawers; some of the drawers have had works 'built' into them. In one, an autographed copy of Paul Bowles' *The Shimmering Sky*; in another, a broken clock on a cushion. Hundreds of drawers — 120 of them have little keys for winding up music box mechanisms. When they are all wound together, they play a tiny cacophony for Finnegan's Wake. That night I couldn't hear them. The jazz was too loud.

SNAP! CLASSIC! POP! MARKETING THE NEW MUSICS

Michael George Smith

The first major posthumous release of new material from the late Frank Zappa is an album titled *The Yellow Shark* (Barking Pumpkin/Warner, CD 81227 16002), new arrangements and transcriptions of some of his best work as well as some of his last compositions, commissioned for the renowned German orchestra Ensemble Modern conducted by Peter Rundel. The recording is drawn from a number of critically acclaimed performances in Europe last year, the orchestra supplemented by the addition of 'instruments' such as plungers, sirens and power tools.

One of the most popular visiting ensembles in last year's season from Musica Viva was the Balanescu Quartet, a traditional string quartet that has recorded an album of the music of German electronic music minimalists Kraftwerk. One of the most popular 'pop' albums of last year was a collaboration between singer/songwriter Elvis Costello and the Brodsky Quartet, an album called *The Juliet Letters* (Warner, CD 9362-45180-2). Topping the English pop charts last year was the London Symphonietta recording of *Symphony No. 3* by Henryk Gorecki (Nonesuch Elektra, CD 7599-79282-2). The year before it was the *Four Seasons* by Vivaldi as interpreted by the flamboyant Nigel Kennedy. The American string quartet Kronos regularly pack out concerts playing an eclectic mix of works by twentieth century composers from Schoenberg to John Zorn, Jimi Hendrix to Frank Zappa.

Which begs the question: where does contemporary classical music end and what would once have been described as progressive rock, or even that numinous category called fusion, begin? As serious composers from every genre — contemporary, classical, rock, pop, jazz, even world music and the equally numinous/dubious new age — have sought to take their ideas beyond the bound-

aries of their perceived genres, each have collided and colluded with the other to create hybrids beyond categorisation, or at least faster than the commentators have been able to impose new ones upon them. Where, for instance, does the improvisational composer fit into the picture? The popular perception of improvised music is jazz, but that ignores the works of Stockhausen and John Zorn to name just two. Are the Kronos Quartet pop or classical? Can Frank Zappa legitimately present a classical as well as a bizarre pop oeuvre?

'I think performers', explains the founder of the Kronos Quartet and first violinist, David Harrington, 'the people who are really out there experiencing what it feels like to relate to an audience while they're playing music, haven't traditionally been consulted. The decisions, in terms of what is considered viable art music, have been left in the hands of promoters and composers'.

The answer for Kronos has been to strip away the stodgy bow ties and dinner jackets and present themselves as flamboyantly as any pop group. The result has been to reach audiences that would have traditionally never considered attending a concert by a string quartet while not compromising the premise upon which Kronos was founded: to present a serious repertoire that reflected the nature of composition in the twentieth century.

This is the philosophy behind the label that has released the entire Kronos Quartet catalogue, Nonesuch Elektra, distributed in Australia by Warner Classics. It is the philosophy that has seen the label nurture the careers of some of the most important American contemporary classical composers working today, including Steve Reich, John Adams, John Zorn and Bill Frisell, and the eclectic World Saxophone Quartet.

It was certainly that philosophy that made Nonesuch the market leader in this field. Even so, when the Australian arm of

WEA (Warner Elektra Atlantic) first took up the catalogue, it was placed in the hands of the various pop catalogue managers within the Warner group. Around five years ago, it was finally handed to Warner Classics, whose marketing manager is Andrew McKeath. 'Companies are starting to discover the value in music like that of Steve Reich and John Zorn, dare I say the "commercial potential". Nonesuch was doing this kind of music before anyone so I think it's entirely appropriate they should have the first major success with the Gorecki, which has sold over 25,000 copies in Australia. Other companies have followed of course — you've got Point Music through Phillips, and Catalyst through BMG — but they're all pretty much in their infancy. Nonesuch has made a long term commitment to their artists, John Adams in particular, who has become something of a house composer. And while they may not directly commission work, they enable groups like Kronos to do so, which creates a kind of family network of creative output from the artists to the label'.

'Kronos still remains unique', McKeath expands, 'because they're not a pop quartet at all. They might play a bit of John Zorn and the odd arrangement of Hendrix, but they still commission some really quite serious contemporary music like the Morton Feldman Quartets they've just recorded which as I understand it, is very uncompromising music and is likely to have very limited sales of a thousand or two worldwide. They'll do these sorts of things and they'll do albums like *Pieces of Africa* which is a big crossover album which can pick up airplay on stations like the ABC's youth network JJJ. That's why I think they are so successful. They don't restrict themselves to one particular area'.

The success of Nonesuch Elektra in marketing this kind of music attracted Philip Glass to the label, which has resulted in the recent flood of releases from the catalogue of this pioneer of minimalism, including the soundtrack to the most recent film by director Godfrey Reggio, *Anima Mundi* (Nonesuch Elektra CD 9 79329-2), and will see reissues of two early works from the 60s, *Music With Changing Parts* and *Music in Contrary Motion*, originally recorded and released on his own independent label, in February, and a record-

ing of the complete String Quartets performed by Kronos, in May.

The problem is letting people know just what is available, whether on Nonesuch or the more obscure independent labels trying to nurture contemporary classical music in all its manifestations. Radio exposure in Australia is limited to ABC Fine Music and the occasional broadcast on either ABC Radio National or one of the more adventurous public radio stations around Australia. Film is also proving to be a useful tool for introducing audiences to this kind of music, as is evident from the success of Philip Glass with his trilogy of film scores *Koyaanisqatsi*, *Powaaqatsi* and now *Anima Mundi*. Peter Weir has used the Gorecki on the soundtrack of his latest film, *Fearless*, to be released in April, along with pieces by Kronos, the Gypsy Kings and another contemporary classical composer from Poland, Krzysztof Penderecki.

'Even exposure on ABC Fine Music is limited,' says McKeith, 'because playing this kind of music is very expensive (because of copyright). It's a lot cheaper to play Schubert symphonies. But there are other problems. Bill Frisell released an album last year, *Have A Little Faith* (Nonesuch Elektra CD 7559-79301-2), an album of covers of compositions by Bob Dylan, John Hiatt and Aaron Copeland. He did a version of Copeland's *Billy The Kid* ballet, arranged for rock ensemble. Quite tuneful but we only sold a couple of hundred copies, because we couldn't get radio exposure. ABC Fine Music wouldn't play it because it had *drums* on it, and the tracks are all too long and esoteric for JJJ'.

Touring any ensemble is expensive and there are never any guarantees of success in this field, but McKeith is actively chasing John Zorn, with pianist Roger Woodward and his Sydney Spring Festival of New Music program, in the hope of touring him later this year.

Despite a burgeoning music scene, Australia's contemporary classical fraternity is bound to independent labels.

'We don't have a brief to get involved with local music,' McKeith explains, 'which is unfortunate. Then again, I've been sent very few tapes of that sort of thing. But because of the commercial nature of operations like ours in Australia, the opportunity to develop anything locally is inevitably limited.'

FIN DE SIÈCLE SHOPPING WITH JON ROSE

Gallasch gets the goods

The CD spins out the reverie/nightmare of the Jon Rose *Violin Music For Restaurants* (ReR CD). I click in the cassette of my meeting with him at the ABC: 'In the early 80s I got disgusted with Musica Viva forever bringing out third-rate string quartets so I printed a poster for a non-existent tour by Johannes Rosenberg'. On *Restaurants* I hear a very real lion. I browse through *The Pink Violin: A Portrait of an Australian Musical Dynasty* (NMA Publications, Melbourne, 1992). 'The book represents analogies and metaphors for what we're talking about. What started out as a joke became a persistent persona. Thanks to a journalists' strike in Berlin a whole newspaper page was given over to Rosenberg and (at the violin festival I'd directed) people, serious people, wanted a perverse composer-musicologist like this to exist. My work is seventy-five percent Rosenberg projects and most things in this book are eighty to ninety per cent true, for example being detained at the East German border for bringing out a nineteen string cello and having to play it to the guards.'

You enjoy playing with the line between truth and fiction, you are both yourself and this other persona. Do you create an onstage Rosenberg?

'I don't play him. I'm just a violin player. And political. When Berlin went for the Olympics, the sheer hostility to the whole idea was astonishing. So I created a work connecting sport and the playing of an instrument and used recorded commentary from the

1936 Nazi-run Olympics. I did a live version in Sydney for the ABC using archives of the Australian orgasm at winning medals pitched against the Nazi desire for victory.'

A funny-horrible passage on *Restaurants* distracts me: the preparation of a chicken in a cooking program is pitched against the sound of a sad squawking bird, interpolated with sounds of disaster and Paganini-ish fiddling. The audience laugh nervously. I'm suddenly reminded this was a live performance.

'We've come back to the live radio of the 30s and 40s. The medium became stultified with over-production or talk-back with the least interesting people getting on the air. Now technology makes live work possible again.'

'The MIDI [musical instrument digital interface] can control any MIDI instrument, a synthesiser or sampler or any harmonising device. For a piece in Munich in 1992 I sampled recordings of a 30s surrealist so he "performed live" with me through a MIDI violin bow to MIDI interface measuring the bow hair pressure — not like a MIDI violin which is like a parrot where you play something and get it immediately. I also use ultrasound, which is similar though more theatrical, in the sport piece. I have to move around the stage, to dance, to make it work through the bowing arm. It's right at the guts of playing and technique.'

'I send this MIDI information to the computer and there are a whole lot of parameters: speed, sensitivity, volume but the main thing

I have is "a keyboard in space", 32 tables with notes arranged in any way I want. A hard bow stroke will yield Beethoven and a light one Hendrix. But because it's not a solid piece of wood, it depends on the note you've just played and the note you're about to play, how you move and even how you do the bow up. If this process didn't have creative surprise I couldn't go on stage with it. It's mostly a system developed for solo use. You can't concentrate on it and everybody else in a group live performance.'

But the group performance is still improvisatory?

'Planned and improvised. THE SONG COMPANY will be cued in from Perth for *Violin Music in the Age of Shopping* (Live to air, ABC FM Monday, 7 February 1994, 8 pm), like angels coming in from space, singing material I've selected from Lonely Hearts columns. They're too far away to improvise, but in the Eugene Goossens Hall, poet and sound artist, Amanda Stewart, will respond to a Rik Rue-created shopping list of three hundred and fifty items each with a sound sample. Chris Abrahams and Melanie Oxley will perform jazz standards with the words transformed into perverse comments about shopping.'

Is it a performative set-up in the hall?

'It's live, it's improvised but it's basically a radio event for the 30,000 who listen in, so I'm not worrying about lights and layout. However, the live audience know you're doing some strange thing to create a sound

which you're not supposed to see, so there's a "peeping tom" element. Another live version called *Sellout* is happening in Perth during its Festival at Fat Bellies on February 28 and March 1 with drummer Tony Buck and four or five Perth musicians.'

On 14 February at 9.30 pm, ABC FM's 'The Listening Room' is playing your Violin Music For Supermarkets, a big collaboration with many contributing artists including the likes of Chris Cutler and Fred Frith. What is this shopping preoccupation?

'It's not that shopping is bad but with the demise of ideology we're left with a vacuum where there is only shopping. *Violin Music in the Age of Shopping* is the umbrella title for all my work for the year — sounds, images, pictures, text, a pool, a memory bank to make pieces with whoever, wherever I am around the world, and creating with the advantages and disadvantages of each situation.'

'I belong to a series of international interlocking structures to do with improvisation. In Australia in the seventies when Jim Denley and I formed The Relativity Band it seemed an obscure idea and thought limited to American jazz but it's finally taking root. And here it is on ABC FM with Denley and many others. Radio has made a great comeback. From its inception it was a kind of virtual reality — you could make anything happen, while television is primitive and boring, no room for the imagination, and VR itself is predictable. A program like *The Listening Room* has a hell of an international reputation.'

BOO BAM MUSIC

Robert Lloyd counts the beat at the Jakarta Drum Festival

A sudden invitation, a brief rehearsal and I'm thrown back into the culture that so seriously influenced my music in the 70s during a long stay in Bali; and to find it all happening now in the one show, the Second International Drum Festival in Jakarta, Indonesia in December 1993! This wasn't just drum playing, this was performance — ritualistic, theatrical and hi-tech to an extent that would astonish Australian audiences and beyond anything WOMAD can even hint at.

There were drum ensembles from East Java, North and Central Sumatra, East Kalimantan, Burma and Jakarta as well as solo drum-dance from Korea, new music from Medan (Sumatra), drum-dance from India and myself representing Australia, solo. Memorable performances came from the drummers from ASKI Padang Panjang which included trance-dancing on broken glass accompanied with large drums and bamboo slit drums. I performed two of my percussion compositions, *Earth Music* and *Boo Bam Music*, solo works for Octabans, long tube drums. The quartet from Manipuri (India) leapt and danced while playing complex tala cycles on barrel drums and always managed

to land on the beat.

The stress of adjusting to huge crowds (a riotous 15,000 on the opening night aching for their pop hero, Iwan Fals), high humidity, mosquitoes, a language I'd been out of touch with for many years (my fumbings became an applauded comic turn on stage), and PAs the size Hendrix had at Monterey, was more than outweighed by the enthusiasm of the audience for an incredible diversity of music, the luxury of an army of tech staff for every instrument and microphone, endless appreciative speeches intimately delivered through a proliferation of mikes and PAs even in the tiniest spaces, trophies with a little drum on top and endless food — I was never waiting for a Nasi Goreng or a satay stick.

I saw unusual works which I think should be invited to visit Australia: from Medan in Aceh, a teacher of composition who works with a four piece ensemble with synthesiser with MIDI [musical instrument digital interface] triggering a second keyboard (shades of Jon Hassell but with traditional melodies and drums); and Bandung performer Harry Roesli playing drum kit and synthesiser at the same time: the music consisted of a rhythmic



International Drum Festival

sound track improvised to televised grabs of boxing matches projected onto a huge video screen.

The final night performances included groups from Myanmar (Burma), mask dances from Kalimantan and my last performance: the reception was astounding (I am not used to audiences cheering throughout the piece).

Franki Raden, the festival director prompted me to conduct all the groups, fifty performers, through a collective improvisation — which proved to be a real crowd pleaser and a lot of fun. No language — just a rhythm — and typical of the whole event, generous, intense and cooperative. The next festival is hoped to celebrate Independence in 1995.

INSIDE THE CAVE

Stevie Wishart experiences Steve Reich's *The Cave* in London

Entering after the Festival Hall had been plunged into utter darkness, a blind audience member guided me to a free seat. Although some left before the end, he remained throughout the opera. The durations given for each act are very precise: 64' for Act 1, 40' for Act 2 (with only a five minute breather in between), and 32' for Act 3. This heralds the methodically quantised nature of Reich's sound-world and the refinement of Beryl Korot's audio-visual technology.

The lights come up over a metallic sci-fi grid construction dominated by five huge video screens. Six singers are positioned on various levels of the grid and far below are the remainder of the Steve Reich Ensemble (percussionists, string trio, keyboards, flutes, oboe, english horn, clarinet, bass clarinet). With surprising immediacy the singers relate the Old Testament story of Abraham and Sarah in a quasi-staccato hyper-chant. Reich's repetitive rhythmic formulae and short range melodies imbue an urgency to

the rather laboured pace of biblical language. It is refreshing to experience an operatic style bereft of nineteenth century European shackles. The choice of Paul Hillier as conductor and vocal coach was an inspired one. He made his name initially as founder/director of the Hilliard Ensemble, then specialising in mediaeval vocal repertoires. Under Hillier's direction the ensemble performed with a clarity of tone and intonation which Reich's tonal transparency demands. Certainly a non-classically orientated vocal technique has none of the projection of classical opera singers, and so the singers were individually miked, as were the instrumentalists.

The main role of the vocal material was in relating passages from the Book of Abraham, sung in English while being typed on close-miked computer keyboards, and projected onto video screens in English, German and French. In this way the audience is informed of how Abraham buys the Cave of the Patriarchs as a burial place for his wife Sarah and

their descendants. This brings us to the main subject of Korot's videos in the form of a series of interviews with Israelis from West Jerusalem and Hebron (Act 1, 1989), with Palestinians from East Jerusalem and Hebron (Act 2, 1989, 1991), and with Americans from New York City and Austin, Texas (Act 3, 1992). Each were asked the same basic five questions: Who for you is Abraham? Who for you is Sarah? Who for you is Hagar? Who for you is Ishmael? Who for you is Isaac? While responding, each interviewee's face fills some screens and others enlarge minute details — woven patterns on their clothing, the veins of a leaf of an inconsequential pot plant, a strand of the interviewee's hair. Korot creates a stunning counterpoint between the video as documentation and as an abstracted visual patterning.

The answers are spoken in unscripted, unstaged, natural speech, but the overall phrase lengths are carefully distributed to conform to Reich's metronomical score in the style of *Different Trains*. As with the music, certain key passages are emphasised through repetition, their incessant but not necessarily forward moving energy forming an ideal foil to another element of Korot's visuals — field

trips into Hebron. We catch glimpses of the roadside along which we are driven to the twelfth century mosque which today stands over the Cave and remains of a Byzantine church. She takes us inside to the hushed interior of worship where, amidst armed Israeli soldiers, Jews and Moslems uniquely worship under one roof.

What was particularly inspiring was to find a new opera which was so contemporary — in terms of its subject, use of technology, and exploration of visual and musical composition. The crystalline vocals, and precision of the instrumental writing and performance sound truly minimalist and pointillist in their rhythmic and melodically tonal myopia, yet so lush in timbral complexity. The honest documentation of human religious debate is lyrically interplayed with the use of video as a non-semantic art form. The sung biblical texts enliven the appreciation of the colloquial orality of the present-day interviewees.

Five months after the event, the strongest memory is of the protagonists' utterings being penned onto parchment. The scratching nib filling the acoustic space, the nib filling the screens, their time-honoured speech still have repercussions in religious debate today.

NEW MEDIA HYPE

McKenzie Wark in the Info-Sphere

The growth industry of the 90s is not multimedia, cyberspace or virtual reality. The growth industry of the 90s is hype about multimedia, cyberspace and virtual reality. Apart from the video games industry, which took off like a rocket, there are more sound bites and press releases about all this stuff than anything else. Still and all, it's fun hype. Reading all the hype might not tell you about much, besides the future of hype, but hype may very well be the future of culture.

But let's turn the hype mode off for a minute and take a look at this new media hype industry itself. New media hype spawned two glossy magazines which are now infesting the newsagents: *Mondo 2000* and *Wired*. Both are from San Francisco and combine that city's liberal intellectual confidence with Silicon valley info-capital. Being a last, late spin-off from the military industrial complex, new media hype is an odd blend of state-subsidised-knowledge-capital and free-wheeling small business hucksterism.

Both these magazines are aimed at people who want to scramble to the top of the new

middle class of the emergent information economy. *Mondo* has fringe culture, neo-hippy pretensions, but is not that different from *Wired*, which is pretty tight with the heavy industry types. If you want to know who's most heavily into self-promotion in the info-celeb stakes, read *Mondo*. If you want to know who's hawking this week's hot product data, read *Wired*. Or for the serious aspiring cyberpunk, read both. They may be mostly hype, but they are also a guide to the expanded production of hype, which is precisely what the new information economy is all about.

The main thing one can observe about the expanded production of hype is that there are three kinds of info-hacking which cut it in the hype economy. One is hardware hacking — actually having technical skills. This is now pretty much essential. Like the old days of the art academies, you have to be down with some kind of technique. Modernist arm-waving is passé. There's no room any more for amateurs.

Of course you can specialise in data-hacking. If you can surf the endless wave of raw

data pumping out into the info-sphere every nanosecond, there's a place for you. This is not so much a skill in finding information. Any fool can do that now — the stuff is everywhere. The skill is, rather, in not getting bogged down in yesterday's news, in eliminating all the inessentials. It is not so much about finding data other people can't hack, as in recognising the significance of something else, right in front of everyone's noses, that everyone else has ignored. This process even has its own terminology: you can grep, grok or zen information. To 'grep' is to recognise patterns; to 'grok' is to drink it all in and distil the contours. To 'zen' is a far more elusive form of abduction for really hardcore data hackers. These are things they don't teach you in school.

Then there's a third option: style-hacking. Every cool info-hacker has her or his limitation, and that limitation is style. But somebody has to form the styles — the look, the package, the concept — for everyone else to wrap their bodgie bundle of skills or goods in. So if you know nothing of Unix and can't find a relevant piece of data in three minutes if your life depends on it, try style hacking. *Mondo 2000* is basically a style-hack mag. *Wired* is data-hack. Hardware-hackers pretend not to read either.

Needless to say, all this is somewhat

underdeveloped in Australia, but that will change. The publishers of *Rolling Stone* can see which way the wind is blowing, and have floated *Hyper*. It's a video games magazine with aspirations to something grander. Aspirations as yet unfulfilled, but worth keeping an eye on.

The video game culture covered by *Hyper* matters, because Nintendo and Sega are actually making new media happen. Like many new media, it starts as rudimentary trash aimed at the bottom end of the market. That's how cinema started. Sega is raising a generation of teenagers acultured to the post-broadcast age. Whatever form culture takes in the future, this is the audience it will have to understand.

Up the other end of the scale, check out the 'Art & Cyberculture' special issue of *Media Information Australia*. It's a good collection of articles by and for people trying to put the new hardware tools to creative use. New media are not going to go away. The clumsy goggle and gloves 'virtual reality' is neither virtual nor realistic and will probably disappear into the museums alongside the Vita-phone and 3-D movies. Yet ever more abstract, flexible, accessible media will continue to arrive on our doorsteps, whether we like it or not. Whoops, looks like the hype mode is back on again ...

AT SHORT NOTICE

THEATRE

Belvoir Street starts 1994 strikingly with a brochure by Baz Luhrmann, driven by black and white photos and interviews with the seasons' artists. Neil Armfield directs a potent *Hamlet* lineup with Richard Roxburgh, Jackie Mackenzie, Max Cullen, Gillian Jones & Jacek Koman; and there's Nicholas Parson's *Dead Heart* (with Black Swan); *Blue Murder* by bright new light Beatrix Christian; Steve Martin's *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* (with Play-box); a work to be named/created by Luhrmann and an innovative program of four works by Bogdan Koca, Leisa Shelton, Nina Veretennikova, and Michael Smith. Criss-crossing the theatre-performance line is Melbourne's IRAA Theatre with their latest, *The Bacchae*, *Burning by Water*, adapted from Euripides, Robbe-Grillet, Koltes & Joyce, directed by Renato Cuccolo with performers Nadja Kostich, Robert Meldrum, Catherine Simmonds and Tony Yap. From Feb 15, IRAA Theatre, The State Theatre Company of South Australia looks set for a whole new approach with a season that includes Louis Nowra's latest, *Crow*, Dymphna Cusack's unweildy but intense minor classic *Morning Sacrifice*, Fo's *The Accidental Death of an Anarchist* directed by Robyn Archer, a new musical from Dennis Watkins as well as the hosting of South American Teatro del Sur's *Warsaw Tango*. *Morning Sacrifice* opens with the Third International Women's Playwrights Conference (July 1-10) with the State also offering Dina Panozzo's *Varda Che Bruta ... Poretta* and Pamela Rabe in *A Room of One's Own*. First up from Penrith's Q Theatre, west of Sydney, is Kevin Nemeth's play 'about love, death and punting', *Winning Day*, directed by Helmut Bakaitis, March 2-27, followed by Ron Elisha's *Choice*, Nick Enright's *Good Works* and Nicholas Jose's *Dead City*. Tryst Theatre are bringing back their production of Berkoff's *East* to both Sydney and Adelaide audiences Feb to April, followed by Linden Wilkinson's *Nice Girls*, Mardi McConnochie's *Vestal Beach* and Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* in their 1994 Bondi Pavilion Theatre Season. Adelaide's Junction Theatre Company premieres *Square Pegs*, about mothers and their disabled children developed with writers Pat Rix and Kate O'Brien, Feb 16-March 12. No. PACT's freshly furnished theatre for young people in Sydney's Erskineville is not turning into just another venue, says new director Anna Mesariti. Although the scale of the studio theatre has been enlarged, can seat more than 100, has dressing rooms and an invaluable mezzanine level, and will be very attractive to companies visiting Sydney, it will continue to be home to young performers in a broadening range of multi-arts works.

MUSIC

The Michael Nyman Band gives some oomph to a staid Musica Viva season (after a refreshingly contemporary 1993) with one night stands in March: Adelaide 22, Melbourne 23, Sydney 26, Brisbane 27, Canberra 28. Yes, he will play *The Piano*. In Brisbane on Saturday March 5th, Roland Peelman conducts the Queensland Philharmonia Orchestra in *Australia Played* with works by Gordon Kerry, Carson Dron, Andrew Schultz and Craig Allister Young. MORE VIOLIN Violinist Aska Kaneko incorporates her grandmother's buyo dance (one of the paradoxes of contemporary Tokyo life is the way young people see traditional Japanese and other Asian music as 'oriental') into her musical grab-bag of Tokyo itself in her debut solo album *Multi Venus*. Besides her solo performances, which now include the sarangi, a bowed instrument from northern India, as well as electric and acoustic violin, Kaneko performs with Aska Strings, one of the country's most in-demand session string ensembles. Feb 7-12, Kaneko is in Sydney and is keen to indulge her penchant for improvisation with any local modern ensemble. (049) 587 399. The Strawberry Hill Hotel and The Harbourside Brasserie are two of the few venues that support contemporary music in Sydney. From Feb 7 the Brasserie and SIMA (Sydney Improvised Music Association) are hosting The Sydney What is Music? Festival 1994 featuring Roger Dean of Australysis, drummer Tony Buck, and guitarist Oren Amabarchi and drummer Rob Avenaim. The latter two have been involved in John Zorn's seminal 'game' piece for improvising musicians, *Cobra*, and are presenting it with Dean and sound sculptor Rik Rue. Brasserie (02) 252 3000 for details.

RADIO

If you read this in time you can catch a repeat of Louis Nowra's *Sydney* with Nick Enright, a big cast and music by Sarah de Jong. Radio National Sunday Feb 6, 2.54pm (sic) and part two the following Sunday. On that night, Feb 13, Brent Clough's production of *On First Looking into Blackman's Home Life*, a valuable companion to Richard Moore's acclaimed film, is broadcast 8.30-10.00pm with the author, Barbara Blackman, of this radio essay reflecting on her life with Charles. Features actors Lucy Bell and Brandon Burke. More Nowra: the acclaimed *Song Room*, Sunday Feb 20, Radio National, 2.54pm. The Listening Room, Monday 21 at 9.30pm has Kay Mortley's production of *Cling Clang*, a performance about sounds with the actors playing percussion, and also *Heavy Metals*, about the carillon and bell sounds. In a performance about the experience of reading, Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch respond to Trevor Hay's award winning *Tartar City Woman* (M.U.P.). The hour long program fea-

tures the writer and his subject, Wang Hsin-ping. Sunday on Radio National, March 6, 8.30pm.

DANCE

"Taste the pleasure, feel your desire" at the Victorian Art Centre from Feb 24 in choreographer Don Asker's latest: *Bend the Willow* with Fei Lee, Margaret Mills, Jane Mortiss, John Utans and Tina Yong with music by the Paranormal Music Society's Blair Greenberg and design by Michael Pearce. At the other end of the island the deepening affair with Asia persists with Chrissie Parrott's *Satu Langit* on 'the encroachment of modernity' into Surabaya and her vision of 'a philosophical coming together' of Javanese and Australian Cultures. Music by Sydney's Tony Lewis and with Arif Rofiq and Novianti Poedjastoeti of Surabaya's Citra Dance Studio. From March 3, Perth Festival. Sydney's The Performance Space offers *The Four Generations Project*, March 11-27 with Elizabeth Dalman, Patrick Harding-Irmer, Susan Barling, Gideon Obarzanek and Norman Hall. Sydney Dance Company's *Raw* premieres budding choreographers Carl Plaisted, Alfred Taahi, Brett Morgan, Bill Pengelly, Glen Murray and James Taylor at the Wharf Studio, Pier 4 from March 2-5.

PERFORMANCE

The Ivan Dougherty Gallery (part of the campus of the University of NSW College of Fine Arts) with the assistance of The Performance Space celebrates 25 years of Performance Art in Australia with turns by Barbara Campbell, Derek Kreckler, Jill Scott, Post Arrivalists, Pure Vermin Pride, Vivienne Binns, Joan Brassil, Joan Grounds, Lyndal Jones, Jill Orr, Mike Parr, Stelarc, Amanda Stewart, Penny Thwaite, Ken Ursworth, Arthur Wicks, VNS Matrix and others. Curated by Nick Waterlow. Performances May 24-29. In the meantime The Performance Space and Theatre is Moving presents *Steps*, performance/dance works curated and choreographed by Leisa Shelton, featuring new works by an impressive lineup: Matthew Bergan, Alison Brazier, Kate Champion, Roz Hervey, Nikki Heywood/Julian Knowles, Anna Sabiel/Pete Baxter. Feb 17-19, TPS is participating in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Arts Festival with Queer Screen, Feb 20 and two gay and lesbian companies including a version of Lorca's surrealist *The Public* performed as *Salacious*, playing Feb 23-27, is appears April 1-10, a 3-way performance, a sound dance-installation: dancer Tess de Quincey in collaboration with musician Julian Knowles and sculptor Stuart Lynch. TPS' Eventspace 1 for 1994 is free and features an unusually seasoned lineup for the first of this one-off series of try-outs: Eleanor Brickhill, Ros Crisp, Sue-ellen Kohler, William McClure, Alan Schacher and Yuji Sone. In Adelaide Doppio Teatro re-works its admired and travelled *Filling the Silence* for the Festival with Lucia Mastrantone and Linsey Pollack.

CINEMA

The cinema has gone performative, not only in Greenaway and Hartley but Campion (bring back *Sweetie!*), Moffatt and the NZ *Desperate Remedies*. UK's Mike Leigh and Ken Loach favour a realism so heightened that its theatricality shines through. The latest Loach, *Raining Stones*, boasting rampant improvisation from scripts given to performers just before scenes were shot unrehearsed, opens at the Dendy in Sydney. Kino in Melbourne and Metro in Brisbane in March. Women and Sexuality in Asian-Pacific Cinema is being presented by the Media Resource Centre as part of the Adelaide Festival. The program traces mythical, historical and contemporary portrayals of women in films by fifteen directors from Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines and includes Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses* (music by the Festival's featured Japanese composer Minoru Miki). Feb 26-March 11, Mercury Cinema.

OPERA

The experimental music theatre troupe Ihos Opera presents *Mikrovion (Mikrobion)* "the first ever opera to be written about HIV/AIDS", to be staged in Hobart with a cast of over fifty singers, actors, gymnasts, dancers and instrumentalists from around Australia from March 15th. Composed and directed by Constantine Koukias in collaboration with choreographer Christos Linou and visual artist Ann Wulff. Will doubtless be required viewing on the mainland at a later date. Lyndon Terracini, who has been invited to work on an opera directed by Peter Greenaway in Amsterdam, plays Kafka in Michael Smetanin and Alison Crogan's *The Burrow*. Fortunately for new opera lovers and Kafka devotees (well-served by *Kafka Dances*) Sydney gets two performances, March 10 and 12 at the Seymour Centre after the Perth Festival season.

VISUAL ARTS

Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation is hosting Karen Finley, Feb 18, Norwood Concert Hall, Jon Rose at The Synagogue, Feb 21, and exhibiting Mike Parr's *Labyrinth*, Feb 22-March 20. Sydney's T.A.P. Gallery exhibits a high turnover, often weekly, of photography and painting in their two gallery spaces and for the Taylor Square Arts

Festival sited in shop windows and public spaces. American poster artist Frank Kozik stars from Feb 15. Selenium in Redfern has works by Jane Cavanaugh, Anne Gaulton, Helen Pynor, Michelle Ivory and Anna Tow coming up. Cavanaugh's work supported by aerial performances by The Partyline's Simone O'Brien with Sue De Genarro. The Blaxland Gallery in Grace Brothers City Store is exhibiting *Remain in Light*, *Queer Photography* with works by 25 artists as part of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

FESTIVALS

Estia is the Greek Festival of Hobart and features Ihos Opera, a festival of Greek films at the State Cinema, visual arts and a street festival. 11-15 April. The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival from February 4-March 5 features *White Disabled Talent* with Greg Walloch from New York. Undeterred by cerebral palsy and through his work with the avant-garde and comedy, Walloch challenges preconceptions about the disabled. David Paul Jobling presents his two one act plays *Mortal Coils*, one of which draws on his own landmark case before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal in South Australia after he'd been sacked from teaching for writing for a gay publication. *Talk of Mad Women*, one of the hits of '93 and a sellout at the Melbourne Fringe Festival returns. The Adelaide Fringe front-runs circus theatre *Legs on the Wall's All of Me*, two shows by Emily Woof including *Sex III*—'girl becomes boy in trapeze dance love story', Karen Finley, 'comedy siren' Rachel Berger, *Lano* and *Woodley* directed by ex-Los Trios Ringbarkus and now Magpie director Neil Gladwin, and Sidetrack's tasty *Heaven*, performance-by-menu show. Late addition Tokyo Shock Boys arrive with quite a reputation for anarchic and masochistic performances and should be sought out. The Third International Women's Playwrights Conference in Adelaide, July 1-10, offers a feast of performances including those laid back, engaging if spooky American Indian shamans, Spiderwoman Theatre.

CABARET

The Sydney Opera House and Woolloomooloo's Tilbury hotel join forces to present *Legends* with Kerrie Biddell, Nancye Hayes, Toni Lamond and Jeannie Little. Back at the Tilbury, the return of the Sydney and Perth hit *Choux Choux Baguette*—'a legend in her own mind'. Written and performed by sometime Sydney Frontiers, Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tessoriero.

TRAINING

Sydney's Entr'acte are conducting their Autumn Movement Workshops in corporeal performance from April 11-June 2 in Woolloomooloo and in two intensive workshops at Sydney University, May 7 & 8, 21 & 22. Enquiries: ph (02) 358 5483 fax (02) 358 3235

ARTS POLITICS

Arts Action Australia, the non-partisan advocacy group for all of the arts issue a national newsletter and can be contacted through PO Box 1250, Potts Point NSW 2011 ph/fax 02 258 2685

CONTACTS

For information about the extensive activities, services and venues offered by the Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart phone 002 348 414 or write to 77 Salamanca Place, Hobart, Tasmania 7004



BY DESIGN

The multi-disciplinary design duo, Stefan Kahn and Michael Geissler, acclaimed for their work in furniture, interiors, exhibition and set design for contemporary performance company Open City, are poised on the edge of international success. Their set design for Adelaide based

SPORT

TEE OFF

with Vivienne Inch

Audience trounce Post Arrivalists 40/15

Wildcard performance outfit Post Arrivalists squandered match points in their recent fixture at the Hordern Pavilion by failing to run with the ball. They threw treacle and bran at the audience, hosed us with water, rolled drums at us, there was some inspired work with cars and ping pong balls, but when we passed the ball back where were they? Bobbing and weaving their way to the next segment like some time and motion team! In my opinion, the ratbags who did as they were told and bashed away into the night on industrial drums are no better than football hooligans. I threw away my pink ear plugs and ran screaming into the street — looking for action — but where do you go when you're dressed for a Post Arrivalists' gig (sensible shoes and old pants)?

I went home and watched replays of Carpet Burns. I am a big fan of Post Arrivalists — they are the Australian cricket team of performance: the super brats, the iron men and women of the site specific scene, but on this outing, I felt like I'd spent a night at a mini-golf tournament.

TOOTH AND CLAW

with Jack Rufus

Australia's ageing punk cricketer, Greg Matthews, has come full circle with his recent TV ads for hair rejuvenation. Our first ever cricketing punk, he shocked Australian fans in the early 80s with his spiky hair and flamboyant antics. More importantly, he terrorised the Poms with his brutal on-field chants of *No Future*, *Anarchy In The UK* and *God Save The Queen*. The Royalist pommies were frozen at the crease, stiff upper-lips trembling, as Matthews-the-demon wheeled in from the Paddington end, ear-ring glistening, spikes pointing straight at their craven English hearts!

Unfortunately, the later 80s were not so kind to our first spike-haired cricketer. His hair-line receded, the spikes flattened, and opposing batsmen began playing him with ease. Our balding punk cricketer suffered a form-slump. The low-point came in 1993, when the bald ex-punk was carried out of Perth's Hip-E nightclub by crestfallen former supporters.

But now the comeback! Our first ever ex-bald cricketing punk has emerged on TV with a new head of hair. Next the spikes, the glistening ear-ring and the comeback album. Then the roaring crowd, and the trembling Poms too terrified to hold the bat! The punk is back! No Future? We shall see!

dance company, Leigh Warren + Dancers' *Helix* was a big hit in Holland and Singapore late last year and added to the company's international push in '94.

Recently returned from Tokyo where they exhibited their latest furniture designs for NPG Australia at The International Furniture Fair, they see Japan featuring strongly on their agenda this year. In addition, representation by Via International, a major Tokyo/New York based company promises widespread opportunities over the next few years, while other hot issues include negotiations for exhibitions and events in Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong.

On the home front, the pair are busy working on new furniture designs, several interior design projects in Sydney and leading up to a major new interactive video/computer work for Open City later in the year.

Stefan and Michael constantly trade and borrow ideas from widely unrelated spheres and implement these in innovative contexts. A search to discover and reinterpret unfamiliar materials and technologies forms the basis of their creative efforts, always providing a fresh and unpredictable result.

REALTIME

