

RealTime

Performance

25 Years of Performance Art
Dyke Performance

Theatre

International Women
Playwrights' Conference
Currency Press
Mad Love
Sarah de Jong
IRAA

Techno-Arts

VNS Matrix
WBK Theatre
Survival Research
Laboratories

Dance

From New York

Acting

Brophy's *Body Melt*
Anthony Wong's Guide to Acting

Electronic Arts

Audio, Film and TV

Plus

The Very Small Sports Column
At Short Notice

free

Theatre
Performance
and the
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Arts

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Issue Number 2 of RealTime is a constellation of Spaces - audio (ABC's The Listening Room and Radio Eye), theatre (Sarah de Jong; Mad Love), underground (Dyke Performance), cyberspace (VNS Matrix), touring (Handspan), visits (Survival Research Laboratories to Sydney's west, Stephen Petronio to Tasdance), exchanges (Vienna and Melbourne through IRAA Theatre), galleries (25 Years of Performance Art), audience space (the viewing boundaries crossed by George Papanicolau), Australians in Paris and new dance moves in New York, a national jazz label, and the International Women Playwrights Conference in Adelaide opening out to shamans, storytellers and new languages.

Equally, this is an issue about the performance practices that occupy these spaces. The 'puppet' actor that film director Philip Brophy yearns for, the vision of the actor crossing race and gender sketched out by the eclectic but Method-keen Anthony Wong; the needs, fantasies and politics of Dyke Performance with its debt to burlesque and drag; the representations of self by the writer-performer (Virginia Baxter and Clare Grant's *Talking Back*); the history and tensions in performance art in this country as documented by Colin Hood and photographer Heidrun Lohr, all form the centre of this issue of *RealTime* and flow out into the other pieces.

RealTime is about performance -- in Theatre, Performance Art, Performance, Dance, the Visual Arts, Music, Film, Television, Radio, The Techno-arts and the Everyday. It is about performance in the context of the national arts and of cultural and political issues. *RealTime* offers information and critical surveys, but it does not review performances. There are simply too many to cover in the current explosion of national activity. More important, the expectations that go with reviewing- of having decisions made for you about the value of art forms and whether a show is worth seeing or not - are being challenged. *RealTime* lets you know what is happening across the nation; names, forms, events, experiences you might not have encountered before.

After the success of our trial edition earlier this year, *RealTime* goes bi-monthly for four issues, welcoming writers from Adelaide, Brisbane, Wollongong, Canberra and with contributions on the way from Alice Springs, Perth, Darwin, Hobart and beyond. We are expanding our distribution beyond the cities and regional centres

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Body Melt: Acting Degree Zero

Art-splatter auteur Philip Brophy tells John O'Neill why he casts his films in the ad breaks.

Philip Brophy cast his first feature film, the schlock horror movie *Body Melt*, from television advertisements. "If I see most actors in an Australian movie I groan; I think: 'Oh, God'," he says. "What I'm groaning at is what most people see as a sign of quality; some sort of ABC-drama aesthetic. I'd rather some Martians just come down and blew them all away."

And, in a sense, that is what happens in *Body Melt*. Brophy's film is centred on a cul-de-sac in an archetypal Australian suburb, Pebbles Court, where the residents have swallowed both the promotional hype and pills of a drug company which promises "cognition enhancement", not at all unlike Prozac. The only problem is a wilfully withheld missing ingredient. As a result, the pills lead to horrific mutation and essentially turn people inside out. A jilted, similarly mutated genius who lives in the country town of "Nowhere" is ultimately revealed to be responsible.

The art of performance was, for Brophy, at its highest point in a scene where a young married couple, played by Brett Climo and Lisa McClune (a Coles New World girl from television advertisements and now a star in *Blue Heelers*), are confronted with the consequences of the drug. McClune, eight months' pregnant, discovers her unborn child is feeding off her. The genesis

of the sequence was a television commercial for health insurance starring another, since successful drama and film actor, Zoe Carides.

"She did this amazing ad that is just so disgusting," says Brophy. "She's down because she's just had a baby in hospital. It's all white. It's just got this sterility to it. She's handed her baby which she sees for the first time and then she's unsure what to do. They've got this music with a woman that sounds like she's orgasming while she sings breathlessly and there's a tinkling piano. It's a soft-rock ballad and then, suddenly, the baby smiles and Zoe breaks into tears and touches the little baby's forehead with her forefinger. I thought: 'Great, this is the person to drop her placenta.'"

Carides was unavailable but McClune (Cheryl in the film) was an equally "nice" stand-in whose performance enhanced the original. "Dr?" she asks on the phone, "Is it possible to drop your placenta one month prior to birth?" Her unborn child then appears to rape her before the placenta suffocates her husband.

Brophy's previous film was a 57-minute piece, *Salt, Saliva, Sperm and Sweat* which is now available on video. Ironic and funny, it is driven by a synthesised musical sound track and Brophy's actors, principally Jean

Kitson and Philip Dean, utter just 11 lines. They include: "Well, God, piss on me", and "Knock your scrot on that dick-twister."

"It's virtually a form of puppetry," Brophy says of film acting generally, and *Salt, Saliva* in particular. "It's not that far from pornography: 'Okay, pan back, right. Okay jerk off a bit to get an erection. You up yet? You up? Ok, quick, go in now. You scream. You scream. You scream.' It's not far removed from a dramatic situation where a director's told the actor: 'Ok, you come back to this mark. You stand there. You say that line, then turn. We'll do the focus-pull on the lenses at that point, we'll shift the reflector boards around and you move across there as the track comes back.' Whether they're saying: 'I think we should get a divorce' or having their head dunked into a bowl of shit (as occurs in *Salt, Saliva*), the content of that action becomes slightly nullified or over-ridden by the mechanics of the whole situation."

Salt, Saliva is a series of days in the life of "The Man" played by Philip Dean. "Philip always struck me as being like one of the Thunderbirds. I don't like actors who are in my face, the whole Method approach. This emotional outpouring; this angst ridden identification with the on screen person etc." Brophy says. As a result, Dean's most contemplative and demanding performance moments occur while shitting - a role Brophy acknowledges a great character actor like Robert de Niro could do well. But naturalism is a style to which Brophy doesn't aspire.

"That's only one option of how you can actually look at these strange, granular, floating, abstract, pseudo-photographic, ghostly images of people on a screen," he says of "realism". "In essence they are highly iconic and hieroglyphic anyway, just

by their photographic status, despite their fleshy appearance."

The consequence is that in *Body Melt* he has cast soap stars and other actors for their preconfigured iconography, and the icon which looms largest is Gerard Kennedy of *Division Four* and *Homicide* fame.

"It goes back to this artificial logic of the whole film," Brophy says. "Why have a cop in a film that really is only a plot device and try to pretend that somehow the person's a character. Why not just go straight to an iconic instance of copness and put them in?"

Brophy also casts on the basis of voice.

"The bulk of all changes in anyone's expression doesn't particularly come from their face," he says. "I think their face is just a slight adjunct to the much greater range of tonal differences that happen in projection: shifts in pitch, phrasing, beats and what not. The projection, quality and delivery of the voice gives a much more precise impression of what the character is. The face doesn't move around as much. This is marked when you're watching something on a screen where the face just hovers there in a sense and is very often quite internalised in its projection."

Body Melt was shown at the Melbourne Film Festival in June where, according to Brophy, it achieved the highest attendance of any film offered. It has been sold to distributors in New York, England, Canada, Mexico, Turkey, Cyprus, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, and negotiations continue with Europe and Japan. In Australia, Brophy and producer Rod Bishop are organising theatrical release themselves. It is slated to be among the opening films screened by the refurbished AFI cinema in Sydney in October and will be shown in other capital cities thereafter.

How to Play a Coolie and Win an Academy Award

Anthony Wong

An outline of the long threatened, potentially best-selling how-to book from a successful Australian performer who has blurred the borders between races, genders, philosophies and theatrical practices. Will Currency Press have the courage to pick it up? Will you have the courage to put it down and...transform?

Chapter 1. BACKGROUND.

Understand your background. I come from a background of emotional restraint. I had to work for spontaneity. I was always articulate but not brave, I had to learn to express the grief and the anger inside me. At high school I devoured books like *The Plus Factor* and *Pulling Your Own Strings*. Don't be afraid of books like this. Don't restrain emotional energy. I always admired Greeks and Italians for their expressiveness and release. It was a joy to be in *Wogarama*. But I don't try to be like them. Find your own way.

Chapter 2. TRAINING.

Do not separate 'becoming an artist' from 'developing as a human being.' Train broadly in all kinds of craft skills and psychological approaches. The anti-allergenic approach: break down resistances. Peel away the layers. Explore the head and the heart. Explore archetypes, live them out, 'own the warrior' - assert yourself, train in martial arts. Play Gandhi - look at your resistances to love. It's an alchemical art - take yourself, add a script, a role, a director etc. and transform. Be prepared to transform - if there's a role you're offered in a good play and you don't

like it, what don't you like about yourself - are you one of those doomed actors who wants the audience to love you? Try Strasberg, Laban, traditional arts (I went to Korea for workshop experience of Noh, Kabuki and Peking Opera). Be eclectic, seek out teachers and influences, don't close yourself off, don't corner yourself with one approach, one truth. As in life.

Chapter 3.

SELF & PERSONAE:

Play soldiers, serial killers, rapists. Explore the shadow side. You as an actor have a role in bringing buried material from the unconscious. You're chosen to be a shaman to experience all the public is allergic to, to break up the polarities of an overly judgmental world. Love every character you play. You are a Buddhist. Ditch Anglo-Australian hostility to the Method, to opening yourself up to emotional and spiritual possibilities. Don't think you have a self and that's that.

Chapter 4. DIET.

Experience being a vegetarian, go macrobiotic, seriously. See what you become. Eat meat again, eat the local food, ingest Australia (in Adelaide recently to perform Elisabeth Egeloff's *The Swan* in the State Theatre Company of South Australia's critical success - meaning a play that the

critics see but no-one else - the author became enamoured of the aboriginal-influenced cuisine currently seducing Adelaideans - who dine artfully and therefore are in no need of the theatre). Chapter 5. AUDITIONS.

Beliefs create reality. Never believe you don't have a chance. Don't go into audition as if into a fight. I never go in thinking, 'I'm an Asian'. I have gone into an audition in a dress (for *M. Butterfly*). I enjoyed doing it. I wasn't doing it just for the audition. Don't whinge. Your relationship with the industry is your responsibility. Am I an opportunist riding a wave of cross gender, cross race roles? The wave was already happening and these are only a few of my roles. I play roles that challenge me, e.g., a beautiful swan in *The Swan*, Greg Foo Yong, a Greek and a Vietnamese cleaning lady in *Wogarama*, a cynical Canadian actor in *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of*

grew up without on Australian stage, film and TV. In *Wogarama* I played with stereotypes, laughed at my own kind (part of breaking prejudice is to be able to laugh at yourself), satirised them, played with prejudice. Not that I could do this as a way of working for a long time. As Mary Koustas said to me of Effie, 'The role is only one vehicle'. Keep changing - no one fixed form, no one handle.

6. CROSSING GENDER

is not only fun, not only revealing, but it battles sexism and homophobia. Be Buddhist - you are not who you think you are, identity is an illusion, play out other identities. Sexism and homophobia come from fixed, polarised views of the world and the actor can dissolve these.

7. CAREER PATHS.

Think plural. Always plural. Many paths. Many skills. Many roles.

8. CONCLUSION.

In the end this book is my truth, not yours, but it might help you start.

DOUBTS. Am I into spiralling relativism - always shifting roles, training, diet, gender? No. I am guided by my philosophy which allows for transformation in life, on the stage. I have strong beliefs but not a fixed image of myself. I don't see the world or myself, therefore, in terms of opposites. It's not a matter of "Asian but Australian", "male but female" but rather "Asian and Australian", "Male and female".

WHERE NEXT? I want to play Hamlet. I'm waiting. In the meantime I want to have a break (after 26 roles straight) and push my musical side. There's always an aspect you haven't developed. Simmering on the back burner is a work I'm writing where I play myself. A change from interpreting other people's creations? Yes and no because every role is an interpretation of myself.



Anthony Wong in *Sex Diary of an Infidel*

Jeff Busby

Love, a ruthless merchant banker in *The Temple*, an Australian born Chinese gay in *Blood and Honour*, a Filipino transsexual prostitute in *Sex Diary of an Infidel*, an 87 year-old Hirohito in *The Emperor Regrets*. 5. BREAKING STEREOTYPES. I want to be seen as a terrific actor of any number of roles, not as a great Asian actor. To play across race breaks prejudice. And I want to provide the role models of Asians as intelligent, sexual and complex, models I

Pap Smears and Whipped Cream: Dyke Performance in the 90s

Novelist Fiona McGregor likes to watch.

'Nightclub shows are important to keep doing because so much of the gay and lesbian community is defined by clubbing. It's the space where we exist.'

'It's the culture shaping space.'
- Luka and Groovii Biscuits of *Queer Theatre*

A woman smeared in white body paint, with black and silver armour-plates attached to her shoulders and shins, comes across the stage. From each finger of her giant claw-like hands sprouts a rope, and as she creeps further into the spotlight, waving

I spoke to them before the party, they were in their fourth hour of what would be over six hours preparation time. K-Os did their first 'avant-garde hair performance' about a year ago, as a promotion for the opening of Bernice and Paul (Khali's) hairdressing salon of the same name. While they quickly realised it wasn't the most effective way of bringing in clientele, they enjoyed themselves so much they continued to perform whenever asked.

Chris is the only member of K-Os who identifies as a dyke performer. 'Everyone's a

doing an aerobics performance, or a strip show, or that sort of thing, it's really more concentrated on bending people's minds.'

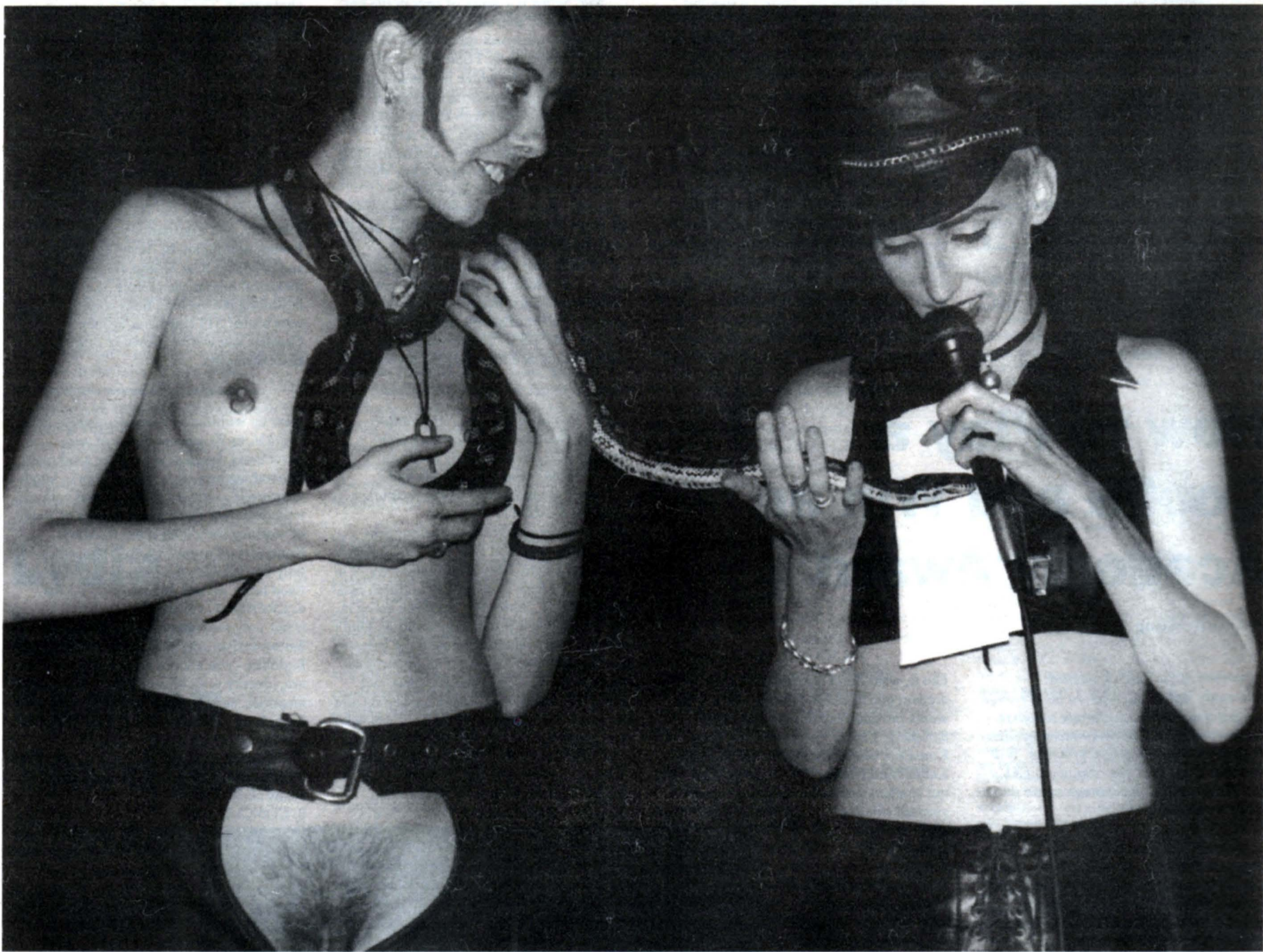
Back at *Bent*, later in the morning, the crowd presses towards the stage once again. There is a table covered in jars of 'preserving fluid' and, to one side of the stage, tulle curtains obscuring a bed. Enter a girl with blackened eyes and a torch, wearing a safari hat, an orange sequined G-string and platforms.

The bug-collector prowls across the stage, finding a giant millipede, a spider and

through the jar.

Dyke sexuality is central to the performances of Sex Intents (the bug-collector) and Glita Kitty Lita (the bug). Their ethos is anybody can get up and play out their fantasy, express their bent, whatever it may be. The aim is liberation, sexual, psychic, dyke-ic, female.

Dyke performance wasn't born yesterday. In the seventies, dykes were known to perform occasionally with Sylvia and The Synthetics, a drag outfit. There was



Ms Wicked 1993; Larissa and Angie

C. Moore Hardy

these monstrous hands, we see she is a puppeteer, leading a human puppet by the hair. The puppet, in a red satin ballgown, wields a pair of giant scissors in each hand and one by one snips her tresses - half plastic tubing, half rope - free.

The music is deafening, Gothic; the lights eery, epileptic. The puppeteer and the puppet wave their ropes and scissors as though in a trance while two people in black drag a pod onto the stage. The pod opens and Khali emerges: a male body coated in dense electric blue paint, with four arms and a large headress. An evil clown with a copious fluorescent yellow Afro capers around like the conductor of this strange ritual.

This is K-Os, a performance group appearing at a dance party called *Bent*, held at the Cellblock in East Sydney Tech. When

lesbian at heart,' he grins. Or perhaps it's just the huge clown's grin painted from cheekbone to cheekbone.

Julie and Bernice consider their shows go far beyond sexuality, and that their lesbianism is immaterial to what they are doing. On the other hand, they maintain they interact in a particular way as a group because they are queer. Part of their intention is to break down the stereotypical view of gay men and lesbians. 'K-Os is getting back to a performance era that has been lost over the last few years,' says Julie. 'Over the last twelve months it seems to be coming back as an unconscious collective here, or with people like Queer Theatre. It all seems to be in the gay and lesbian community. I think it's a resurrection of an artistic form of thinking: rather than getting up there and just displaying bodies, or

other creatures. When 'Single Bed' begins, the biggest creature of all rouses and parts the curtains. This lip-synching, gyrating, glitter-smeared bug with her blue and orange antennae and platforms is pursued around the stage by the bug-collector, who eventually throws a net over her then tears off her wings.

The bug-collector clips a bright cord to the bug's labia piercings then loops it around her legs and her back. The bug squirms on the bed, thighs spread, genitals gaping at the audience. The bug-collector puts on a glove then inserts a clear plastic speculum into the bug's vagina. She gets out her cottonwool buds and takes a pap smear, then she inserts the torch which flashes on and off at the audience. Finally, the bug-collector brings out a giant plastic jar and lowers it over the bug. They kiss

a star performer called Yogi Bear who did Elvis and Roy Orbison, complete with feigned male wanking, and another woman who did Doris Day's 'Whip Crack-Away'.

But in the late eighties there were next to no spaces where non-separatist dykes who felt oppressed by austere feminism could get up and do their own thing. Some of them decided to do something about it.

Things had already begun to move a little. Lisa and Jasper (then Francine) Laybutt founded *Wicked Women*, a dyke erotica magazine in 1988. In the same year a couple of bright boys on the organising committee of Sleaze Ball invited dykes to stage shows. Lisa, Francine, Anna Munster and a fourth woman staged a whipping S/M scene on a podium above the dancefloor.

It was probably the first of its kind: while poofers had been doing this sort of

stuff for each other in backrooms for years, dykes had never done it so publicly before to such a huge, mixed crowd. And, possibly, never since. There were other displays on scaffolding all around the dancefloor in the Hordern, such as a woman being put into bondage and a drag headmistress disciplining a naughty schoolboy with a hard-on. Anna: 'I think it was probably the sleaziest Sleaze Ball there's ever been.'

In 1989, Angie Dowling and Isabell Kormos ran a weekly club called Bitchin'. Izzy: 'Boys had all these places to go. They had bars and drag shows, but dykes had nothing apart from Ruby Reds, which we thought was a bit run of the mill. We were sick of waiting around so we thought we'd try and provide it ourselves.'

They also organised and performed at Stimulation, a women's sex party in Melbourne in 1989. One memorable performance was done to Prince's 'Cream' at the men's sauna where Stimulation 2 was held a couple of years later. It involved beehive wigs, moustaches, mixmasters, and jugs and bowls of cream. They finished the number by smearing cream all over their now almost naked bodies, then pouring the remainder into their shorts. Needless to say, the audience creamed themselves.

At Mardi Gras time in 1989, *Wicked Women* staged *Be Wicked I*, a party at Syds Warehouse. There were subsequently two parties - *Debauche* and *Burlesque* - organized at The Gunnery with Angie and Izzy. The performances included one of Lisa's first in which she was carried through the crowd as a cat in a cage, with Francine as the whip-wielding lion-tamer in uniform.

Lisa: 'We were doing pretty full-on S/M at that stage, so it was like acting out what we were doing at home. We were also influenced by some movies like *Salon Kitty*, and there was Mr Drummer (gay men's leather competition).'

All Wicked events were mixed: this was policy from the beginning. Another policy that was strictly adhered to was that all sexual acts were consensual and safe. These parties killed two birds with one stone: money was raised to enable the lesbian erotica magazine, *Wicked Women*, to survive, and spaces were created where dykes could perform.

It was no mean feat to not only get up on stage and express explicit, unapologetic dyke sexuality; but also encourage anyone and everyone to do the same. Although much opposition to these displays came from dykes themselves, a can of perverts had been opened: pretty soon you couldn't keep them off the stage. Almost every dyke on the scene, at some stage or other, strutted her stuff or offered her body as a prop.

Some people lamented the move beyond raw S/M and leather in the Ms Wicked performances which came with populism. Comments Azaria, from Queer Theatre: 'When Groovii and I were doing performances for Wicked Women, a lot of people were doing really hard core S/M leathery stuff, and good fantasies. But Groovii and I were going, 'Hey, your fantasy doesn't have to be rubber or leather or fist-fucking. It can be, you know, a tupperware party or a bowl of jelly. We eroticize everything.'

Though it never really lost its street cred, the theatrical turn the event quickly took was particularly evident in Melbourne, home of actor Maude Davies and holder of the Ms Wicked title in 1991. Contestants came from other areas of the performing arts too - Skye Wansey, now acting in television and film, won the title in 1990; Virginia Barratt from VNS Matrix entered in 1993.

This year organisers Jasper and Lisa have decided not to hold the Ms Wicked competition. Lisa: 'I think that Ms Wicked has served its purpose and it's come full circle, and that's one of the reasons that it's complete, it's finished. Now as a performer, it's still about celebrating your fantasy world, and accepting that whatever you fantasise about is hot, and that it's fine.'

Ironically, while some people now

complain they are tired of sex shows and want something different, others got such a taste for them that they have come to expect this every time they see a performance. The demand for sex can be just as inhibiting to performers as the condemnation.

'They don't seem to see beyond the sex,' says Glita. 'They just see the sex and they don't see the story.'

'Sometimes they act like drunken yobbos,' says Anna Munster. 'I may as well



Butchered Babies 1992

be doing a strip at the Cross, the way they scream out, 'Show us yer tits'.

Anna continues to perform in a variety of places, and says she would like to move beyond the physical body as an erotic focus without losing sexual content. Her fantasy performance in Ms Wicked 1991 incorporated video, and remains one of her personal favourites. She was one of the four writers featured in *Kink*, a book published by Wicked Women in 1993, and has used her texts in performances.

Dykes also perform with poofs. Says Lisa who performed in Kinky Galore at Dragtrade, a club at Blackmarket: 'We always did a big number with the drag queens, and we had quite elaborate costumes. Sometimes we were boys, sometimes we were girls, and sometimes we were drag queens, you know, girls as boys as girls. Genderfuck.'

Zoe Hardman is a 19 year old professional dancer and choreographer who has choreographed shows at The Albury, DCM and The Exchange and will choreograph this year's Sleaze Ball show. When one of the drag queens left The Albury a few months ago, Zoe took her place on a regular basis. Many of the clientele assume she is a boy or a tranny, 'but then once they know that I am a girl, I think they get into it even more...because I don't dance like a girl at the Albury. I dance like a drag queen.'

Zoe is performing with two of Sydney's best drags, Lady Bump and Maude. But while many drag queens remain hostile to dykes, these two are not only dyke friendly, they exhibit a healthy sense of the ridiculous and an empathy for hairy armpits and idiosyncratic performance styles.

Queer Theatre is a gay and lesbian performance group which includes three women, Groovii Biscuits, Azaria, and Indigo, and three men, Trash, Alley Kat and Luka. All shows are group efforts, with two different members inventing a theme for a show each week. An enormous amount of work is involved: these shows are like mini musicals, with elaborate soundtracks, costumes and props.

Their shows provide an all-too-rare critique of received ideas about identity in the queer community. Like Kinky Galore, they blow away conventional notions of drag without sacrificing high camp. They play with this and other established genres of gay and lesbian performance, adding pantomime and political satire.

Azaria: 'We're fucking the gender-fuck.'

Alley Kat: 'A lot of the time we're caricatures. There's realness there, but at the same time we're caricatures. It's very over the top, our style of theatre.'

Hostility to Queer Theatre's project comes from both dykes and poofs - dykes because they feel alienated by the gay male culture of drag and podium dancers, poofs because they're resistant to performance work which moves outside traditional drag routines. The rapid growth of Mardi Gras

can't cope with us or won't recognise us is that we're not just performers, we're -" Groovii: "commenting on our community..."

Azaria: "and confronting it and not making it nice and glossing it over and not saying, 'Wow, isn't this great. We're all so gay and we're all so glamorous!' It's not like that, there are some really ugly sides to it. But we do find fun and humour in it...."

Once upon a time, the fairies of the Fruits of the Forest Bordello laughed and played on the Fairy Golden Mile all day long, until the wicked clone queens came and drove them all away.

The curtain parts, revealing a band of garish, camp creatures playing instruments and gyrating happily. Gender hardly matters: they are all ludicrously attired in tutus, wings, platforms, catsuits, mini-skirts and wigs as sickeningly colourful as a shelf of Vok liqueurs.

Business has been slow lately. A backpacker in a Union Jack singlet hikes haplessly into the bordello and the fairies leap upon him and begin to provide multiple sexual services. He protests. As strobes flash, the fairies cast a spell on him. 'What are we going to do with him?' lip-synchs Groovii, the madame with red glitter lips and eyebrows that disappear pompously into her hairline. 'We don't want to turn him into another one of those wind-screen washers at Taylor Square ...' The strobes flash again, the music goes wild, and the backpacker awakens declaring everlasting dedication to the Fruits of the Forest Bordello. A sandwich board advertising their perverse services is placed around his neck, and everybody lives happily ever after.

Fiona McGregor's first novel *Au Pair* was published in 1993. Her second book *Suck My Toes* has just been published by McPhee Gribble.

Working Girls

Peta Tait reviews dyke performance at New York's Wow Cafe

Comic forms dominate New York's queer-lesbian theatre. I saw a range of performances in East Village venues, including the Wow Cafe, last year which suggest that queer humour provides the 'comic relief' within discursive representations of sexual identity. Queer comedy has infiltrated even that most pristine of heterosexual institutions, the office secretary. In the Five Lesbian Brothers production, *The Secretaries*, the neat "post-Chanel" skirts and jackets are authentic, but the lesbian bodies are subversively resistant. The hysterical edge to the secretaries' obsession with 'looking right' - perversity masquerading as social conformity - reveals a queer appropriation of feminine style.

The self-imposed restrictive behaviours of the secretaries leave them in a condition of unfulfilled desire. The four secretaries are ruled by a head-secretary. As the 'top', she gains sadistic pleasure from manipulating their sexualised adoration of her immaculately dressed body. In a frenzy of repressed appetites the secretaries scheme to outwit the authoritarian regime of women's magazines and their prescriptive calorie counts. Lisa Kron's character desperately tries to hide her losing battle with her weight to avoid the inevitable shame of her fall from grace. Her binge-eating coincides with the excess of a one-night stand enjoyed by two of the secretaries at the local motel. Their subsequent disgrace and chastisement arises from their failure to resist temptation.

The secretaries work in an office attached to a lumber mill which is the main source of employment in the small town. Their checked shirts and orange hats are trophies awarded by the top for the achievement of an unspecified goal.

A newcomer (Dominique Dobell), envied for her slimness, is trying to become secretary of the month. She wants to wear a checked shirt and orange hat like the others. Her efforts to please are rewarded and she is let into the secretaries' secret. But she will not be accepted as a full member of the group till she has chainsawed an unsuspecting lumberjack to pieces at 'that time of the month'.

The Secretaries was one of the most conceptually interesting productions I saw at the Wow Cafe although its execution did not escape the theatrical awkwardness of much of the work at that venue. The comedy revolves around the suppressed aggression of 'docile bodies' which manifest passive obedience to an invisible authoritarian male boss. A vaguely hostile male world threatens to disrupt their manic efforts to maintain order. The synchronised typing disciplines the body as knees come together and fingers move rapidly across the keyboard.

The violence which underlies the appearance of calm warns that this queer comedy should not be mistaken for a light hearted romp. If the sexuality of the secretaries remains unspoken, the verbal text outlines explicit acts of violence and delivers up a theatre of the grotesque. The secretaries are collectively exposed as an out-of-control monster misshapen by conformity to the ideal of impossible body shapes. But I was unsettled by this notion of the hapless secretary as murderer. I found the performance extremely funny but at the same time I felt disturbed by a linear narrative without surprises, which presents an act of violence as the realisation of a queer aesthetic.

Post Pissed Off

Dance choreographer Stephen Petronio is on his way to Tasdance. Karen Pearlman catches up with him in New York.

Stephen Petronio doesn't want to talk about it. But he's affable and articulate and eventually just outspoken enough that he can't resist. He says his dances are ideas-driven and, given the velocity of the dances, his ideas must be powerful fuel. But, he says, if he talks about ideas people look for their illustration in the dances and "you can't read kinetic information like a book - it addresses another part of the mind. Ideas style the body." At one point, he thought he was so successful that he could say anything he wanted about himself ("I'm a fag, big deal. I'm not going to shut up about it, but I'm not going to let that message consume me.") But he discovered that, like Icarus -

who could dash around the heavens in a similarly dazzling, fleeting, audacious way - he could hurt himself by getting too "hot".

The King Is Dead, the latest Petronio project, is about the death of the masculine icon. It's about the idea of the death of the hero for him personally, as a sign and as a social entity. The process - neurological, emotional, formal or accidental - of transforming an idea into dance is hardly mysterious. But it is a voyage of discovery. He can't - or won't - say how he gets from idea to action, only that it is a mark of success to come to a physical conclusion.

But he will talk about physical metaphors. *The King Is Dead*, he says, is

full of the "pelvis receding", which is the opposite of the classic male thrusting male pelvis. Perched on a fire engine red bar stool in a Manhattan, Mexican, unselfconsciously multicultural, noisy, cheap bar, Petronio rolls his head down to meet his tailbone. It's an action which reveals an abandon and conscious ease with physical danger. (Anyone else would fall off the bar stool or at least have to uncross their legs and put down their Margherita).

He has a soft spot in his heart for Tasdance, the first company ever to commission a work from him almost ten years ago.

When Petronio arrives in Tasmania in August, the Tasdance dancers will undergo endless repetition to get the idiosyncrasy of an action right. The barely perceptible glee with which he admits it will be torture for them is replaced by a rueful grimace when he confesses that, no matter how often he shows the movement to any dancer and

how diligently they practice it, fifteen per cent of the nuance will be lost in translation.

His concern with speed and virtuosity, he admits, is very American. Certainly dance aficionados from other cultures have labelled his work "very New York" because of its concern with "more, more, more - more speed, more space, more money, more success".

Petronio is not concerned about the international epidemic of his trademark "fluidity of shape". He's not possessive, though he does think that if people are going to knock particular aspects of his work off they should acknowledge their source. "It's a language," he says of contemporary dance, "people should use it....we're living in a postmodern culture." And the more that people speak the language, the more people he'll be able to 'talk' to without words getting him into trouble.

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Bill T. Jones (right), 'War Between the States'

Michael O'Neil

Re: Cycles

Dancer Karen Pearlman of That Was Fast surveys New Expressionism in the New York dance scene.

Here in New York, dance trends tend to have a ten year cycle. Movement idioms change like shoe fashions. We get ten years of Reeboks and Nikes and now we're back in platforms.

"After Trish Brown" has been the flavour of the last decade. Fluid, overlapping actions flowing effortlessly from dancers who swing, glide, toss, swoop, flick, and curl but never punch, strike, squeeze, hold or grab. Ironically, this movement style emanated from a cerebral woman working on formal concerns who may have agreed with Yvonne Rainer when she declared "say no to sensuality." But in the past decade the movement (not the formal concerns) became the sexy way to dance.

The popularity of the style has peaked now, and will soon be on the decline. It is as much a cliché to the eye at this point as cross-dressing was a few years ago. The movement language was originally evolved as a tool to address formal concerns. These formal concerns have not been passed along to choreographers with the vocabulary. So the movement language, which was so laden with meaning and intention in the hands of its author, has become gibberish in the works of a fifth generation of followers - who seem like children imitating the words of their elders without knowing what they mean.

The release techniques, in which Trisha Brown and company train, remain very popular with dancers. (They can add years to a dancer's career and many options to their movement vocabulary.) But even Trisha Brown is becoming less like Trisha Brown. Reviews of her latest work describe moments of stillness, strongly articulated, almost semaphoric gestures, a new (for her) bound quality which wouldn't have been seen earlier. One wonders how masters of dance feel about their followers. Perhaps Trisha Brown is evolving in part in response to the morass of clichés others have made of

her deeply felt innovations.

If movement languages tell us something about contemporary social concerns, Trisha Brown and her first generation of followers (Stephen Petronio et al) articulated a glorious, impersonal complexity, a fluidity and overlapping of actions as smooth and as dangerous as the computer technology spinning out of control on Wall Street.

What is replacing this? "New Expressionism" is the phrase today. It means dance has an emotional edge again, a merciful antidote after ten years of soft, seamless movement. And "New Expressionism" is coinciding with an increase in the presence or visibility of companies led by African American, Asian, Hispanic or other "non-dominant culture" men and women. They are looking at a mix of social issues, gender issues, personal stories and cultural contexts in work that freely mixes dance, story, song and any other elements that might be effective.

The leading company in this "genre" is the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Bill T. Jones has actually been defining new actions in dance for 20 years. (Just as Trisha worked for 20 or so years before she was "discovered" by hordes of young wannabees.) Bill T. Jones has broken through as a leader not by being the first to try new mixes of movement stories and social themes, but because of the quality of the work.

Unlike Trisha Brown, Bill T's contribution is not a movement style. For movement he takes what he needs. One minute he requires soft and released - surrender in emotional terms - and the next demands furious attack. In dancers he wants the embodiment of all possible dualities - screams and whispers, amazons and sylphs, people who can be both mud wrestlers and ballerinas in action.

In these politically correct, multicultural times one could dismiss Bill T. Jones' current popularity by saying it's just that he is HIV positive, black and angry. But I propose it is more than that - he is an original artist. And, as such, he is leading a movement which will spawn followers and eventually clichés. What an artist of this stature does is to grasp and express the bigger picture. Bill T. doesn't choreograph a dance about AIDS. He goes back to the Bible, to the Book of Job, and asks how can we have faith when we are visited by plagues. In *The Last Supper At Uncle Tom's*

Cabin he crashed together the experience of slaves with that of Jesus; somehow he made a meaningful semiclash of martyrdoms, so that we could look at our current predicament in the context of endless human suffering and momentary panaceas. He says his new work *Still/Here* is not going to be about how he lives with HIV, but

about how we all live with death. It will be about survival, and it will no doubt be an uplifting encounter with pain, ecstasy and lunacy.

Choreographers/movement theatre artists "arriving" in the wake of Bill T. Jones include people like David Rousseve (African American and gay), Jowale Willa Jo Zollar (an African-American woman, leading a company of all women), Patricia Hoffbauer (Brazilian), Amy Pivar (Jewish American and gay), and many more. Their companies have names like Reality or Urban Bush Women.

These artists are distinguishable from the "pants off" political work of the 80s by the evolution of their craft, and the vulnerability found in their characters. Their take on sexuality/homosexuality, AIDS, cultural difference and social injustice is not as strident as it might have been a few years ago. Sweet stories, wit and self-mocking, and sensuality are evident too. Having a Democrat in the presidency means there is a less clear cut enemy in power, and Bill Clinton is trying to address a lot of the same social issues as these choreographers. So perhaps artists feel they don't have to scream to be heard. In fact, the very popularity of this kind of work at the moment means that they are being heard more than most people, and this creates a bit of a paradox when they talk about under-representation.

What is interesting about this movement is that the words used in the mix of dance and text cannot become meaningless in the same way that movement languages can become gibberish. The words are spoken, usually in simple declarative sentences in English. But what is scary is this: no matter how articulate, right and even moving the works of these first and second generation of artists are, their themes can become trivialised as they're handed down. Sorrow won't go away, but it will go out of style. And then how will we talk about pain?

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Fire bop with me

John Potts grills Kieran Stafford, owner of Birdland Records

In an age of corporate rhetoric and record-company hype, Kieran Stafford is blazingly direct. The man behind the Birdland jazz label as well as Sydney's Birdland record shop, he calls it as he sees it - and he doesn't need many words to do it.

He is justifiably proud of his latest coup: the September release of *Fire*, a double-CD by Mark Simmonds and his Freeboppers. Simmonds has become a legendary figure in Australian progressive jazz, playing sporadically for over a decade, always with ferocious power and single-minded vision. For all his reputation, however, *Fire* will be his first recorded release. I ask Stafford how, with only one release on his independent label, he could entice Mark Simmonds to record. The reply typically zooms straight to the point: "I asked him."

"Mark's been in no great hurry to record," he continues with an almighty understatement. "But he thought that 1994 was the time to do it." *Fire* will be an incendiary blast to end the long, long silence of Simmonds and his band.

I ask Stafford how he would describe the music on *Fire*. "How many words?" he would like to know. I offer him as many words as he needs - but he settles for one. "Intense."

Expanding slightly, he suggests that the four-piece band recorded on *Fire* explores Simmonds' musical concept to the full. What is that concept? A synthesis of funky bop and free style playing; a melding of the styles which diverged in the 1960s and led to the splintering of contemporary jazz. Simmonds' soaring tenor sax welds them back together; the tunes are propelled by funky bass lines, "go completely wild", in

Stafford's words, then return to their catchy origins.

He is well aware that *Fire* will polarise listeners. "Some will hate it, others will love it" - but there was never any thought of lowering the intensity. "What would be the



point in recording someone as talented as Mark, and trying to make him sound bland?"

It's easy to see why Mark Simmonds would be drawn to the Birdland label. He and Stafford share a maverick quality. When Compromise comes tapping at the door, dressed in suit and tie, black leather

case under his arm, he should be prepared to duck if these two are around. Abuse and vitriol might start flying; at best, hoots of derision.

This attitude was behind the move to open Birdland the shop three years ago. "I didn't want it to look like any other record shop," Stafford remembers. That is: crowded, full of dross, and teeming with fanatical men ferreting after obscurities. Astute enough to realise that women music lovers may be alienated by such a male environment, he had Birdland designed as a

spacious, stylish, specialist music store. Even that concept, though, would not have been greenlighted by market research experts. "Anyone who specialises in jazz, blues and avant-garde stuff would have to be a complete lunatic," he laughs.

But the lunacy paid off: enough for the shop to finance the first Birdland release,

Mike Nock's *Touch*, in 1993. *Touch* was nominated for an ARIA award, captivating the critics with its clarity of sound and the lyrical beauty of Nock's solo piano. The CD's sound quality was an integral part of the project. *Touch* was produced with a unique blend of purist analogue recording and sophisticated digital technique. One microphone went straight to a 60's Studer valve recorder, with no treatment of the signal - but this was no Luddite exercise. The analogue recording was transferred to digital using Sony's Super Bit Mapping, a technique which retains more of the subtleties of analogue recording. Stafford tells me of one jazz lover, playing *Touch* loudly at home, who was interrupted by his neighbour banging on the door, demanding to use the piano. The neighbour was shown through every room before he was satisfied that there was indeed no piano, merely a CD recording.

Touch was the first album to use this production technique, and *Fire* will be the second. Why has no-one else pursued this method? Stafford sighs and shakes his head at the major labels' output, much of which he considers over-produced, "with all the life taken out of the music." He will continue releasing music made with the distinctive "3D effect" - but at his own pace. Any new project must be "as valid as the first two."

Walter Benjamin, the great German writer and critic, said that he wrote the books he would want to read - because no-one else was writing them. This seems the perfect attitude for a music producer: forget the prolific output, release the albums you'd want to buy yourself. This is Kieran Stafford's goal: "I'm putting out music to please myself", he concludes. And he's done it, he points out defiantly, without the aid of grants or corporate backers - which is, in these abstemious times, a remarkable feat in itself.

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P I C A

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25 Years of Performance Art

Writer Colin Hood and photographer Heidrun Lohr on Nick Waterlow's historical survey of performance presented by the Ivan Dougherty Gallery and The Performance Space, Sydney, May 23-29



Yuji Sone



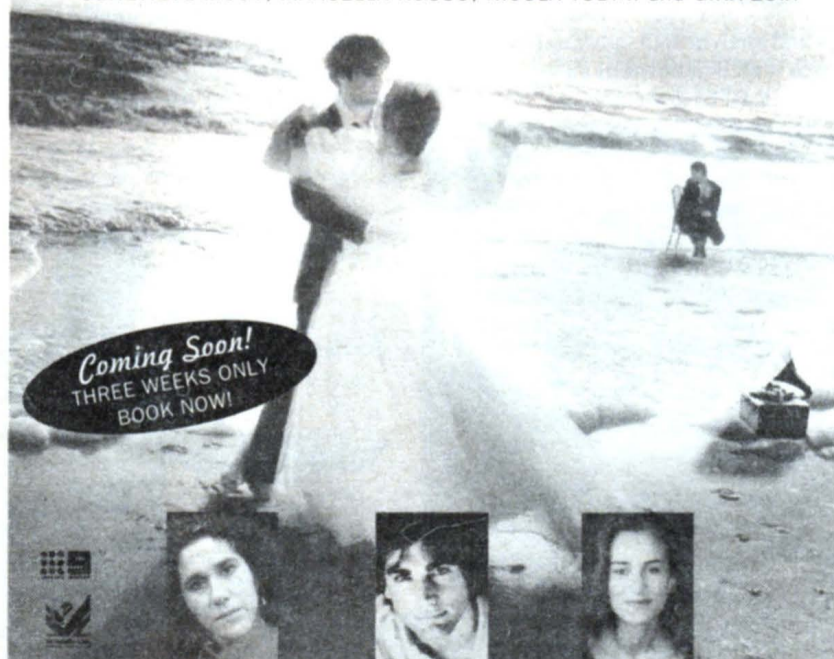
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Upon Leaving The Picture out of the Theatre

Colin Hood

JB In terms of the activities of the Dada group other than painting, the sort of happenings that they devised are in fact happening again. They are called happenings today. Do you ever see or engage in these?

MD The point they brought out so well is they play for you a play of boredom. It's very interesting to have used boredom as an aim. Aimed to attract the public. The public comes to a happening, not to be amused but to be bored, and that's quite a contribution to new ideas isn't it?

Marcel Duchamp - Joan Bakewell interview, BBC, 1968.

film, extending its domain through new media outlets, communication networks and a flowering of new telematic and hypermedia arts. Performance art, on the other hand, evokes different expectations and a few misperceptions: the sight of paint or blood-smeared bodies, an expression of commitment to doing art (as opposed to making art) reverberating in some gallery or performance space.

Most performance art of the sixties and seventies emerged as either a rejection or perverse extension of traditional visual art media. Yet it is still not uncommon for writers on the subject to gloss over the traces of the painter's craft that have imbued this medium with some kind of historical significance. Much of the performance work of post-war movements such as Gutai, Viennese Aktionism and the Happenings of Kaprow, Dine and Oldenberg made explicit references to painting in their anti or

transmuted bodies, iconic gesture and sound in the work of Laurie Anderson and John Gillies' recent collaborations with The Sydney Front.

Still the musician will sound out afresh, the actor distinguish him or herself in a

unsettling appearances. Imagine the painter's charismatic persona dropping out into TV, film, magazines and nightclubs. Imagine the voice of Warhol, that famous cadaverous monotone voice, mouthing the words: "If you want to know all about



Barbara Campbell

dramatic role (with or without a definitive playscript), the visual artist burst through the pictured surface (the 'fourth wall' of the visual arts) into affirmative or absurdist social action. In this respect, the artist attempts to push the boundaries of a chosen

Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am".

Anne Marsh's recently published book, *Body and Self: Australian Performance Art 1969-1992*, forms the literary back-drop to 25 Years of Performance Art in Australia, an impressive showcase of performances, films, videos and photo-documentation, organised conjointly by The Ivan Dougherty Gallery and The Performance Space.

To properly survey "the history of performance art in Australia from a contemporary viewpoint" is no easy task given the diversity of performance styles and traditions that were put on show under the heading "performance art". The performance context also shifted throughout the week: some performed as a walk-through, come-as-you like in relatively empty gallery space, others were embellished with a certain theatrical luminescence. The Ivan Dougherty Gallery and The Sydney Intermedia Network also presented film and video programs of performance related works.

The week opened with Barbara Campbell's *Fleas or the Menses of Lizzie Borden*, a performance and installation running for five days at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery. If performance art was initially touted as doing art—real time activity—as opposed to made art (the aristocratic commodity par excellence), then Campbell has taken up both sides of the equation and given them an extra twist, simulating performative presence and labour (through the mediation of video) while producing feminist artefacts for the tried-and-true art



Did Marcel Duchamp invent the first joke about performance art? Well, not quite. The remark was made (in the year of his death) a good two years before the label "performance art" started to crop up regularly in art reviews and discussions about the current state of the visual arts.

The first book-length history of this seemingly distinct genre was written by Rose-Lee Goldberg. Published in 1978, the book was suspiciously back-dated to the turn of the century and included a variety of theatrical experiments ranging through avant-garde cabaret, the architectural bio-dynamics of Soviet and Bauhaus theatre, and the post-war (post-Artaud) experimentation with theatres of everyday life. By 1984 however, Goldberg was asking the question: "What ever happened to performance art?" Had visual artists become bored with quasi-theatrical activist politics or had the genre been simply sucked into the vortex of "mediafication"?

In 1992, Dan Quayle sat down at his desk to write a 'really' sincere letter to Murphy Brown's TV baby to redress his unpopular remarks about real and fictional single mothers. This kind of role playing (fired with media and ideological manipulation) was another performance of sorts. Politics imitating art imitating life.

Shifting the focus from bravura media politics to cultural activity in the narrower sense, performance covers a range of genres (and special moments) in theatre, music and

quasi-theatrical actions.

By the late sixties and early seventies, there was a similar (Australian) reaction to the dead-end of formalist abstraction. The polymorphous presentations of visual artists (such as Mike Parr, Stelarc, Tim Johnson, Ken Unsworth and Peter Kennedy) emerged as part of a new vanguard of anti-theatrical, anti-institutional activism which softened the edges between theatrical and artistic experimentation. The engaged political street actions of the Australian Performance Group—fired with typical 60's radicalism—were matched by 'liberated' exchanges between artists and gallery-goers in alternative exhibition spaces.

And what about performance as a multi-media spectacle? Visual artists, sound and cine-artists, actors, dramaturgs and choreographers have often worked together under the loose generic label "collaborative intermedia" (as opposed to opera, theatre, TV, or some other name for traditional mixed media). The radical assemblage of different arts and skills (in the communal effort of production performance and provocation) has run its own historical course: the seamless epiphany of Wagnerian opera; Sintessi (or variety theatre) of the futurist movement; the fractured (sometimes picturesque) assemblages of the work of Brecht Robert Wilson and Lyndal Jones; the 'musical' concerts of the Cage-inspired Fluxus group; the computer-assisted video mix of

medium. In the passage of time (or even in the sampling of current agendas) these transgressions and distinctive appearances mark out discreet sites and histories of the art of performance, both mainstream and 'avant-garde'.

Tired of the dull flirtation with genres, melanges and analytic hair-splitting? Then watch it all boil down to an art of personality, an art of distinctive or



Mike Parr

market. In this latest performance, the hand-carved soap figures (produced in absentia for televised viewing) and neatly hung dresses evoke the theatrical mystique of the courtroom trial of the mama and pappa axe-murderer. Both the familial effigies, and the 'exhibits' for the prosecution play on the hidden machinations of what Freud called the "family romance", re-working the forensic narratives crowding 'destabilised' menstruating women.

As part of a 1992 performance at the MCA (in an on-going commitment to performative self-portraiture) Mike Parr sucked, vacuum-like, on a monochrome panel (by the artist John Nixon) till his breath gave out. This devaluation of the panel from fine art object to mere theatrical prop also represented a kind of sacrifice of the painter's body to the labour of painting. Parr has described his body incision pieces as anti-theatrical events inciting a primitive collective memory. For *Waste*, Parr wears, skin-like, the gilded surface of ornate frames and icon paintings and cuts himself with a scalpel. Artist's script reads: "The artist delivers himself a christ-like wound. Squeeze and wipe away blood till the tissue-box is bare."

In a mocking tribute to the 'dead' ancestors of contemporary performance, David Branson from the performance group Splinters, played a naked, barbecued-liver-smeared Pied Piper to an audience outside the main auditorium of the Performance Space. Branson, the shamanistic raconteur, led a group of dedicated followers through the main auditorium and into the back lane for another kind of barbecue. Immersed in a carnivalesque and strangely contemplative ambience (an inner-city 'celebrity roast'), they stood and watched poor old "body-art" being put to the torch.

Described by one viewer as a Pirandellian play on the absent author/character Derek Kreckler, *Still Untitled* seems more influenced by the 60's tradition of Fluxus concerts (with their collage of sound and non-matrixed events) than the well-scripted *mise-en-abyme* of Pirandello's frame plays. Victoria Spence's monologue *The Waiting Game*, also played at an amusing "being-there-with nothing to say", a girl-child's begging the indulgence of the parent-spectator, so it was not surprising to see her turn up again as the apologist/narrator in Kreckler's piece.

The machinations of moving-image, voice and sound were principal elements in a number of works, evidence of a shift from a physical performer/spectator interaction into a disembodied, synthesised assemblage. Working in the context of expanded cinematic (or video) performance Lyndall Jones and Linda Sproul sampled the masks, constraints and media productions of feminine identity. In *Which Side Do You Dress* (Parts I and II), Sproul mimics the gestural icons of masculine authority, finessing the double standards (and double-entendre) of pornographic and erotic stereotypes in a politicised, audience-interactive burlesque.

While sound and spoken performance has its own distinctive modernist pedigree, contemporary Australian works by Amanda Stewart, Open City and Yuji Sone are also resonant with current issues of technology, mass media, race and identity politics. Open City performed a more compact (conversational) version of *The Museum of Accidents*, perverting cause-and-effect relations in technological and psychosexual narratives.

Sone's *Voice of the Masked Other* consists of a series of taped voices sourced ambiguously to both a live performer (a mime punctuating the vocal patchwork with scare-quotes and rhetorical emphasis) and a TV screen filled with static. Charting the mythologies and bibliographies (at last, a



Victoria Spence and Annette Tessoriero in Derek Kreckler's *Still Untitled*

performance with footnotes!) of cultural displacement, Sone plays off ethnographic critique and performance history with "exotic" masculine desire. In an ironic tribute to the apocryphal inventor of the word "performance art", Sone repetitively

Elder statesmen for the 'genre' had taken an early initiative with reminiscences, criticisms and recommendations that charmed, sometimes aggravated the audience.

Both Lyndal Jones and Mike Parr

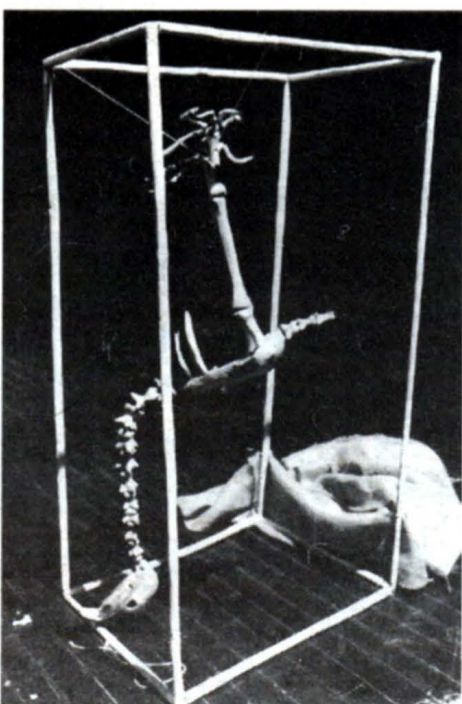
or forgotten.

A rejoinder from Mike Parr salvaged the debate (for me at least) in the dying seconds of the first session. One of the problems of defining (or perpetuating) the activity of



mimics the concealed masturbatory antics of Vito Acconci from a 1972 performance, *Seedbed*.

On Sunday, May 29, in the main auditorium of The Performance Space, a special forum on the history and current practices of Australian performance art was beginning to burn on emotional overdrive.



From Arthur Wick's *Free Fall: Slow Motion*

delivered eloquent (but sadly existential) descriptions of the "traumatic" ongoing activity of performance work. "Living in anxiety", working through "the reality of contradiction", "taking risks for a new kind of openness", such were the truisms that were uttered by two of Australia's most respected artists. Noel Sheridan, for his part, spoke against the perpetuation of performance as an "insipid" post-modern genre, insisting that a "willingness to fail" should relieve artists of the desire to repeat what had once been a catalyst to experimentation and change. What followed was a flurry of hurt rejoinders, valiant ripostes and little cathartic moments filling out the blanks on a polemical and confessional landscape.

Such was the scene before the convening of a second panel of predominantly theatrical performers. David Branson (from the Canberra performance group Splinters) and Keith Gallasch (from Open City) took the visual artists to task for leaving the rich tradition of Australian experimental theatre out of the picture. Still, this dispute might have been resolved from the outset by giving "performance" to the theatre and music fringe, and "performance art" to the visual artists - or better still, by a more formal discussion of the conditions (historical, contextual, institutional) under which the differences between the performing arts are foregrounded, blurred

performance is that "the name gets in the way". I would add a few more words to his remark (echoing the advice of the Belgian art historian Thierry de Duve) so it reads, "the history of the name gets in the way".

Colin Hood lectures in Art Theory and Cultural Studies at the University of NSW College of Fine Arts and the University of Western Sydney.



Amanda Stewart

Mad Love

Cecelia Cmielewski talks to Adelaide's Mad Love

The experiment that is Mad Love stems from a conviction, not in itself unusual, that theatre has become caught up in its own conventions. Their solution is a creative collaborative approach involving performers, directors, visual artists, designers and musicians framed by a fully operational company.

The experiment began with a script development grant for \$5000 from the Australia Council in 1987, which Curtis Weiss, the actors and designers used to

mount a production called *El Rancho*, followed in 1989 by *Alphaville*, and in 1994 with *The 1,000 Eyes of Doctor Mabuse*. The trilogy of productions have in common an investigation of the cinema and theatre genres, in these cases, the western, the thriller and horror.

Mad Love uses a dizzying mix of convincing genre recreation and hilarious distancing to both involve the audience and actively engage them with familiar texts. While the impetus flows from a strong political manifesto, Mad Love are no Brechtians - there is no particular expectation on the part of the ensemble for audience members to 'get it right'. Alienation, they believe, is sufficiently ambiguous for a diversity of responses. Kafka's resolution of representation in

Metamorphosis may be closer to the Mad Love experiment.

Weiss believes in "always working from the space as the first premise" and, as a result, all his productions have used layers of space, as distinct from sets. In the case of Mabuse we traversed zones, located on several floors and a basement of a disused warehouse, a shell rejuvenated by artists to house the performance.

A microcosm/ecosystem begins to develop. Audiences voyage physically as well as intellectually through the spaces. At first the movement is self-conscious, but eventually their part in the performance becomes more comfortable as they are integrated into the workings of the drama and the action "as if pulled through the television screen".

Although Weiss is adamant that the actors, designers, and visual artists also drive the process, to date it has been his investigations which have initiated the projects. This is changing however, with the development over the past twelve months of a new infrastructure which has formalised the recognition and creative force of the collective talents involved in any particular project. As a result, Mad Love have a number of projects in different stages of realisation at any one time.

Mad Love's 1,000 Eyes of Doctor Mabuse featured performers Kahlil Jueridini, Catherine Mobley, Steven Sheehan, Craig Tidswell, dramaturg John McConchie, design by Shaun Kirby and direction by Curtis Weiss.

A good murder, A Real Murder

Melbourne's contemporary performance company IRAA goes international

IRAA Theatre's *Woyzeck - A Good Murder, A Real Murder* opens in Melbourne at the Beckett Theatre on September 1st. Based on Buchner's classic, this new work is sponsored by the Goethe-Institut. Shortly after, IRAA hosts Theatre Ohne Grenzen from Vienna as their guests for the Melbourne Fringe Festival. In turn, their *Woyzeck* will tour Vienna, Seville and Singapore in 1995 - "Sometimes international outlets are easier to reach than national ones!"

Woyzeck was written by Buchner at the age of 24, shortly before his death, and is considered the first modern tragedy and the forerunner of expressionist theatre. With this text IRAA, director Renato Cuocolo and dramaturg Martina Winkel will explore an interplay of possible perspectives between past and present, memory and reality.

IRAA's Cira La Giola says, "Cuocolo recently shocked purists with his collusion of Euripides with James Joyce and Alain Robbe-Grillet in his *Bacchae-Burning By Water*". Cuocolo explains, "With Buchner, I am exploring a more recent area of our theatrical culture which doesn't have the encrustations of time I have explored in the Greek tragedies through contemporary writers. I underline the subjectivity of any reading by choosing *Woyzeck* himself to recollect the events that, in my version of the play, led him into a mental asylum. There are other possible readings: if Marie, the slaughtered lover, could speak, she would certainly tell another story."

With his Melbourne ensemble Cuocolo "explores the space between drama and

performance, using text-based materials to develop a new, process oriented dramaturgy driven by physical, visual and verbal expression. This often involves collisions and collusions of different texts, the breakdown of a given order of textuality and allows the company to explore features



Woyzeck

Lyn Pool

of culture, reading, personal and collective history that might be otherwise suppressed by the neatly joined hierarchical discourses of the hegemonic text. It is not a smooth process and it challenges the deeply set habits which limit the interplay of textual and performative languages."

Other borders have been crossed. La Giola says, "Melbourne's arts writers and

critics like to underline how avant garde IRAA has chosen to be based in a church hall in suburban Alphington. Undeterred by our Melway Street directory's hierarchical arrangement in circles of decreasing art expectancy, we have developed, since 1988, a strong following, full houses, recent annual funding from the Australia Council and a forthcoming international tour."

That tour will take IRAA's *Woyzeck* to the Kunsterhaus Theater in Vienna, part of a negotiated "Pilot Project for Artistic Exchange between Austria and Australia", in which, for the Melbourne Fringe Festival, IRAA presents Vienna's Theater Ohne Grenzen in two performances, a music recital by composer and virtuoso accordion player Otto Lechner and a photographic exhibition by Vienna-based Adelaide artist Nick Mangafas on the theme of aging. The performance *Alt/Tag (Old/Day)* is also about age, "Hilde, the old lady, is portrayed by a wooden puppet, to whom the visible player gives life and voice." *Morsgaui* "is a tasteless, collage-macabre (sic) of old folk songs and new hits, quotations from politicians and the voice of the people, everyday racism as well as traditional prejudices newly polished, demonstrated with and on kitchen utensils, fruits and vegetables animated by two visible performers." *Morsgaui* is performed "in a crazy and humorous mixture of English and German", *Alt/Tag's* first four performances will be in English, the fifth in German. This enterprising cross cultural and bilingual exchange is assisted by the Austrian Ministries of Culture, Foreign Affairs, the City of Vienna and the Goethe-Institut.

RT

IRAA's *Woyzeck, A Good Murder, A Real Murder* opens at *The Malthouse, Melbourne* on September 1st with Alran Berg, Matthew Crosby, Melita Jurisic, Mark Pegler, Catherine Simmonds, Tony Yap and composer Otto Lechner. In the Festival Fringe Theatre Ohne Grenzen performs at the IRAA Theatre, Alphington 4th to 11th October.

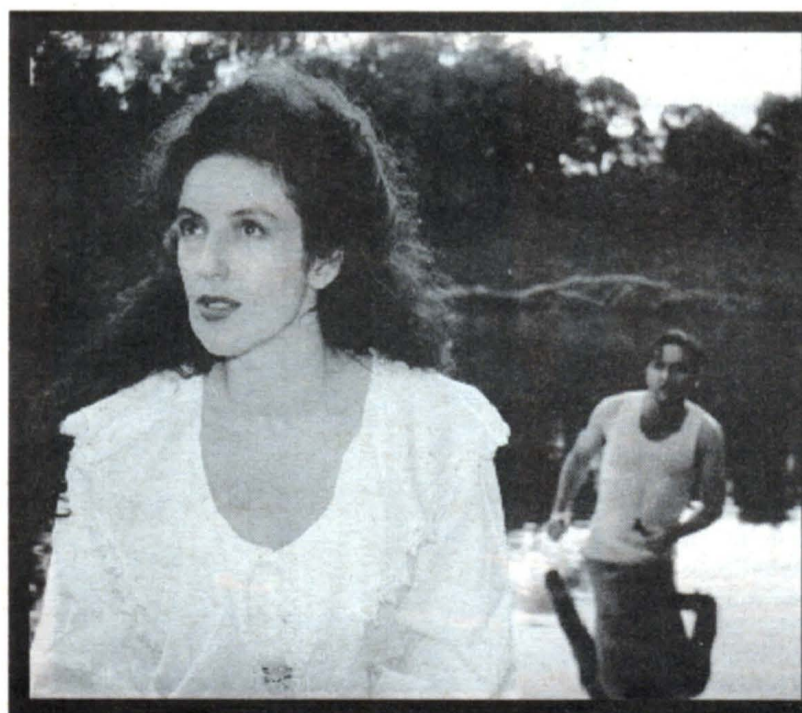
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Composing Daniel Keene

Composer Sarah de Jong talks about her career with Keith Gallasch.

When pressed by director Christopher Williams to compose for Keene's *Low* (Belvoir St Downstairs, 1993), Sarah de Jong thought the play so tightly written that music would stop its drive. But so adamant was the director, and so moved was de Jong by the play, that even though she feared the music might only cover scene changes (still its commonest use despite a century of film and the lessons of opera and performance) she broke her pact with herself that she would never compose music for a theatre production where she could see no need for it (remember, from another angle, Beckett and his agent's litigious alarm at the Mabou Mines' 'impure' production of *Endgame* with music by Phillip Glass).

She composes less and less for theatre, preferring the more integral role of music in radio, performance and dance. But Keene has a special appeal, she argues. He goes persistently, painfully and lyrically where no other Australian playwright goes in terms of class and the capacity to face urban despair with a language that is spare, reveals the unspoken without announcing it, is rhythmic and curiously heightened, reminding you of, but quite unlike, Raymond Carver's stories, marvels of repressed emotional economy.

Her attention is to the play's structure, that's her starting point or her exit if there's not the shape to work with. For *Low* her music would 'lock the door' on a scene or 'pick up the energy with percussion and saxophone at the end of a manic scene and take it to a more confronting level'. At other times the music would 'let the audience come down into the next scene'. Keene was so pleased that he asked for the music to go into the Perth production of *Low*.

Nonetheless it was hard work. She couldn't simply read the play and compose. She had to see what the director and actors were doing, resulting in a very tight composing schedule. Fortunately, however, Sarah de Jong is a collaborator used to and enjoying the give and take of shared creation.

She has worked recurrently with Louis Nowra (including *The Golden Age*, *Inside the Island*, *Inner Voices* and for radio *The Song Room* and *Summer of the Aliens*; with Nigel Kellaway (*Fantastic Toys* for the Australian Dance Theatre, The Sydney Front's first production *Waltz*, Clare Grant's *Woman in the Wall* - on which Kellaway collaborated; his solo work *Nuremberg Recital* and recently the work in progress *Portrait of an Invisible Man*, its koto composition repeated at the 1994 Adelaide Festival by Satsuki Odamura); with Kim Carpenter and his Theatre of

Image (*Shining in Light*, *The Happy Prince*, now set to tour Australia, and a new work *Secrets of the Night*; and with radio producer Jane Ullman (including *Summer of the Aliens* the first Australian radio drama production to win a coveted Prix Italia; *Swim Swam*, a disturbing reverie of children's voices, songs and sayings for *The Listening Room*; and, selected for competition for this year's Prix Italia, *Lights of Jericho* by Perth writer Haya Hussein, for ABC Radio Drama, an evocation of women's lives in the Middle East across 50 years with 'music as the landscape, the hills, the valleys').

Keene's *All Souls* was commissioned and successfully premiered by Adelaide's Red Shed Company in 1993. Griffin's artistic director Ros Horin, a great supporter of Keene (she directed his *Silent Partner* for Griffin last year), had long wanted to work with de Jong. Now was the perfect opportunity. De Jong found herself with plenty of room to move this time, with a play she says 'taking more risks and with more clarity than his other works', 'more filmic' and with a central figure, an eerie bag-lady who is a medium, a guide for lost souls in a purgatory of the here and now, a woman troubled by dark childhood recollections but possessing, nonetheless, 'a beautiful soul'. *All Souls* inspires the operatic in de Jong.

Recently she composed for Janys Hayes' theatre adaptation of Nowra's 1986 radio work *The Widows* for the Music and Theatre Department of Wollongong University as part of the Festival of Creative Arts in June. The hoped for adaption of *The Widows* as music theatre didn't eventuate, but de Jong's frustrations were mollified by a successful 'play with music,' with an orchestra of flute, violin, trumpet, cello, trombone, percussion and piano - 'Wagnerian by theatre standards!' - her first experience of working with so many musicians. Also at the Festival were the One Extra Dance Company with their *Drowning in a Sea of Dreams*. For this work she composed and recorded at home on her synthesisers (as she often does), added a piano track, recorded singer Annette Tesoriero, put it all on CD and had the bonus of a viola player in performance with the dancers.

Working with so many musicians and a trained opera singer was an inspiration. De Jong found herself feeling that Phillipa, the woman at the centre of *All Souls*, should be celebrated in song and that Annette would sing that song. For the rest, "It's taken pretty much from Daniel's stage directions -

the wind blows, it stirs, moves leaves, whispers like half heard voices, the murmuring of souls". She'll work closely with the actors in rehearsal on whispers, breaths and sighs, with recorded whisperings and with an orchestral wind machine in the theatre - "I like its artificiality. The sounds in the show are made in the performance."

"I'll collaborate with the actors and the director to find the right places for the sounds, how long they can run, right through, underneath scenes, coming out of scenes. This is sound design as much as it is composing music. I've been preoccupied with sound design from as early as *The Precious Woman* in 1981, hence my work in radio."

Sometimes you hear de Jong's own voice in her work. A rich new development has been film collaboration with her husband, visual artist Tony Twigg. His seven minute *A Passion Play* was the only Australian short film taken by Cannes in 1992 and has been recently purchased by a French television company for European broadcast. Its wide panel of shifting and transforming iconic stick figures are pitched seductively and then alarmingly against the escalating rhythms of de Jong's voice (recorded in a single take). His next film, *A Parade*, again with a score by de Jong, will be premiered at the forthcoming Brisbane International Film Festival.

All Souls could get Daniel Keene the attention he has long deserved. He's been championed by the smaller theatre companies and by artists like de Jong and Horin who know his worth and his power. It's an open-ended, gentle work shifting across the lives of several couples at critical points in their relationships, shadowed by death, by anxiety about who they are, about what they might become and curiously connected by a lone woman they have no real contact with. The scale is larger than usual. There's an unusual topicality for Keene in the child abuse and lesbian material (prompted by his Red Shed collaborators?). The tone though is still Melbourne tough, the resilience of 'ordinary people' in the face of despair, at a glance Leunig without the tears, Dickens without the laughs, but for Keene it is more warmly emotional and sadly funny than you'd expect (or some would want). The language is remarkable, the structure musical. To experience the voices of Keene and de Jong in duet will be a theatre-going privilege.

Although clearly pleased to have her work for koto played in concert at the Adelaide Festival, de Jong is not too

perturbed that her compositions aren't broadcast on radio music programs. The theatre is where she is to be heard, ranging from the quietly lyrical to *grand guignol* with a distinctive gothic voice heard in the single pedal organ driving Jim Sharman's neo-gothic *A Midsummer Nights' Dream*, in the mad, swirling cabaret synthesiser keyboards of Kellaway's *Nuremberg Recital*, and in a hypnotic 46 minute koto work in *Portrait of an Invisible Man* that tautly coils East and West.

All Souls opens for Griffin Theatre Company at The Stables, Sydney on August 11.

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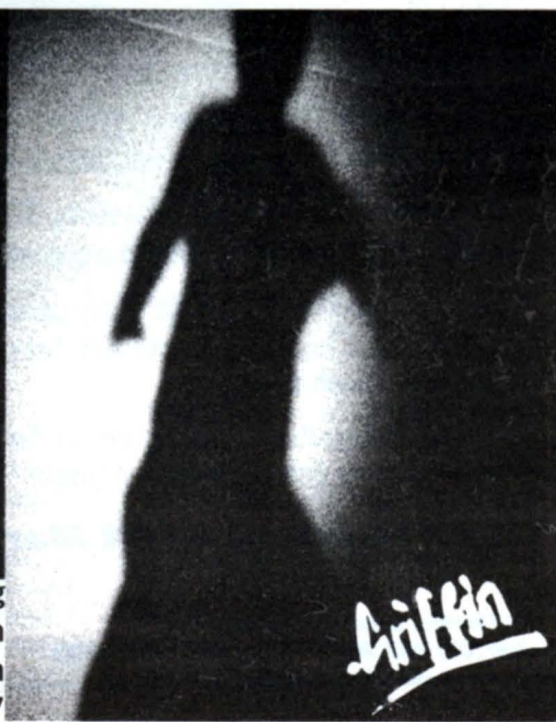
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Cultists rejoice. Another Frida Kahlo gig. Not the recent tasteful spread of Kahlo style in an Australian fashion magazine, not Luke Roberts cutely transformed in the flesh or in Tracy Moffat's movie *Bedevil*, but *Viva la Vida*, a play by Karen Corbett produced by Handspan with two Fridas, with the anguished body of the paintings 3D-ed in puppet form and the tormented psyche by a flying foetus and a husband 'reduced' to a pair of gigantic trousers. Non-cultists, prepare yourselves for a press onslaught of "Picasso was a personal friend and Leon Trotsky one of her many lovers", "Diego Rivera was her philandering husband", and "Some feminists argue that Kahlo perpetuates stereotypes of women as victims. 'But she's the most assertive victim I've ever seen,' declares writer Karen Corbett." And more. "Madonna owns Kahlo's painting *My Birth* and wants to make a film of her life." "A Mexican shoe manufacturer has produced a 'Frida' pump adorned with a fringe shaped like her famous black eyebrows." Journalists leave the cult unquestioned, happily repeating press releases and each other like a bad night on Stuart Littlemore's *Mediawatch*. The equally repeated assertions about her daring to show her pain, showing women 'as something more than sex objects', the complexity of her German-Mexican ancestry, her 'indomitable spirit' are all trotted out. No hope there. Director Angela Chaplin's production, on the other hand, enjoys a good reputation as a nightmarish evocation of a life framed by Mexican culture and influenced by Chaplin's stay in Latin America.

Viva la Vida is being toured by those purveyors of the unusual and the adventurous in theatre, Performing Lines, and opens at Sydney's The Performance Space - site of a couple of earlier Kahlo manifestations - on September 29 after Adelaide at The Space 31 August - 10 September, and Hobart's Peacock Theatre 15 - 24 September.

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The Constant Spectator: Interviewing the Audience

John Baylis talks with George Papanicolaou

Any one who has spent some time in the foyers and venues of Sydney will know George, if only subliminally. He is the Constant Spectator, and he has seen pretty well everything that has been performed in this city since the late 1970s. I first ran into him when I was performing in a Mike Mullins-directed performance work called *An Evening with TS Eliot: light refreshments will be served* in 1978. My most recent encounter with him was a few weeks ago at a recital of Tibetan chanting at the Conservatorium of Music. And in the meantime, he has turned up everywhere: at the Opera House, in the streets of Adelaide at Festival time, at performance art events in galleries, at outdoor concerts. George is always there.

JB How many performances do you see?

GP Nowadays, I go to about three things a week, though I used to see something every night. I see most Performance Space stuff, most of what the Sydney Theatre Company put on, I subscribe to Belvoir, and I've just seen *South Pacific*. I go to the Ensemble Theatre. I used to go up to Marian St and out to the Q Theatre. I also go to amateur companies: I once went to see the Castle Hill Players because they were doing a Dürrenmatt. I see Sydney Dance Company, and used to subscribe to the Australian Ballet. I try to see Dance Exchange and Melbourne's Danceworks. I attend a huge range of music events, from contemporary companies like Synergy to Monteverdi concerts to heavy metal, though not much rap for some reason. I seek out performance art in galleries when I hear about it.

I didn't go to university. I did a technical training course after I finished school. I've always been interested in the technical side of things as well as the aesthetic. I don't work in the arts.

I would spend about \$60 a week on tickets. I don't get invitations, though I sometimes win tickets through giveaways and the like.

JB Why do you see such a variety?

GP There's a spectrum there, like wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum, and each wavelength exercises different intellectual, spiritual and emotional muscles. The way I look at it, to work all the muscles you really need to go to all the different performance styles. If you just go along to one type you may end up with one highly developed emotional biceps, and like in body-building it will act as a distorting influence on the rest of you. I try to be balanced. When I went to the Adelaide Festival in 1992 I saw five to seven things a day for three weeks. It was like a spiritual aerobics workout, every single emotional muscle worked to the limit.

I have no problem shifting gears. My tastes are catholic.

JB What do all these performances have in common?

GP To return to the wavelength analogy, they have the ability to cause change - emotional, intellectual, spiritual - in the recipient. Communication takes place between audience and performer, by sight, sound etc. It has an effect, it causes a reaction, any reaction.

lot of ideas to play with. I can compare them to situations that I come across and hopefully use the experience to become a better person.

JB What do you see as some of the characteristics of contemporary performance work?

GP Unpredictability and the sense of danger because you don't know if something is

JB But what artistic purpose can placing people in this position serve?

GP I think it is very valuable. Many people never get confronted in their regular lives by things that they can't handle. It's good for us to be in a certain sense a victim, someone who can't control what's going on, because it helps us to understand the perspective of victims in the real world.

I don't just go to see the performance, I go to see the audience reaction to the performance. This has become an integral part of my experience of performance. I am part of a community, especially during a Peter Brook epic or a festival.

JB What is a bad performance?

GP Doing something with nothing new and no commitment or intensity. If a performance is just going through the motions, I get bored. I'm a very tolerant audience: one good moment can redeem a show for me. And if something is good in its genre, then I'll get something out of it. I can see a West End farce, and if it's done well I'll laugh.

JB Can watching performances damage people?

GP There are some sensitive people who are upset easily. I've seen people set off by moments in shows which have obviously touched something deep. And I've seen actors similarly break down on stage.

JB Have you ever felt endangered yourself?

GP In La Fura Dels Baus' *Suz/o/suz*, when the crowd parted and a guy was running towards me swinging a gas cylinder on a rope, I did begin to get a bit worried.

JB What about moral or spiritual danger?

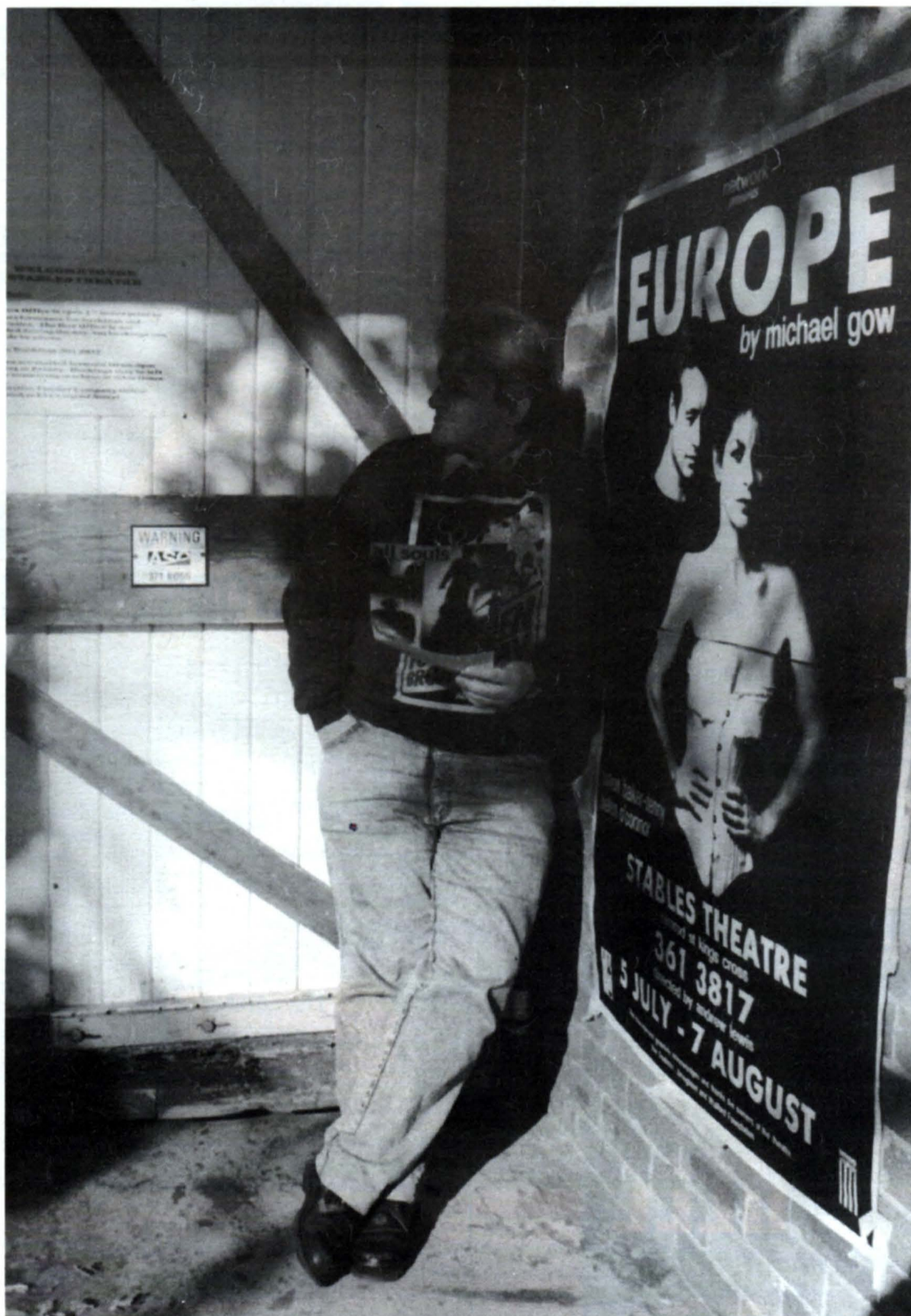
GP A few times I have felt that I was looking into the face of pure evil, a sense that the apocalypse was upon me. In that T. S. Eliot show with you and Mullins for example, performed in a church. And The All Out Ensemble's *Asleep at the Wheel* - the final image of the car in the dark, only the headlights on and the driver's hand on the horn. The hairs on the back of my neck rose up. Or at the Adelaide Festival Fringe in 1980, Phil Motherwell playing Charles Manson and addressing the audience directly - I was the audience, no one else turned up.

There's an emotional fatigue that has built up in our mass media society where you see so much violence that you get inured to it. What is wonderful about theatre and especially performance is that these things can be reworked into different formats so that people can be made to rediscover those fears and emotions.

JB To what end?

GP To put it in the words of the main character in *The Dead Poets Society*, the question is 'what draws us on', and only the arts truly answer this. This is what draws me and fascinates me and keeps me coming back to this world so often, because I find it a way of renourishing my spirit. Reinventing and rediscovering my own humanity through the humanity of others.

That is what this theatre stuff is really about: the romance and the poetry and the magic and the reality of what people are.



George Papanicolaou

Wendy Morrissey

JB How do you use performance?

GP It's a form of distilled life where I have the essence of the artists' years of experience focussed into one or two hours. I get the benefit of all they've learned and all their thinking. In a few years of theatre-going I get a lifetime's worth of characters and situations, things that I might never have come across in my own life. So it gives me a

going to happen to you.

JB Is this just a danger of being picked on, or does the danger go deeper than that?

GP I think it does. Looking at audiences, I have seen those who are very self-assured, obviously top dog in their field, able to handle any problems. Then they come into this totally unfamiliar arena. You can see their self-assurance cracking.

The Hyperreal Thing

Bronwyn Coupe encounters future resistance in Canberra

Enter Questacon, the National Science and Technology Centre, this October and you will enter the future. No, it's not another computer accessory trade fair. It's *The Hyperreal Thing*, a site-specific work created by WBK Theatre for Canberra's National Festival of Australian Theatre. Working with the architecture but rubbing a little against its futuristic sheen, WBK are preparing a critical reading of this space by night.

The audience will be ushered into Questacon and prepared for a tour guided by this 'smart' building itself. But the building is not smart enough. The tour is to be hijacked by neo-Luddite activists who have emerged from "a shanty town on the edge of the information highway".

Yes, there will still be political resistance in the future. The audience will be captured as part of a coordinated action that simultaneously shuts down the central control of all the national museums. A somewhat bumbling group of subversives desperate to make their point of view will present the audience with their hyperreal exhibit. This is a history lesson reminding the punters how the promising world of 1994 ended up here and now - 2008.

Writers/directors Monica Barone and Boris Kelly plan to make the work accessible to a Festival audience with an engaging story line. The program will mix a range of performance styles - narrative set-up and comedy combined with innovative techniques familiar to followers of this ten-

year partnership's more challenging works. This return to theatrical conventions signals a change in direction away from work designed to force the audience to confront themselves as the site of construction of meaning. The authors have a position and they want to state it.

In some ways this work revisits concerns explored by the team earlier (as *The People Next Door*) in *Frankenstein's Shadow*. Based on Mary Shelley's classic cautionary tale of technological hubris, they used the text to explore corporeality as determined by early modernist nature/science dualisms. Through the figure of Dr Frankenstein, the rationalist, they examined the construction of identity in relation to scientific and other discourses. A glance at the subtitle of *The Hyperreal Thing* - "a futuristic sit-com" - reveals that another kind of reproductive technology is now at issue. Here, it's not a humanoid monster, but televisual representations that are the technological doppelgangers threatening their creators.

Although intrigued by the various conceptualisations of hyperreality, Kelly and Barone emphasise they didn't want to go too far with theory in the research phase. "I didn't want to end up constructing a thesis instead of a performance," Kelly says.

Instead, they want to present an entertaining worst-case scenario to counter the flashy utopian techno-wonderland that populates TV science shows such as *Beyond 2000*. Determined to be a relatively low-tech theatre of bodies performing, *The Hyperreal Thing* aims to provide a palpable spiritual experience. It will be interesting to see if WBK are able to avoid humanist clichés and pose intelligent questions about a world of increasingly intimate and invasive communication technologies.

The Hyperreal Thing is written and directed by Monica Barone and Boris Kelly. It will be performed at Questacon on October 8 - 9 and 12 - 16 as part of the Canberra's National Festival of Australian Theatre.

Just Act Natural

Caroline Lumby sticks her foot in the door of current affairs re-enactments

Watching a bizarre true story on Channel Seven's *Real Life* recently, I found myself sizing up the dramatic talents of a girl performing a re-enactment. A young, attractive brunette, she made a phone call to her boyfriend to tell him, in a halting, dramatic voice, that she never wanted to see him again. It was one of those performances that would have gone unnoticed in a John Cootes Furniture Warehouse ad or an early *Neighbours* episode. The weird thing was that she was playing herself.

Amidst the latest attempts at broadcasting reality on TV current affairs, re-enactments have emerged as a popular device. TV re-enactments have always been around in some form: a news reporter retracing the fateful steps of someone killed by the IRA; an actor, wig askew and a pair of Razzamattaz on his head, doing a bad impersonation of a bank robber. But what's interesting is the growing trend of getting people to play themselves. The idea behind this seems reasonable: if you get real people involved in the re-enactments then you get closer to the original event. So why do these real characters seem so artificial, why do we

notice their wooden performances? Because TV is essentially about drama and entertainment and that goes double for news and current affairs.

Take news. Brian Henderson does a great impersonation of a news presenter, Brian Henderson's hair does an even greater impersonation of a news presenter's hair, Roger Climpson does an average impersonation of Brian Henderson and so on. It's the same with current affairs. The closest thing we've got to a real current affairs host is *Frontline*'s Mike Moore. Via satire (and a bad wig) the character of Moore reveals the true nature - the performative nature - of television presenters and TV in general.

It's just like the movies. TV stories are short films. News segments represent reality with the aid of formal film techniques. Prime time current affairs' stories often run with a combination of straight interview, re-enactment and file footage, which all use a mix of dramatic devices. And here's the thing. This adds up to a pretty sophisticated system for simulating reality. The trouble with plugging reality back into this system

is that it's going to be measured by the same production values. People are going to be judged on their performance.

The idea that realistic re-enactments are closer to real life than dramatised ones doesn't hold up. The original event doesn't act as a referent. Let's face it. The original event could be equated with a scene from a bad movie anyway. Take 1. So when model Jackie Tarrabay on *Real Life* remakes that final fateful phonecall to her doomed Esprit boss boyfriend, or prison warden turned fugitive Heather Parker relives her days of love on the run on *Sixty Minutes*, what we are getting is the televised equivalent of Take 2.

With all drama, the better the

performance the more real the scene and vice versa. (Some TV producers already know this. That's why the acting's always so bad on soap operas - it's escapism). And that's why TV re-enactments using real people don't work - they don't know how to be real for the camera, they can't act natural. Current affairs shows need professionals. There would be no more boring arguments about how believable Terry Griffiths' performance was on *The 7.30 Report*. *Real Life* could just hire de Niro to play a disgraced police minister with a soft spot for the ladies opposite Jodie Foster's tough young professional bravely fighting her boss' unwanted sexual advances.



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FELLOWSHIPS FOR ACTORS AND DIRECTORS

The Gloria Payten Foundation and The Gloria Dawn Foundation invite applications for their inaugural Fellowships from professional actors and directors in theatre, film or television.

A Fellowship from the Foundations will enable successful applicants to travel overseas to broaden their professional knowledge through either formal courses of study or by self-devised programs of observation and secondment.

The number of Fellowships and the level of grant will vary from year to year, but it is estimated that a maximum of \$15,000 will be awarded to any one Fellow.

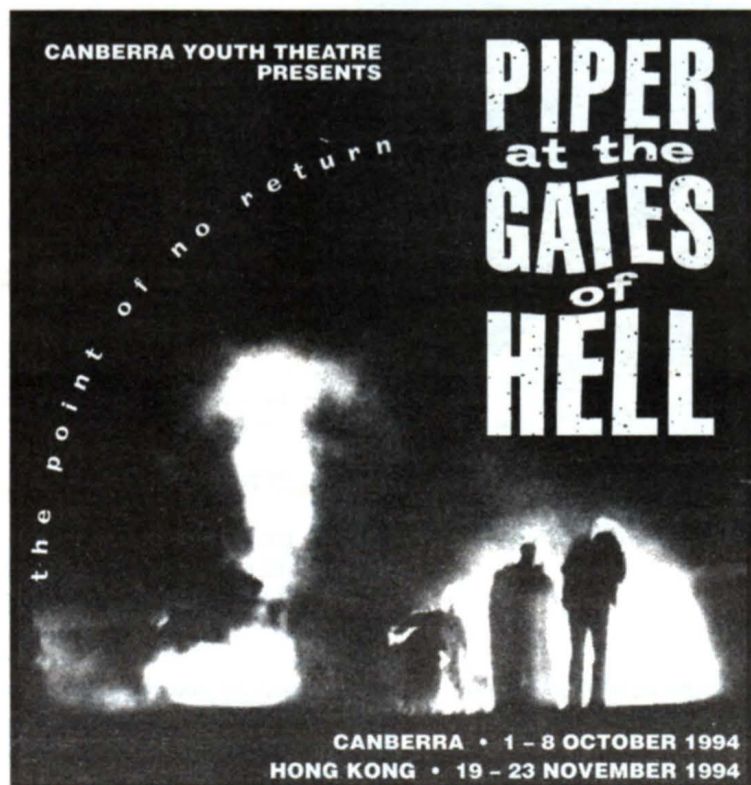
Applications close on Friday, 30 September, 1994.



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Girls in Cyberspace

Jyanni Steffensen e-mails a message from the future

Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century* inspired a generation of female replicants. With cyborg replication uncoupled from organic reproduction, cyborg sex is a nice prophylactic against heterosexism - "My mistress enters my sensory orbit". Contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs - gamegirls, simultaneously organism and machine, who populate cyberspace ambiguously and polymorphously, like Intelligent Mist. *The cyborg is feminist ontology and epistemology and it gives us politics*. It is a creature in a postgendered world - "I image a muscular hybrid" - resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy and perversity - "She decodes my perversities in nanoseconds". It is oppositional, utopian and completely without innocence.

Cyborg monsters in feminist science fiction define different political possibilities and limits from those constructed by the mundane fictions of Man and Woman - "I'm psyching for some hard downtime with a free radical". Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden i.e. through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished (w)hole, a city and cosmos. The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism. As illegitimate offspring they are exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their Fathers are, after all, inessential - "millenia later I am accommodated in an oral cavity which amplifies the workings of her secret cybernetic body...she transforms me into pure code, pure speed...".

All New Gen leading a band of renegade DNA sluts, Patina de Panties, Dentata and the princess of Slime, grants the wish for (s)heroic quests, exuberant eroticism and serious politics. She is omnipresent intelligence, an anarcho-cyber terrorist with multiple guises whose main aim is to virally infect and corrupt the informatics of domination and terminate the moral code. *In this game you become a component of the matrix, joining ANG in her quest to sabotage the databanks of Big Daddy Mainframe...*

Monsters still defined the limits of normalcy in the human imagination. Before they successfully interfaced their bodies with cybernetic matrices, human beings had to appreciate that any desire for stable identity was useless and retarded certain monstrous instincts necessary for healthy interface. Luckily, monsters represented a very large, indelible territory of habits, taboos and details in their psyches. Monsters still exist and their semiotics continue to proliferate. Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of

phallocentrism. The name of the game is infiltration and remapping the possible futures outside the (chromo) phallic patriarchal code.

All battles take place in the Contested Zone, a terrain of propaganda, subversion and transgression. Your guide through the Contested Zone are renegade DNA Sluts, abductors from the oppressive superhero regime, who have joined ANG in her fight

mainframe, a transplanetary military industrial imperial data environment.

The path of infiltration is treacherous and you will encounter many obstacles. The most wicked is Circuit Boy, a dangerous technobimbo: with a gratuitous 3D detachable dick which, when unscrewed transforms into a cellular phone. The phone is a direct line to the Cortex Crones, brain matter of the matrix and guardians of the digi cryst. However, el clitoris es linea directa a la matriz.

Technological determinism is only one ideological space opened by the reconceptualisation of machine and organism as coded texts through which we

will be is a radical question; the answers are a matter of survival. Both chimpanzees and artefacts have politics, so why shouldn't we? On your dangerous and necessary journey to screw up BDM, Circuit Boy and the Cybermen: *You will be fuelled by G-slime. Please monitor your levels. Bonding with the DNA sluts will replenish your supplies.* (I can vouch for this strategy, especially if you remove more than your shoes in the Bonding Booth). "She willingly slid into the other she had always felt herself to have been. She could use her body to connect with the networks of her choice."

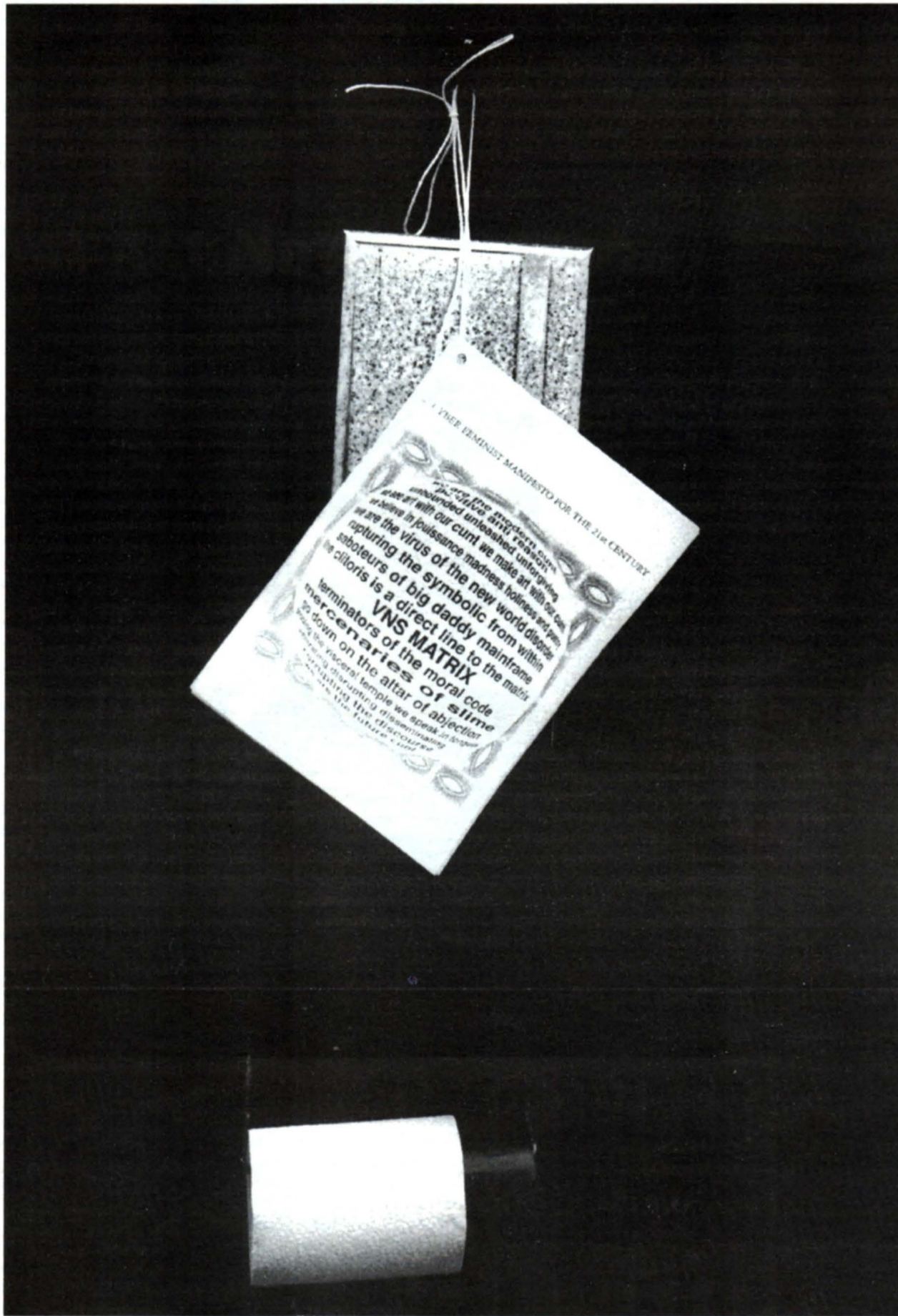
Be prepared to question your gendered biological construction.

Humans classified themselves by gender, which severely impeded the development of social relations such as those involving reproduction, science and technology. One bi-product of gender identifications was labelled the Oedipal complex, a kind of psychological virus. Recall this early but already lethal example from my databank: "Ladies and Gentleman...Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of femininity...Nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem - those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply - you are yourselves the problem". The Oedipal complex was promoted as an irreversible development and caused many disfigured identifications. Consider the transfer of guilt to an entire social class of women in this example or in concepts such as *purity* and *mother*. Such perversions almost certainly account for the brief appearance of Oedipal chimeras during early cyborg development. Fortunately, Oedipal chimeras extinguished themselves on cue by mirroring their identity in dualism. From this, human beings learned to distinguish illegitimate fusions that are ethically unproductive from those that are critically speculative. They are fast becoming post-Oedipal, like me. The potential of cybernetic worlds rests with the feminist cyborg. Salutations, pussy.

Be aware there is no moral code in the Zone.

Once they articulate the representational problems raised by cyborg technology, they will have achieved the status of partial explanations. Then monsters will represent the potential of community of human imagination, and they will say, "I want to make my selves partially appear". Enjoy. "We move through this post-real world at the speed of thought."

Heidrun Lohr



for data liberation...Transformations are effected by virus vectors carrying (hopefully) a new developmental code - Virus of the New World Disorder.

Humans were preoccupied with perfectability. They often said, in the mirroring way they had of saying almost everything, "I want to make myself perfectly clear" and "I want to make my self perfectly clear". Since the difference between these statements was evident only when the written form was carefully read or self was correctly enunciated orally, human beings were prone to totalising arguments, theories of unity and hierarchical dualisms. Gamegirl Objective: To defeat Big Daddy

engage in the play of writing and reading the world. "Textualisation" of everything in poststructural, postmodern, postreal theory has been damned for its disregard for lived relations of domination that ground the 'play' of arbitrary reading. Postmodern (feminist) strategies, such as cyborg myths, undermine the certainty of what counts as real, probably fatally. The transcendent authorisation of interpretation is lost, and with it the ontology grounding Western epistemology. The alternative is not necessarily cynicism or faithlessness like the accounts of technological determinism destroying 'man' by the 'machine' or 'political action' by the 'text'. Who cyborgs

Jyanni Steffensen is an artist, a writer and arts critic, completing her PhD in Women's Studies at Adelaide University.

VNS Matrix are artists Julianne Pierce, Josephine Starrs, Virginia Barrett and Francesca da Rimini working from Sydney and Adelaide. Their current project is the on-going development of an interactive computer artwork All New Gen. VNS Matrix create hybrid electronic artworks which ironically integrate theory with popular culture. As cyberfeminists, VNS Matrix' mission is to hijack technology and remap cyberspace.

Third International Women Playwrights Conference

Virginia Baxter monologues on the IWPC and dialogues with Clare Grant on women writing for performance

Each day of the International Women Playwrights Conference (Adelaide, July) an intriguing dramatis personae assembled on the grim school office set for Dymphna Cusack's *Morning Sacrifice*. From day one when Fatima Dike took the stage as proudly South African for the first time alongside Justine Saunders, Robyn Archer (yodelling us to attention!) and Joan Littlewood - shocking the conference into gear by telling us not to go to the Theatre and threatening to 'do her Laurence Olivier' if we didn't stop her - and for each of the six crowded days that followed, the theatre was alive with women's voices.

Voices connected across forms (inmas of Aboriginal women, shamanistic rituals of Korean Kim Kum Hwa, storyweaving of Spiderwoman Theatre). Voices eloquently discussed identity, representation, language; storytellers everywhere - among the best of them June Mills, Sarah Cathcart & Andrea Lemon, Leow Puay Tin (Malaysia). Voices raised over *Antigone*. The session on New Englishes with Pauline Matthie (Jamaica's Sistren), Stella Kon (Singapore), Cherie Imlah (Australia) and Djanet Sears (Canada) was particularly relevant as Australians become aware of our own rich mix of Englishes. The Body was given voice from the stage (ritualised, gendered, identified, displaced) in workshops (spatialised by Jenny Kemp, destabilised by Peta Tait and Peggy Phelan) and forums including Kishida Rio (Japan) and Pol Pelletier (dynamic Canadian performer/writer). All this plus voices in performances, readings, conversations.

A few gripes, of course. For me, the conference's aim to explore the similarities between traditional performance and the postmodern artist was not altogether realised. Aside from a whisper of postmodernists in the programme (including Deborah Levy from England) performance writers were not to be heard. Clare Grant and I were allotted an hour in the final session to discuss writing for performances outside the framework of playwriting in a performed paper commissioned by Playworks. As it turned out, because the session on the works of Mona Brand, Nancy Wills and Betty Roland ran over time - and how could we begrudge these writers the stage time they have been denied for so long - for Clare and I the experience of addressing a comfortably seated audience from a proscenium stage was appropriately fleeting. We were whisked off the stage after 25 minutes so that the Women's Suffrage Centenary Medal could be presented in the foyer. Joan Littlewood was right. Real life was elsewhere.

Here's an excerpt from the script for that performance, TALKING BACK. The section which details the work of Jenny Kemp, Lyndal Jones, Barbara Campbell, The Partyline, Angharad Wynn-Jones and Amanda Stewart has been omitted. This paper will be performed in full at Sidetrack's Contemporary Performance Week in September and for Playworks at The Performance Space in October.

THEY SWITCH CHAIRS, RELAX INTO INTERVIEW MODE

VB Clare Grant in the hot seat. Let's take a moment to fill the audience in on your work because as with a lot of the work we'll discuss, although it has achieved recognition, has a growing audience, has toured the world, a lot is unpublished.

CG It can't be.
VB Why is that?
CG It may not read like writing.
VB So except for long articles in small publications, you -
CG Videotapes.
VB Videotapes, you -
CG Memories.
VB Memories of performances over the past 10 years, you are a blank page.
CG You too.

THEY READ THE AUDIENCE

CG Totally blank.

VB Anticipatory.

CLARE FLIPS THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE SCRIPT

VB So, where better than this International Women Playwrights Conference to say that there are many women in this country who are writing works for performance that are not plays wouldn't you say, Clare?

CG I'm not accustomed to so many words.

SHE CLOSSES HER EYES.

VB Clare?

SILENCE

CG I've stopped speaking. I have not ceased to exist.

SHE POINTS TO THE AUDIENCE.

CG They are reading me.

VB Clare Grant, could you describe what it is that you... do?

CG In 1986 we co-founded the Sydney Front.

VB We?

CG Seven of us. We started with a piece called WALTZ. It started as a piece about women and war and turned into a piece about the Diva.

VB How was that written?

CG It wasn't written, it was "made".

VB Sorry, "made". From ... ?

CG Collective visions.

VB How did that work?

CG At first a lot of "No" saying.

VB Oh, yes.

CG Thinking. Silence. Staring at walls.

A LONG PAUSE AS SHE STARES FORWARD

VB Staring. Uh-huh ...

CG Then laughing.

VB Laughing.

CG Someone would suggest an action.

VB Good.

CG Everyone would say "No".

VB Oh.

CG 1988. *Pornography of Performance*. "We'll stand naked inside cylinders and invite the audience to touch."

VB No.

CG Yes. 1991. *Don Juan*. "We'll ask someone in the audience to take off their clothes and stand naked for exactly two minutes."

VB No.

CG Yes.

VB Why?

CG "Because it is in these actions that performers or audience or both find themselves in situations where they must react in ways similar to the ways they react when they are not in the theatre. But these reactions are not 'real'. They are highly contrived situations that resist contemplation alone as response. They seem to demand a decision. But making a decision means entering into an unreal world where the consequences do not match

those of the other world outside the walls." John Baylis, 1994.

VB And did they?

CG What?

VB Take off their clothes.

CG Most nights. A couple of times we had to pay them to do it. 1992. *First and Last Warnings*. "The audience will all wear black slips. If they don't they'll pay double, be ushered in late, be seated on the stage and served champagne."

VB Then what?

CG The other half of the audience will build a wall between themselves and the people on the stage.

VB So the action builds to a scene?

CG Yes.

VB How?

CG Usually, we'd decide on an attitude for the scene and leave it to each person individually to come up with something. Then correct each other if it seemed the attitude was "muddy" was a word we used a lot.

VB So, precision was important?

CG Well, we didn't necessarily want the audience to know the precise reason for a scene or action but we certainly wanted

CG Too many words.

SHE SPEAKS INTO THE MICROPHONE

CG Roma is Amor

Amor is Roma

BLACKOUT. CLARE MOVES INTO THE AUDITORIUM. SHE SHINES A TORCH ON SECTIONS OF THE ARCHITECTURE, SOMETIMES ON PEOPLE IN THE AUDIENCE.

CG Before sundown I grew restless and turned towards home. Streets and streets of low bricked garden fences passed by me. I stumbled on until by chance I came upon a hedge row of tangled brambles. On the bush grew a single bloom, guide to those who never go astray. I was in the old neighbourhood, greeting my family at the garden gate.

Roma is Amor

Amor is Roma

And then I realised that it was an angel's voice. St. Michael's to be precise. He told me that St. Catherine and St. Margaret would come and see me and that I was to do as they told me and that I was to believe that their orders came from God.



Fatima Dike and Joan Littlewood

Lisa Tomasetti

There, coming down the middle aisle, under the full flood of light was the face I was looking for. My attention was so rivetted on that face I was not conscious of the figure belonging to it. I couldn't see the neck; the shoulders that held it up. Ah....beloved face, floating down towards me on that stream of light. I longed to be lifted into the light.

SHE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE

Roma is Amor

Amor is Roma

STUBS IT OUT

...tender fingers, I knelt down to receive them on my lips, my ears, my nostrils; across my lidded eyes; at my temple. I knelt down. I am annoyed. I am waiting now. The light warms my cheeks as I wait. I want. I am waiting for that mauve-gloved index finger.

This way please. Thank you. Isn't it a lovely day? How do you do? How do you do? Would you mind helping me with my next scene, please. You won't have to answer any questions. May I have the sugar, please? How do you do? Isn't it a lovely day? Are you out of your mind! What do you mean? How can you possibly say that? Where did John go?

them to be convinced that we as performers had strong reasons for everything we did in performance.

VB And were they convinced?

CG Well, they kept coming back. The Sydney Front made works for seven years, toured many of them around the world until one day someone said: "We disappear ourselves altogether".

VB No.

CG We wrote instructions for the audience to perform the work.

VB That was it?

CG 1993. *Passion*. The audience performed Christ's Passion for each other then The Sydney Front officially ceased to exist.

VB Are there scripts?

CG Written on video to remind the performers.

VB And the text?

CG Descriptions of a set of actions, sometimes with words, for interaction with an audience to incite reaction.

VB So that's writing visions with other people.

CG Shared visions.

VB Let's move to your solo work.

CLARE MOVES TO ONE END OF THE TABLE.

CG Hardly solo. There were four of us.

VB Collectively written solo performance.

CG 1991. *Woman in the Wall*.

VB Let's talk about that.

AS CLARE MOVES BACK TO THE TABLE.

VB This way please Tell me about writing *Woman in the Wall*.

CG In 1991 I was thinking a lot about nuns. I had come across a book about a 6th Century nun who had herself bricked into a wall. She lived in a tiny cell with a hole at the top for air and food and another at the bottom for waste.

VB What drew you to that?

CG I don't know. Possibly that image. Possibly a feeling that I had been constructed into other people's walls, others' sense of my identity. This was the most extreme physical image of that feeling I could imagine.

VB You're attracted to extremes?

CG In performance I am.

VB I'm more interested in details.

CG Your work relies more on text.

VB Languages of all kinds, visual, verbal, musical - and the way language defines the body.

CG You think so?

VB Mm. So the image came first -

CG Then the talk.

VB My territory.

CG Free-ranging, speculative, associative talk.

VB And then?

CG Some written text emerges from

dramaturg and writer Mickey Furuya. The composer Sarah de Jong is walking in Circular Quay and a song hits her in the chest.

VB What's happened to the nun?

CG How would you imagine a body in the 6th Century?

VB Good question.

CG That took us to archaeology, oblique connections to do with heightened religiosity, detectives, puzzles - "Amor is Roma".

VB Roma is Amor. So the talk becomes poetic.

CG You could say that?

VB I'm interested in the actual.

CG Actually, as we were working, outside my house people were walking their dogs. "S-i-t! S-t-a-y!" We heard it so often, we wrote it into the piece.

VB I like that. Then what?

CG Questions. How do we present these ideas in a theatre? Nigel Kellaway starts drawing a sideshow alley. It transforms into platforms. Questions. What is the body doing in the performance? A woman on a plinth emerges wearing a dress made from yards of plastic. Questions. What is the audience's relation to the performance?

VB Question. Were you in there?

CG No. I did tell stories in the rehearsal process but they were well and truly deflected through a female detective, Medea, a madam, a female orator, a wife...

VB Characters?

CG Roles. Is that what you'd call it? To turn the tables.

THEY SWAP CHAIRS.

VB In 1985 I wrote a solo performance called *What Time is This House*. Like *Woman in the Wall* it was written in collaboration with another writer, two visual artists and a composer from our comparative family histories, collages of the languages of houses we'd all lived in and photographs of our own as well as other people's houses. But the voice of the solo performer is my own. I address the audience

intimately as myself.

CG You played yourself?

CLARE MOVES HER CHAIR AWAY

CG There we would disagree.

VB Why?

CG For me the theatre has a different reality.

VB Not *real* real life?

CG In performance, I can do exuberant, outrageous things but it's not me.

VB Who is it then?

CG I am the person who can let myself do certain things in performance.

VB I'd say we're probably closer than you think.

VIRGINIA MOVES HER CHAIR CLOSER

CG But you speak as yourself.

CLARE MOVES HER CHAIR AWAY

VB A version of myself. A "what if" self.

More or less myself. The American comedian Steve Wright says, "I got home last night to find that all my furniture had been stolen and replaced with exact replicas". A persona.

CG We could possibly agree on persona.

VB Okay.

CG I'm touchy on this point.

VB SHE TOUCHES CLARE'S ARM. SHE HISSES. I can see that.

CG When I took *Woman in the Wall* to my home town, some people thought I was telling them the story of my life.

VB Most writing starts with the Self.

CG But a series of *theatrical* events had been layered over it, juxtaposed to change meaning, some of the language was in music, costume, lights, mostly in the movements of the body.

VB When the form is open, there are lots of ways to read it.

CG I felt like I'd left a skin behind in that city and it was waiting for me to slip back into it.

VB But you didn't.

CG Theatre is fiction with its own logic.

Nothing to do with me.

VB Nothing?

CG It was constructed by four people.

VB So other people had constructed your identity?

CG With my collusion. I held on to my ideas but at the same time, gave them up completely if that makes sense.

VB Perfect sense. And in the performance, the audience moved around?

CG There were no seats.

VB You let the audience construct your identity? Write the performance?

CG Not *my* identity!

VB Sorry! The performer's identity. What do we call her "She"? The Woman?

CG "I."

VB "She who is I but Not I."

CG She who moves from one "I" to another so she can't be held down.

VB And who are *you*?

CG In this case, the performer who must keep going no matter what, move through the performance to its conclusion in approximately 50 minutes, always with her eye on the audience.

VB So to put it simply, you start with nuns but unlike a playwright, you don't write a piece with a character based on a nun or the nun-in-you (or the nun-in-all of-us if you're going for *The Human Condition*) who presents herself as a woman in conflict with the world who by some cathartic means manages to break free of the chains (or wall in this case) and comes out changed.

CG Correct.

VB Instead, you start with an image of confinement, you open yourself to the possibility that others may swamp your vision of its meaning, you collaborate with them, at the same time holding on to your own strong personal vision, and together you create a work about a solo performer on stage in which each night, in real time, you embody both the ease and anxiety of that state of moving from one personification of the "self" to the other while the moving audience choose their own versions of you.

CG In a word.

THEY READ THE AUDIENCE.

VB Convinced?

CG Swimming.

THEY SETTLE BACK IN THE CHAIRS.

CG Let me look at you.

CLARE MOVES IN VERY CLOSE TO VIRGINIA & WHISPERS

CG How do you see yourself?

VB The aaa territory ...

CG More personal.

VB The mmm most accurate place to put me ...

CG Too passive.

VB For me to put myself

CG That's better.

VB In relation to say, just say ...

CG Just say it.

VBsomeone who sees herself as a playwright ... is...sorry, lost the thread.

CG How do you see yourself?

VB I would probably ...

CG More definite.

VB I would see myself as having a preoccupation withaaa...

CG L L...

VB Language in performance.

CG Good.

VB Sorry.

CG Don't apologise

VB Languages. In what has been described as a non-text-based medium!

CG Influences.

VB Influences? 1981. Gillian Jones performing her *Anorexia Sometimes*. On stage with a saxophonist. Speaking to the audience. Part stand-up comedienne - no jokes - part raconteur - stories with no endings. I remember she announced at the beginning that she would do some "acting" for us later and proceeded to move in and out of acting. She took my breath away.

CG So?

VB Not so pushy? I'm talking about inspiration here.

CG It's here in the script. "So?"

VB So.

CG Virginia Baxter, how would you say you substantially changed in the transfer from acting in other people's plays to

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performing in your own voice?

VB Big question.

CG Can you handle it?

VB Can I handle it? SHE OPENS HER MOUTH.

CG "I remember one night ..."

VB I remember one night in 1983

performing my first solo work *Just Walk*, a piece about an actor who's given an instruction to 'just walk' across the stage 'naturally'. That night, I stopped addressing the audience as if they were invisible. I looked people in the eyes. It changed everything.

CG Changed you?

VB Everything.

CG How?

VB The um. The um. (SHIFTING TONE AND VOLUME) tone and VOLUME of my voice changed. My breathing changed. I felt authentic. I started to write myself.

CG You expose yourself when you write.

VB SHE STANDS. "Indulgence and Confession". Here we go. CG I wasn't going to say anything about Indulgence and Confession.

VB SHE THUMPS THE TABLE.

All writing begins with the personal. Hopefully you use your writing skills to detach yourself and turn it into something that other people recognise.

CG Finished? SHE TOUCHES HER ARM

VB HISSES Sorry, I'm touchy about that one.

CG So which parts of yourself do you expose?

VB Not nearly as many as you! CG I may sometimes take my clothes off in performance but I do not reveal myself. Which parts?

VB Well, I'm a feminist living in a heterosexual couple in which we are in and out of kilter, out of synch, the dialectical state that most couples live in these days if they're trying to avoid totalities ... to use a very long sentence.

CG For me, always touching, ordinary, complicated moments.

VB Oh! Thank you.

CG Pleasure.

VB Everyday talk interests me.

Conversations - like this one.

CG Oh! Thank you.

VB Pleasure.

THEY SMILE AT EACH OTHER. SNAP OUT OF IT.

CG How do you reproduce talk as performance?

VB I collect, select, edit, rhythmically re-arrange, write, rewrite and then try to forget it's written, to make it sound as close to real as possible.

CG Why real?

VB I am interested in the particularities, the rhythms and patterns of language, the way it expands and contracts, especially the way it shifts in meaning and the way it is rarely ... certain? And not just the sound of it but the way it is expressed by the body.

CG The body in real time and space.

VB Theatre, except for some notable exceptions, is more interested in language in the context of story and character. Bodies, space and time are fictional, the audience barely visible.

CG But intimacy is only one strand of the writing you do.

VB Since 1987, as *Open City* with Keith Gallasch and a promiscuity of collaborators (to coin a phrase), I have created a number of *Intimate Epics* - works in which the Everyday rubs shoulders with the Infinite, the Extraordinary

CG The theoretical, the speculative.

VB The dialogues may sound everyday like this:

VB Clare?

CG Virginia?

VB You walked straight past me.

CG I didn't see you.

VB You looked straight at me.

CG I was looking for you.

VB You looked straight through me.

CG I was elsewhere.

VB You didn't recognise me.

CG Calm down.

VB You were thinking.

CG I don't think so.

VB What were you thinking?

CG What makes you think I was thinking?

VB Your eyes were running a little dialogue.

CG How do I look when I'm not thinking?

VB Vacant.

CG That's when I'm conscious but not thinking.

VB Whatever you were doing, you disappeared me

CG Don't panic.

VB You abandoned me

CG I was conscious but not thinking. I was elsewhere. Therefore I missed seeing you for a moment.

VB Get lost!



Kim Kum Hwa

Lisa Tomasetti

VB That's from *Sum of The Sudden*, a performance event which began at 7 pm and ended at 10 pm each night. The audience were free to come any time and leave when they wanted. The work was about the psychology of the moment in times of crisis or shock.

CG Did you give a lecture on these theories, present a paper?

VB Now there's a leading question. Some of the performance was like lecture/demonstration but there were also a set of Couple Dialogues in very bright light, a set of *Sudden Fictions* at a mirror that caught shadows, a *Man in a Box* acting out a cycle of autistic/obsessive episodes, three fugues for a *Dancer in a Shadow Box* who also told stories to the moving audience. All the stories and events were repeated in cycles over and over. Whoever said Performance was not interested in narrative?

CG Not The BIG Seamless Narrative.

VB Narrative interrupted by other narratives.

CG Physical narratives.

VIRGINIA TUCKS CLARE'S HAIR

BEHIND HER EAR.

CLARE LICKS/CLEANS A SPOT ON VIRGINIA'S FOREHEAD.

BOTH LOOK UNCOMFORTABLE.

VB Spatial narratives.

THEY LOOK AT THE SPACE BETWEEN THEM AND THE AUDIENCE.

CG Mm

VB Mm

CG Let's talk about writing in collaboration.

VB Like you, we don't start with a script. *Open City* starts with ideas—verbal, visual, performative. We don't begin with a theme and try to work out how to disguise it in plot. In theatre, if you're too obvious,

someone will tell you your theme is showing. In Performance, the ideas tend to be on the surface.

CG Doesn't mean they're any easier to unravel.

VB Audiences are more likely to scratch their heads looking for words to describe performance.

CG On the other hand, some are extremely simple.

VB Minimal.

CG Conceptual.

VB *Open City* is discursive. We bounce ideas and creations back and forth between collaborators and end up with a script where art forms converse with one another, interrogate each other.

CG Give us an example.

VB *Sense* (1993) was initially written as a Scenario of Theatre Narratives with Entrances, Expositions and Exits with spaces for the performers, composer,

you fall not straight down but through a network of fine, strong threads and there are millions of them. Next thing, the dirt is in my mouth and I'm choking on it. My head is full of killer tomatoes, triffids, green slime and ooze. That's when I fainted. And I pulled my way up. Up, up, through this upside down forest. Up, up through the horrible sweetness of rotting gardenias. Up, up and I wound up where else but in a greengrocer's. Heads of lettuce, eyes of potatoes, ears of corn (a bit common or garden, they could go) and slowly into focus, the Greengrocer himself. Doctor? "Benign" he said. Benign! "Shop!" said the shop assistants. "Give me carrots, potatoes, cabbages. Bruised is OK. No fruit." Too easy to travel on an imagination of fruit. I bought the shop and they threw in the artichokes because I'd been such a good customer. "Hold out your hand and close your eyes," said the Greengrocer and he planted a truffle in my hand to remind me where I'd been. "A kiss for the cook?" he said. I said, "Please do not squeeze me till I am yours" and I sniffed the truffle and everything fell into place for a second and I left the shop ecstatic accompanied by a couple of percussionists on pumpkins. "Lucky we deliver" said the Greengrocer. (I could still cut a couple of seconds out of that.)

THEY CHECK THE STOPWATCHES. AN ALARMED GASP.

CG It's time

VB Is it that late?

CG Time to recap, neatly summarise.

VB Writing for Performance enlarges the notion of writing.

CG Allowing as it does for collective writing.

VB Writing transformed by improvisation, writing that emerges from improvisation.

CG Different kinds of language.

VB Spoken word.

CB The language of the body.

VB The way they're linked.

CG Performance without language, without text.

VB Writing for Performance does not necessarily rely on the single authority of the writer and the director.

CG Though the form has its auteurs.

VB It is more often created by writer-performers, director-writers, dancer-writers and other hybrids.

CG It allows a great range of languages because it can share in the language of performance poetry, songwriting ...

VB It can deal with theoretical concepts without having to disguise itself in character and plot. Its text is not sub, it is on the surface, spoken or signalled by the performers who invariably play themselves or extensions of themselves, their 'what if?' selves, their own personae.

CG It is a form which offers freedoms taken up by many women writers. In Australia these include among others: Lyndal Jones, Jenny Kemp, Barbara Campbell, Deborah Pollard, Victoria Spence, Peggy Wallach, Amanda Stewart, Ania Walwicz, Sherre de Lys, Annette Tesoriero, Margaret Cameron, Mickey Furuya, Angharad Wynn-Jones, Noelle Janaczewska, Dina Panozzo, Sarah Cathcart, Anna Gibbs, Katia Molina, Bronwyn Calcutt, Sue-Ellen Kohler, the Party Line, Clare Grant, VB Virginia Baxter

THEY BEGIN TO PACK UP THEIR PAPERS.

AS THEY MOVE INTO THE AUDIENCE

CG Happily informed.

VB Expanded.

CG Hungry

VB for more?

CG Just hungry.

END

Performing Sexualities

Conferences on sexuality and performance were recently held in Sydney, Melbourne and, as Linda Carroli reports, at Brisbane's IMA

The day after the *Performing Sexualities* conference held at Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art, I was in a delivery room with a friend in labour with her first child. I use as a mirror for the conference this experience of birth. Coincidence has made them inseparable, although as one speaker, Beth Jackson, observed, sexuality's terms are so loaded with moral value their use requires caution.

The conference examined theoretical and performance work by women and posed questions about how and why women 'use' theory, in particular via performance.

Jackson, of Griffith Artworks and curator of *Knowing The Sensorium*, which provided the context for the Conference, said performance is a mode for the active speaking feminine voice. For the feminine to become active and speaking, her privatised, subjectivised silence must be broken. From behind the closed doors of the delivery room, we can hear the guttural groans of other women in other rooms. The midwife tells my friend to make as much noise as she wants.

Words like "epidural" and "caesarian" hang heavy in the room, despite the fact that the medical team are reminded there is a birth plan, a competing text that has no currency in an obstetrician's world. The doctor later quipped, "Every time I see a birth plan, my heart sinks."

As Glenda Nalder from the Centre for Innovation in the Arts at the Queensland University of Technology remarked, the constitution of subjects has become "increasingly electronically mediated". Meaning is constructed in the overlap of technology, biology, sexuality and culture and these construct systems of domination.

The doctors demand that this labour be accelerated. Their edgy, anal anxiety follows them in and out of the room. Nitrous oxide relieves the tension, if not the pain. The foetal monitor is restricting my friend's movement, compounding the labour pain; although the sound of her baby's heartbeat is calming. After this first encroachment, it doesn't take long before a drip is inserted, then a catheter, and she is entwined in a mess of tubes and wires further restricting her movement. Perhaps this is akin to Stelarc's third arm or his stomach sculpture: the exteriorised sensorium represented by Marshall McLuhan's 'vicious turtle' in Jane Goodall's critique of his metaphor. Goodall, whose work surveys Australian performance, teaches in the Drama Department at Newcastle University. McLuhan drew an analogy between a turtle flipped over, the shell going 'inside' and the central nervous system going 'outside', and the human nervous system being totally 'outered' by too many technological extensions. The turtle turns vicious. We become paranoid. We're anxious about the idea of the human body being obsolete. "If only it was," my friend declared after a particularly aggressive contraction. "The disappearing body is an old cartesian trick and no one is better placed to call its bluff than the performance artist," Goodall said. "We need to know the whole body and not just the brain."

Performer Linda Sproul declared, "while theory informs my work, I'm not a critic or a theorist." It's an interesting disclaimer to make in the context of this conference.



Linda Sproul

Heidrun Lohr


In asking the question "how different is different?" she used as examples the current fixation with body piercing and her own work. We're chilled by her description of *Listen*, for which she had her back and buttocks marked at a domination house. It's not the performance that's chilling, but Sproul's confession that this conference is the first time she has shown its documentation. Until now she's "not wanted to deal with it" and her uneasiness is apparent.

In her case against fixity, Teresa Brennan of New York's New School of Social Research stressed that feminism was a force for change and used the concept of creativity as an oppositional term to fixity. The creative process becomes something which, in its persistence, releases energy in surprising ways. Accordingly, the labour shifts beyond the self's existing fixed governing points.

Brennan's critique of fixity was taken up in novelist Marion Campbell's performative presentation of her own writing. Campbell's paper is lyrical, "about a novel that cannot become". "Writing performs for me a sexual becoming, to enact the difficulties of being multiple and singular at once through subjection to particular identifications in passion and in loss."

Philipa Rothfield of the Philosophy Department, La Trobe University, raised the issue of performing sexuality in relation to dance and the work of Shelley Lasica which, while not being intentionally sexual, is able to be sexual. Movement retains its own sensual, sexual pleasures, beyond those of looking.

After seventeen hours in labour, my friend is whisked off to theatre for a vacuum extraction, with caesarian as a secondary option. In Greenaway's recent film, *The Baby Of Macon*, birth's performative qualities were made patently and grotesquely obvious. After the birth, reunited with her baby, my friend claimed that she understood why "it was called theatre. It was so dramatic. They all yell and argue. At the end, I expected applause."



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Fear of Hybrids

Bosco Rung has his say

... differences should be observed, not in order to be docile to genres, to limit types, or to anally oppose any mixing of forms (which will take place in any case), but in order that the mind may keep itself clear of confusion, since to enjoy a redolently blended stew, we are not required to forget the dissimilarity between carrots and onions

William Gass, "The Art of Self",
HARPERS, May 1994

Yes, but ... In the same article, subtitled "Autobiography in an Age of Narcissism" (Peggy Phelan of NYU said in passing at The Performance Space's Performative Sexualities conference that American performance had ended up in an autobiographical cul de sac! What is happening?), Gass reminds us that the novel, whose purity is so often defended in the face of postmodern irreverence, started out as an odd brew of encyclopedia, confession, history, myth-telling and the intrusion of the real into romance, all simmered and boiled over several hundred years. Your novel reader is not likely to be so distanced from the pleasures of a good book to be thinking, "Carrots? Mm, onions." Mind you, on the encyclopedia front, you do come away from Peter Hoeg's *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* well-informed on the Inuit language for snow and ice.

In the 90s we swing anxiously between the allegedly pure and the synthetic, trying to live out constructive dialectics e.g. multi-culturalism allows one to retain a sense of the culture one emerged from but not at the expense of the one you're living in now. Solution - learn the two languages of these cultures properly (as in the praised Tempe High School project in Sydney). But clitoridectomies? The pressure's on to eliminate them, but by education or by law? Equally, we wonder what kind of body we have or want at the end of the twentieth century - the pure, natural, healthy body or the medical body or, too late, we're already there, the bionic body, the cyborg of implants and transplants and prostheses and genetic elimination of faults. The natural body is a recent construct, wellness can be got at Wellness Clinics, fitness is expensive and sport means, as an epidemiologist put it, "By the year 2010 no triathlete will have their own knees."

The purity of political correctness has let off the hook some old purists whose thinking is strictly binary and who now conveniently equate the reforms of recent decades in sexual politics and the environment with 'McCarthyism'. Fortunately, the P.C. experience hasn't been so frontline here as in the U.S. and the thinking person can question P.C. without losing their liberal hat to the hot winds of debate.

The performing arts are no stranger to the battle between the pure and the synthetic. Tensions in dance (see Karen Pearlman on New York), varying responses to technology in performance (see Linda Carroli), body performance versus text-based, the blurring line between performance and performance art (see Colin Hood), between conventional theatre and performance, between new musics and old (no help from ABC Classic FM) are widely evident. For some, these oppositions and tensions are alarming. At the Adelaide Festival the Performing Arts Board explained the function of the

projected Hybrid Arts committee to responses like, "Who are these people who will get the money? I don't know them." "I hope it's not visual artists, they've already got the VACB." "Is this the PAB trying to call the shots?"

As was explained, the allocated funds, some \$2.4 million (now \$2m), were simply the amount already spent on a diverse range of individual performers and performance companies. The committee would give space to artists whose work had repeatedly 'fallen between funding stools' as well as encourage those who, for example, were working performatively with new technologies and new forms. Given the overall shortage of arts funds, it's not surprising that some theatre practitioners are alarmed that 'their money will go to' impure forms where words don't seem to count so much or in the same way and creative processes are alien.

That word Hybrid looks set to have a life in the arts. As Hybrid Arts it's the name of the Australia Council's Performing Arts Board's new committee, artists in cross artform or multi-artform or multi-media zones are adopting it (see VNS Matrix), and it's the title of the U.K.'s bi-monthly performance magazine. Already there are the predictable mutterings that hybrids are genetically weak and die out and aren't all these cross art, multi arts only fashionable strains that will quickly degenerate. Of course, taking my cue from my quarrel with Mr. Gass, what is pure? Certainly not theatre as even the most cursory glance at its history and the recent practices of Armfield and Kossky in this country in the mainstream alone will show. And who would want to invoke the natural when speaking of the arts? 'Hybrid' is spot on.

Lest you think this is just about forms and that the Hybrid Arts are luxurious experiments at the expense of the pure and of theatre's (and the critics') beloved 'human condition' - as empty, sentimental and pure an expression as you can get today - these hybrids address and embody issues of gender, race, technology and language and the body that are beyond much theatre. Recent yearnings for the purity of the performance art of the 70s and the 'political' theatre of the same period are the result of a snowblindness, a dazzle of memory, a dream of the one, a failure to see the many. As Peta Tait confesses in the introduction to her *Converging Realities*:

Continued on page 23

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When I asked what happened to the radicalism of women's theatre from the 1970's in my book *Original Women's Theatre*, I answered the question somewhat negatively. I realise now that my searching for a coincidence of feminist theoretical and theatrical expression in thematic content in the 1980s prevented me from seeing some surprising new directions and continuities in practice.

Contrary to widely held beliefs, feminism did not become a spent force in terms of women's work in the theatre. ... I now believe that it is possible to argue that women's theatre in the 1970s not only disseminated into other theatre practice but also sustains a genre through the physically performative enactment of gender identity. The interesting example of women's circus, which informed women's work in physical theatre throughout the 1980s, may be a uniquely Australian development in international women's performance.

The Audio and the Ecstasy

Carolyn Craig talks with ABC producers Roz Cheney from *The Listening Room* and Brent Clough from *Radio Eye*

Life at the ABC was never meant to be easy, especially when it's in the throes of another identity crisis. The ABC is torn between allegiance to a traditional mode of broadcasting and a desire to keep up with the techno fast lane of the nineties. The tension is exacerbated by the



McLennan, Ulman, MacGregor, Cheney, Ravlich

politics of economic rationalism from which none can escape.

In the current ABC climate, network policy aimed at maximising audiences is the name of the game. The expansion of JJJ to regional areas is a recent example of this.

"Accessible" is the current buzz word. Witness the rebirth of Classic FM aimed at bringing the classics to the people via a mixture of the favourites of 'the people' (at a safe distance on the phone) and the celebrities (in the inner sanctum of the studio).

Under ABC Managing Director David Hill's muscular populist thumb, ABC staff wriggle. How uncomfortable the wriggling feels depends on where staff and programs are located in the ABC's labyrinthine structure. It's the programs which don't fit neatly into the more conventional genres of classical music, news and current affairs that are likely to become sites for resistance.

The Listening Room and the more recent newcomer *Radio Eye* come out of the Audio Arts department. Both are at the radiophonic cutting edge: if you haven't heard them before, you're in for a listening treat. The programs challenge conventional notions of the old documentary and feature radio forms. *Radio Eye* presents a range of material about contemporary culture (*Does Mother Earth Have AIDS?* and *Surfing The Internet* are recent examples) with an ear to aural texture. *The Listening Room* is committed to the exploration of a range of acoustic forms - performance work, features (dramatic, poetic) abstract sound art and music (on occasion in front of a live studio audience).

The Listening Room is the ABC's flagship acoustic arts

program. Its executive producer Roz Cheney has consistently fought to maintain adequate resources to keep it on air. Says Cheney, "because some managers consider that programs like *The Listening Room* don't fit easily into either a strictly talk or music station they are potentially at risk from mainstream network programming philosophy." RN is basically regarded as a talk and analysis station and FM as a music station, she says, "whereas radiophonic works are considered to be marginal and anything experimental is always in danger of going when times are tough."

In addition to Cheney, *The Listening Room* has a small, dedicated group of creative producers - Andrew McLennan, Tony Macgregor, Robyn Ravlich and Jane Ulman. Despite several international awards, *The Listening Room* has experienced cutbacks in airtime (as of February 1993 it was reduced from 90 minutes to a "flexible" 60 minutes on FM and its repeat on RN was dropped). In addition, *The Listening Room* has been affected by a 40% cut in its artists' budget over the last two years. Cheney believes "that programs such as *The Listening Room* and *Radio Eye* face particular difficulties in developing new forms of radiophonic expression and diversity in the face of the ABC's current conformist profile".

Although *Radio Eye* producers Brent Clough, Matthew Leonard, Sharon Davies and Nick Franklin come from a variety of broadcasting backgrounds in journalism and features, the program is committed to challenging traditional broadcasting values. *Radio Eye* sees its role as promoting debate about culture in the broadest sense. Clough thinks there is a parallel with the ways of thinking being discussed in the cultural studies field in universities.

Radio Eye challenges some of the old professional dichotomies between documentary and feature, and questions issues of authority and framing. On the role of the presenter, Clough says, "Radio National in general is about traditional viewpoints whereas *Radio Eye* tries to ask questions about representation in the media".

So what is being offered by *The Listening Room* and *Radio Eye* in the future? Here's a glimpse of *Listening Room*'s highlights for August.

E-Dice: A Plan for Eurydice by Paul Charlier (Monday 8 August). This program weaves the myth of Eurydice in the underworld with disturbing documentary material from the experiments of infamous psychotherapists. These include Australia's own Dr Harry Bailey and an American Dr Wilder Penfield, who in the 50s and 60s stimulated with an electrode the exposed brains of patients who were being operated on. Through an electronic score and the coalescing of these themes, Charlier evokes a metaphysical zone resonating with radio ether, computer memory and the unconscious.

Winter's Tale: A Melodrama for Radio (Monday 15 August). Written by Gerhard Ruhm, directed by Klaus Schoning of West German Radio, technical production by Andy Henley, production by Andrew McLennan. In *Winter's Tale*, a young man buys a car and is attacked by a group of youths. He is tied up in a wooded area wearing only his underpants in -15 degrees. He manages to free his hands but not his feet and struggles five hundred metres to the edge of a main road. A man and woman drive past as the young man gesticulates desperately. They drive on. In seventeen minutes we are chilled by an intensely musical and symbolic score and a frightening roadside ambience. An impartial newsreader and a Greek chorus retell this true story punctuated by a mechanical techno-track. Also on this night, *From the Forest: Winter* by Jane and Philip Ulman, an acoustically sensitive and meditative soundscape of the Australian bush in winter.

Graveyard Gate (Monday 22 August), technical direction by Russell

Stapleton, produced by Robyn Ravlich. An acoustic impression of a city of the dead. A cemetery in the western suburbs of Sydney, Rookwood Necropolis, provides the site for a journey where the voices of the past and the present mingle. The graveyard gate is an enigmatic stairway to heaven and opens into an excursion through cemetery lore. Voices intoning at the graveside mix with ghostly sonic traces and even a tour of a crematorium. This program is the ABC entry in the Documentary section of the 1994 Prix Italia in September.

Finally, *Lament for Lost Buildings* (Monday 29 August) by Peter King and Jonathan Mills, production by Jane Ulman and Cathy Peters. This complex sound piece pays tribute to the vision of Marion Mahony Griffin, draughtswoman and professional partner of her husband Walter Burley-Griffin. This is a lamentation for a much neglected architect whose dreams met with great frustration.

In August *Radio Eye* transports us to unusual sites of cultural expression. In *Bridge of Voices: Living with Autism* (Sunday 7 August), listeners will hear from an international network of autistic people who have bridged what was thought to be an impenetrable barrier to communication. *The Wall in the Mind* (Sunday 14 August) focuses on the growing tension between East and West Berlin in the wake of the reunification of Germany. Berliners of all persuasions talk about the Wall as both object and subject.

Judith (Sunday 21 August), billed as the "alternative biblical blockbuster", is a retelling of the original tale of Judith in the Apocrypha. The Renaissance artist Artemista Gentileschi, after being raped, painted the subject of Judith many times. Freud based his decapitation = castration theories partly on the story of Judith. This program is performed by Judith Anderson in part and is produced by Judith Kampfner. *To Catch a Flying Star* (Sunday August 28), produced by Jamie Leonarder and Matthew Leonard with technical production by John Jacobs, promises to be an acoustic voyeur's delight: an insight into the collective trauma of human contact with UFOs and their occupants.

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In this edition of Real Time Carolyn Craig writes about *The Listening Room*... at the radiophonic cutting edge... and its August programs.

In September you can hear Gerhard Ruhm's *Ophelia and The Words* with Judy Davis and *From Dreams and Visions* by Sarah Hopkins (Sept.5); *From The Forest: Spring* by Jane and Phillip Ulman and *Dry Country: Voices of the Wimmera* by Elwyn Dennis (Sept.19) and *Echoes of Eternity* by Robyn Ravlich and *Ghost in the Machines* by Jane and Phillip Ulman (Sept. 26).

For release by ABC Music in September four CDs of *The Listening Room* productions: **Alpha:** *The Listening Room* by Roz Cheney and John Jacobs, *New & Curious Subjects* by Roz Cheney, *Currawong* by Moya Henderson, *The Harbour Breathes* by Rik Rue and *Nethermost Parts of the Dark* by Ross Bolleter • **Beta:** *The Strange Machine* by Ion Pearce, *Mungo* by Ros Bandt and *Metamorphoses I* by Andrew Yencken • **Gamma:** *Dry Country* by Elwyn Dennis, *Bal-Moral: A Number of Positions Plus Waves* by Emanuele Caiato and *Music and Questions* by Tom Johnson • **Delta:** *Fragment Constructions* by Bill Seaman and *Staccati en Glissando* by Henri Chopin.



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by Peta Tait



The first comprehensive study into theatre created by Australian women, *Converging Realities* looks at the work of those women who express feminist ideas through their use of form. Peta Tait identifies how women's work in comic and physical styles, performed in unusual spaces, necessitates a redefinition of feminist theatre. Addressing both theoretical and practical issues, this volume also contains contributions from Venetia Gilot, Julie Holledge, Anna Messariti, Lydia Miller and Mary Moore.

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600,000 hours is considered to be the average human life span. 600,000 Hours (mortality) is a project of the Experimental Art Foundation that focuses on attitudes towards, and metaphors of, the dissolution of the body and mortality both within the personal, the cultural and the societal arenas. The project comprises an exhibition program, contextualising publication and conference.

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This project has been assisted by the
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Australia Council and Foundation South Australia

Fresh Currency

Keith Gallasch encounters
converging and other realities
at Currency Press

The publication of Peta Tait's *Converging Realities, Feminism in Australia Theatre*, is a bold move by Currency in collaboration with Melbourne's Artmoves. Its perfectly timed release coincides with the International Women's Playwrights Conference (where it was launched) held in Adelaide, Performative Sexualities conferences in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, and the burgeoning interest in women's theatre and performance in university departments.

"Bold" because it's not the kind of book you'd expect from Currency, a publisher associated with faithfully and extensively documenting Australian theatre. You would search in vain in their impressive catalogue for discussion of the ideas and theories that have invaded and challenged theatre and performance over the last decade.

Tait's *Converging Realities* not only documents very clearly the influences of feminism in theatre by women since the 70s, detailing productions, working methods, international contexts, critical and personal responses, but does it in terms of recent theorising of culture and gender, and is about as accessible as you can get when having to deal with the poetics of contemporary theory.

True to the spirit of the feminist theatre she describes, Tait's book is in part collaborative. She shares her space not only with many interviewees but also with significant contributions from Venetia Gilot, Anna Messariti, Lydia Miller, Mary Moore, and Julie Holledge whose "The Language of the Lover", about the erotic, intersubjective relationships between performer and audience and performer and director, is a real bonus. It's an ambitious, courageous and necessary book which will, of course, be criticised for what it has left out, for using too much or too little theory and for being implicitly separatist.

What it does for Currency and for the reader is expand, even explode the standard notion of theatre as driven by plays interpreted by directors, actors and designers. The women's work reported by Tait ranges from conventional practice (albeit with new content) to circus to performance to community events and rituals, from playwrighting to

collective creations.

Emboldened by such an addition to Currency's Women's Studies List, I asked Katherine Brisbane, publisher, and Sandra Gorman, publishing director and proud of *Converging Realities*, what are the chances of a book on Performance covering pretty much the same period. The mood darkens. "We've had about five offers." What about publishing performance texts? "Essentially we publish literature. Plays have to be well written before we'll publish them. They have to be intelligible. We have to like them." Of course, many performance works can't be adequately documented in print, but there are artists and companies that work with language. I point out that they are about to publish visual artist and writer Noelle Janaczewska's *The History of Water*. They point out they're going to publish a book by Gaye Poole on food in Australian drama next year. I ask, will it cover performance works and will its release coincide with The Performance Space's projected international food event, which they didn't know about but are now interested in. "We are publishing Neil Cameron's *Running and Stamping Book*, which is more than exercises, it's a philosophy." Cameron wrote the very practical *Fire on the Water* for Currency based on his experiences of creating large scale ceremonies and theatre works with communities across the world.

Given the expanding and diverse range of Currency activities it seems indelicate of me to push the performance barrow too far. Their lists in teenage drama (including recently Nick Enright's *Property of the Clan*), screenplays (especially prepared for publication rather than just running off the filming draft), 'plays from Black Australia' and community theatre preserve much that is ephemeral in theatre and are a revealing reflection of the history of our subsidised theatre and the sheer scale of its creativity. Sandra Gorman noted too their interest not only in works reflecting multi-cultural Australia but in publishing bilingual texts with a Vietnamese-English version of Bruce Keller's *Puppy Love* first up. With Keller to-and-fro-ing between Australia and Vietnam, the publication will be valuable on both local and overseas fronts.

Brisbane's personal preoccupation is with Currency's music titles. Despite conservative resistance in the music teaching field, Currency's beautifully designed sheet music, including collections of Australian guitar solos, Australian piano music and "Organ Australis" are slowly making an impression. After the success of her *Entertaining Australia*, a history of the performing arts in Australia, Brisbane now faces the copious task of completing *A Companion to Theatre in Australia* begun by the late Philip Parsons.

There's a strong sense of anything is possible at Currency Press and, says Gorman, "while schools and universities provide the backbone of our sales, a good independent bookshop is bound to have at least a metre of Currency books."

Noises in the Blood

Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the Vulgar Body of Jamaican Popular Culture by Carolyn Cooper
(Warwick University Caribbean Studies; MacMillan Press; London, 1993)

As a form of 'New English', Jamaican has been spectacularly successful in using the circuits of international popular culture to spread itself around. While it seems much of the global population is hard-wired into electronic America's version of black orality (from Oprah to O.J., Spike to Shaq), Jamaica's 'bare-foot' language has emerged as a wilful border-crosser, intent on establishing 'affective alliances' through the twin routes of music and migration.

Carolyn Cooper lectures in the English department at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, but like most Jamaicans she loves to travel. She visited the South Pacific and Australia last year to research women's literature, check out the local reggae scene and discuss the "bastard oral texts...vulgar products of illicit procreation...pervasive invasions of the tightly-closed orifices of the Great Tradition" which constitute the subjects of her study.

Key bastard texts Cooper explores include the poems of pre-eminent Jamaican folklorist Louise Bennett, Erna Brodber's book *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*, Michael Thelwell's novelisation of the film *The Harder They Come*, Bob Marley's lyrics, performance poems by Jean 'Binta' Breeze and Michael Smith and lyrics from a range of contemporary dancehall DJs.

Certainly, *Noises in the Blood* demands at least that your ears are wide open. It's an insistence rarely encountered in scholarly texts, but one familiar to anyone 'fram foreign' who listens carefully to the lyrics of a dub poem or reggae 'chat'.

An unu beta riid it. It maita likl haad fi kech di spelin

fi di fers, bot afta yu gwaan gwaan, it no so bad.

The cunning strategy of *Noises* is to lead the assiduous reader into a patch of the author's own patois (rendered in the widely accepted Cassidy orthographic system). Cooper leaves the reader stranded until his or her voice hesitantly negotiates the text for phonetic clues to get 'out' or perhaps further 'in'.

It's this interpenetration of scribal and oral traditions, the collective moulding of a resistant orality in vocal performance, which gives Jamaican its strength and subversive versatility. Interestingly, the chapter in which Cooper forces the text to speak Jamaican considers the work of the London-based Sistren Theatre Collective, whose members recently attended the Women Playwrights Conference in Adelaide. Their work is implicitly ordered on the basis of 'corrupted' English, the oral accounts of black women who craftily retain their Jamaican grammar, syntax, proverbs, metaphors and folk tales in the face of massive cultural demands for 'correction'.

Add to Sistren's visit, recent concerts/workshops by dub poet Benjamin Zephaniah; Sydney-based Jamaican poet Starman's scheduled performance at this year's Sunsplash concert in Kingston; a major tour by reggae artists Chaka Demus, Pliers and Jack Radics; the presence of reggae sound-systems and bands (many featuring remarkably hybrid line-ups) playing original and cover material - and it's obvious that noise from a small Jamaican island has long since bubbled into our veins. Just exactly how Jamaican invigorates the lifeblood of other 'new Englishes' in this country remains to be said.

Brent Clough

Brent Clough is presenter of Radio National's Radio Eye features programme and selector with the Sydney ragga sound system, Nasty Tek.

Paris Between the Lines

Tony MacGregor

The Australian poet Christopher Barnett recently gave a reading to launch his new book, *The Blue Boat*, published here in Paris in a bilingual edition by the small but perfectly formed house of Le Nouveau Commerce.

I remember Chris from earlier days, a roaring boy: shaven head, teeth missing, incantatory, lavish with his anger, his romance and his despair, sometimes drunken, mostly belligerent but lovable all the same in Adelaide and Melbourne. At 40, he is still lavish, but on the wagon, teeth restored, wearing his politics on his sleeve, a hammer and sickle tattooed inside a large red star on his forearm. Long hair held back with a clip. Big rings, loads of bangles and bracelets.

The owner of the English language bookshop which hosted the reading introduced him as an artist for whom France was a spiritual homeland. After the usual thank-yous - partner, publisher, translator, the Communist Party of Australia for expelling him - he went on: "And I want to thank my country for giving me the hate out of which I write. I hate my country with a pure and deep hate, an enduring hate, without which I could not write."

And then the work. A nervous beginning...loud, almost shouting and then settling to an uneven keening, a rhythm of hesitations and revelations. Given in shaky whispers, joined for long sections by two French readers, giving the whole thing a musical texture, exposing Chris's vulnerability, lending his images a compelling emotional strength. A beautiful poem.

After, in discussion, he returned over and over to the theme of his hate and contempt for Australia, a brutalised and brutalising culture which stupefied the souls of ordinary men and destroyed those of poets. A nation in constant denial of its genocidal and criminal past. A country redeemed only by its landscape and the original inhabitants

of that landscape.

In France, by comparison, he found context and conviviality - historical depth and circumstances in the everyday life of the culture which welcomed and supported him and his work. A place where it was possible to be both a poet and to discover what it was to be a man who loved someone.

Reading this now, it seems almost like a parody of the Romance of Exile, but Christopher was nervously vulnerable as he sat there for these strangers seeking to open a space for his work in another country and another language. His descriptions of Australia can never be mine. And his invocation of France as an Exile's haven was perfectly sincere, but impossible not to read as a continuing romance in a direct line influence from an earlier generation's exile, when a coffee at Cafe Flore didn't set you back \$6.

Expatriation is about the reinvention of self, in which the mythologising of departure is more important than the reality of arrival. In that sense, Christopher's exile is compelling. Yet such exile is also a luxury, as it always was, but one that now seems less attainable in a world of selective borders and multinational cultural commodities.

Two weeks later, at this same bookshop, another expatriate Australian writer was reading: Janet Turner-Hospital, launching the publication in French of an early novel, *The Tiger in the Tiger Pit*.

Turner-Hospital enjoys international literary respectability: at her reading were the Australian ambassador and Barry Jones even. No mention here of hate of country or genocide. Despite decades of nomadic expatriation, Janet Turner-Hospital can still be called Australian, even if the basis on which she calls Australia home is uncertain.

But when she says that her life in exile came about accidentally, she avoids acknowledging the need for reinvention afforded by exile, the need that some people have to escape what seems to be an implacable destiny or the dead hand of cultural predicament. To the question, where do you most feel 'at home' she answers, "I don't know", but says each year she returns to Australia, where she feels compelled to visit the rainforest of coastal Queensland. This she sees as her soul place, a place of dark, cool beauty and silence, to which she must return for spiritual sustenance. It is an image of a landscape without people, a landscape in perpetual stasis. The discussion continues, and finally she says: "Australia is the place where I feel most 'not at home'". Later she says: "In some ways I feel most comfortable in

airport transit lounges or railway waiting rooms."

Here, in the between and nowhere places, she hears the confidences of strangers brought together by flight delays and lost baggage - valuable material for a writer. And we all laugh.

France welcomes artists and rich Americans...its borders are open to a veritable babylon of Europeans.

But Europe is closing its borders to the south and to the east. Each year hundreds of black bodies wash up on the southern coast of Spain having failed in the attempt to swim the few miles from Morocco. In Paris it is impossible not to be reminded that comfort of "in between" is the privilege of the voluntary exile, of the traveller and tourist.

Sport

Tee Off

with Vivienne Inch

Marr and Parr

Is it just me or does anyone else get the impression listening to ABC Radio's Arts Today that the umpire has taken over the game? I had one ear glued to the programme on Performance Art as I teed off and it seemed to me that possibilities for decent volleys between the artists assembled were stymied by the ump blowing his whistle: "Sorry, Stelarc. For our listeners, could you explain 'psychobiology'?" While he appears to be a nice enough chap, intelligent and knowledgeable in some areas, but what does he know about Performance? Couldn't he sometimes whisper discretely from the booth ("Fine argument") or busy himself banging coconuts together as points are scored by artists speaking for themselves, unmediated. Most umpires stay away from games they don't know, keep a discrete distance from the players and acknowledge that most of the crowd knows what they're watching.

And while I've got the ball, what was Mike Parr doing coaching from the sidelines at the 25 Years of Performance Art Forum unfairly tackling Joan Brassil, yelling "Purity!" and "No money for players!". Mike left the game a few years ago after cutting off his prosthesis, only recently emerging through a black maze. I think the game's changed since he left the field but I'm only a sports commentator, what would I know?


Tooth and Claw

with Jack Rufus


Diego Maradona had every right to be outraged when he was ejected from World Cup '94. His skilfully prepared blend of five pseudo-ephedrine variants made him sharp, quick, explosive: the player of the tournament. What an enfeebled World Cup we were left with, once the wild-eyed Maradona was drummed out by the puritans of FIFA!

Can't they see the benefits of pseudo-ephedrine? Without it, Maradona was fat and sluggish, a has-been. With it, he charged at the world - and the world was back-peddalling! Isn't it time for the FIFA stuffed-shirts to do the logical thing - and open soccer up to drugs? No restrictions: Ben Johnson could make a comeback on the wing, defenders could bulk up on steroids, forwards could maraud at the goal, fuelled by coke, amphetamines and angel dust!

Why stop there? Throw the game open to genetic engineering and the marvels of science. Eight-armed goalkeepers could hang like spiders from the goalposts. Midfielders could shoot out prosthetic extensions. Strikers could rocket their shots at goal with jet propulsion and laser guidance systems. Coaches could send on mutant cyborgs, drug-crazed maniacs and interceptor robots. Now that's football! That's entertainment!




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SPACE**

Perhaps artists have traditionally been law-breakers and their artistic practice has always involved an element which strains at convention and law. At times such straining at convention and law is driven by rational motives against perceived irrational standards in the broader community. So what happens to the artistic practice in a world which is totally rational - one which is modelled on rationality? One whose problem is seen to be the system of rationality? Doesn't the artist then have to do a kind of reversal, like the arrow of time when the universe begins to contract? Doesn't the artist have to reveal the weakness and the failings of rationality by performing in a way which is thought to be against rational standards. This seems to be the only avenue left for today's artists whose sole responsibility is to act irresponsibly before all conventional standards. And anyway The Performance Space has been publicly perceived as the place where the irrational confronts the rational. Narratives are discarded for fragmentary and non-text based works, and the shit and piss of the body are made of equal importance as the meaning that comes from the tongue. So what is the big deal about "the locked gates"? You can understand the logic. We set up an institution to challenge a social system; and that challenge in the present context is not to move to greater forms of order (that was yesterday), but to challenge the system of rationality which is so obviously riddled with problems. But we are not consistent when we set up the paradox of an institution which is opposed to the institutionalisation of art forms. There is hypocrisy here. We only have to look at the way the avant garde has now become the establishment. This is our hypocritical situation so you may as well look at it. We want to challenge everything that is conventional and rational, but we also want to control that challenge by means of the institution which is implicated in a rational order. We want destruction but we want to keep it within the containment of an institution. The only responsible act left for an artist who wants to throw out all the remains of the rational system and perform the patchwork necessary is that he should burn down, throw out, lock-up the institution which maintains itself in an act of rationality - **William McClure, The Performance Space Quarterly, Spring issue out now.**

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Search and Destroy

Survival Research Laboratories are coming to Blacktown. Douglas Kahn does reconnaissance

In New York an immense art market mandates the creation of a constant scattering of individual art stars. The San Francisco Bay Area, on the other hand, with its long history of tolerance, eccentricity and collective action, has always been better at nurturing subcultures: the Beats, Hippies and Psychedelic culture, Underground Comics, Mission Lowriders, Berkeley Bohos and Sits, Punks, Modern Primitives, Oakland Rappers, Hackers and Cyberpunks etc. New York may salute the flag of a Jasper Johns, but the Bay Area wears an R. Crumb T-shirt and scratches its arse.



These subcultures have increasingly taken on more and more technological trappings. Whereas the Beats were largely atechological (with the exception of the Bay Alien William Burroughs with his adding machine, orgone box, e-meter, dream machine, audiotape and film cut-ups) and the Hippies were anti-technological (if you look past electric guitars and light shows), recent computer-driven subcultures are fusing silicon chips with carbon-based corpuscles and washing them down with designer drugs. Inhabiting an oscillating point between total disinterest and giddy embrace are the machine performances of Survival Research Laboratories.

Under the direction of Mark Pauline, SRL has mounted a formidable array of noisy spectacles since the late 1970s which, after a certain point, have regularly attracted crowds in the thousands with more breaking down the door. Many more learn about them through videotapes, broadcasts, word-of-mouth, *Research* and other publications. There is of course only one way to truly experience the cacophony, flash, heat, smoke and stench of one of these performances. But imagine with the full length of your body big lumbering machines and frail peering ones, dead-animal/live-

machine hybrids (perhaps melded with your lost road-kill cat), a stray sacrificial Billy Graham robot, and a race car with mace side-claw and tank-track pincers with an appetite for speared sheep heads all out to destroy each other. At the same time you are being targeted by fluorescent tube rifles and blasted by sonic cannons and explosions, soaked in perfume or fire and bathed in the warm glow of dozens of burning pianos and Deep-Fifties music intercut with blood-curdling lamentations subsisting on a cornucopia of guts. SRL's tech can get sophisticated - the world's largest Tesla coil, a 'supersonic' propeller, V1 rocket engine, computer-assisted remote controllers - but the experience is raw.

The audience members are not only assaulted by simply being witnesses to such a display but they are also, having signed a waiver form in case of injury, willing objects of a broadside attack. Such attacks against the audience are nothing on the scale of the machines' attacks upon each other, which are, in turn, nothing when compared to how humans use machines to attack each other. That is why the pounding pomp and fiery circumstance of an SRL destruction derby can only give an inkling of what some people have felt around the world when the U.S. comes for a visit. Although Bay Area audiences are the most actively anti-militarist in the nation, there are no intrinsic politics contained here, just as firing a gun may repulse, teach respect, engender a sport, have no effect or sexually arouse different people pulling the trigger. The same is true for SRL's predator/prey view of nature, for the only natural artefacts here are the hard-wired instincts installed into machines by a social legacy of ferocious control and fleeting desires; the only environment a parodic, post-apocalyptic dystopia raked free of life forms, that makes *Mad Max* seem like the moralistic cake walk it is. Also for many people the performances are intensely funny, but they are never tongue-in-cheek enough to prevent the cheek from being shredded and the tongue torn out.

In the context of the history of technology, the SRL enterprise might seem fairly anachronistic. Mechanics has given way to infomatics and telematics and the brute scale of engineering has shrunk down to the turning of atomic cogs and splicing of genetic code. SRL instead lives and scavenges amidst the debilitated light-industrial areas, where they bring the detritus back to more life than it ever enjoyed in its functional heyday. However, these machines are reconfigured and invigorated only to more effectively destroy one another once and for all. To entice dying technology into one last masquerade, simply for the perverse enjoyment of a generation awash in electrical currents, is both an instance of cruel humour and a public service. If this technology is not given assistance in its own demise - whether they be automobiles, military weaponry or the beefy bulkheads and hydraulics of nuclear power plants - then its continued existence will mean the slow, festering disappearance of humans, leaving a planet of uncooperative machines with no one to entertain but themselves.

Douglas Kahn is an artist and writer, coeditor of *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-garde* (M.I.T. Press, 1992), newly transplanted from the U.S. to the South Coast of NSW.

Street Level

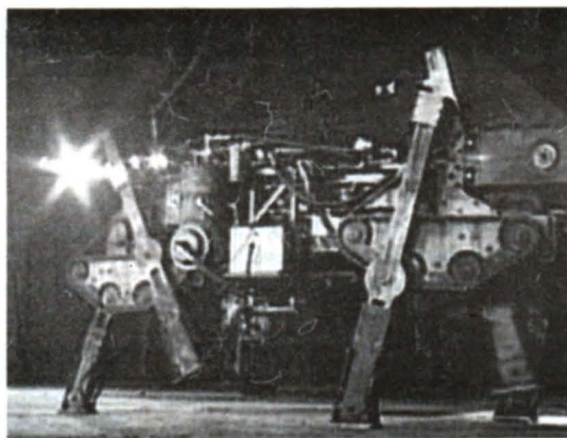
Street Level, an artist-run-initiative in Sydney's west, is about to insinuate itself into the national arts consciousness. This funky art and community space has taken other larger, better-funded organisations by surprise by announcing that it has invited Mark Pauline and Leslie Gladsjo from San Francisco's infamous Survival Research Laboratories to Australia - to Blacktown in fact. Not only has Street Level shown entrepreneurial flair on its own behalf, but it has negotiated a small tour of other Australian cities as well. SRL won't be performing its explosive form of public art this time round, but Pauline and Gladsjo will be guest speakers on the workshop, forum and lecture tour.

Survival Research Laboratories works as a collaborative organisation, bringing together creative technicians and technologies to produce intense, spectacular events. The group is internationally recognised for its organisation, construction, staging and documentation of these large-scale public performances. Street Level believes that Mark Pauline and Leslie Gladsjo will make an interesting intervention into local discussion. Survival Research Laboratories was founded by Pauline in 1978. Apart from his role as creative director and designer-constructor of SRL's incredible mechanical devices, he has overseen the development and survival of the group. At the workshop he will advise on urban and industrial scavenging, design and construction, and the development and production of big events. Leslie Gladsjo documents SRL's performances; in fact most of the group's large international audience has only seen the work through Gladsjo's documentaries.

Whilst in Australia she will talk about the technical and logistical requirements of producing high-standard documentation. Gladsjo has also created works about performance-artists Kathy Acker and Karen Finley and is currently working in Europe making a documentary about Bosnia.

The public forum to be held at Blacktown will also involve local practitioners plus Sarah Miller from The Perth Institute of Contemporary Art and Angharad Wynne-Jones from The Performance Space. Legal and insurance specialists, cultural planners and local and state government representatives will also speak. Many successful collaborative public-art events have already been initiated by local artists, but the complexity of negotiating the use of public space can be daunting. Street Level hopes that one of the forum's outcomes will be an increased understanding of the different needs and desires of each of the players in these sorts of creative enterprises.

Another sign of Street Level's determination to break the isolation of living and working 'out west' is its involvement with five other Sydney galleries in a joint marketing strategy. Street Level have joined with Artspace, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Australian Centre for Photography, First Draft and The Performance Space to work on a number of group projects, including a flashy brochure and a contemporary art bus which will be launched this month. With all this activity it is clear that Street Level has no intention of allowing the contemporary art scene to remain quite so inner-city-centric.



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U.S. MACHINE PERFORMANCE GROUP

**WORKSHOP
FORUM &
LECTURE TOUR**
SEPT 16 - OCT 2



MARK PAULINE
(creative director)

LESLIE GLADJSJO
(cinematographer)

LECTURES

CASULA POWERHOUSE

LIVERPOOL 16 SEPT

THE PERFORMANCE SPACE

REDFERN 20 SEPT

I.M.A. BRISBANE 22 SEPT

A.C.C.A. MELBOURNE 29 SEPT

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This project was initiated and developed by David Cranswick and Adam Lucas in conjunction with Street Level Blacktown, College of Fine Arts UNSW, and the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council. Liverpool Council are major sponsors and project partners.



This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding & advisory body.



Stages of Eating

Stephen Varaday on the theatrics of restaurant design in Sydney and Melbourne

So when you go out to eat, what are your reasons? Sustenance, convenience, and social interaction are obvious immediate responses - but there are a multitude of deeper, subliminal forces at play when it comes to the dining experience.

The notion of promenade, of watching and being watched, the complete interactive activity of going out to dinner sets up a certain theatricality and inevitable performance that is embedded in our collective psyche. World renowned architect and head of the School of Architecture at Columbia University in New York, Bernard Tschumi, recently noted that "Architecture is as much about the event that takes place in a space as about the space itself". Now this may seem superficially obvious, but for a generation of architects reared for decades on the well-worn and often misinterpreted maxim that 'Form Follows Function', it has been a somewhat difficult concept to swallow.

Our immediate world has been shaped by economics and consumerism. A building is no longer a symbol for its owner, whether it be a religious order or a bank or a post office or a theatre. Buildings have become commodities, generally not to be inhabited by their owners, but handed on from one superannuation fund to a banker, and on again to a public company. Acquisitions of financial value, but of no definable symbolic worth. An office tower becomes a block of apartments. An industrial building becomes offices. A church becomes a theatre. A mortuary platform becomes a place to hold functions. A house becomes a restaurant, and a smaller office building becomes an art

museum. This is not a world in which we can have fixed notions about external forms and appearances.

During my relatively short lifespan, the eating habits of our nation have transformed from the most basic past to a present that is blessed with the widest, freshest, variety of produce, a multiplicity of ethnic influences, and a diversity of eating establishments that many in this country are still to experience.

Into this world, centre-stage, steps a chef. An artist, using materials and skills to craft a culinary creation. Being a chef is not a solitary occupation, needing the interaction and appreciation of others for it to be truly satisfying. It also needs a place. A place as simple and basic, or as elaborate and crafted as is required to complement the meal. Economic realities intrude upon artistic poetics, and the real world of shops, terraces and bank buildings have to be re-invented as 'place'. 'Place' that will allow the performances to be played out, the theatricality of the performance of eating.

The diversity of place is a much wider topic that branches in many directions, and so I will concentrate on three places of similar disposition. Rocket and Darley Street Thai in Sydney, and Monsoon in Melbourne. All three have been designed with a theatrical air - of elevating the diner above the mere necessity of eating, and of setting a program outside of the everyday. There is a hierarchy, a plan or a script which has been sewn into the fabric of the design that guides each individual through their own improvisations. Walking past, looking into, moving inside and through, standing, being seated, looking, seeing,

reading, speaking, feeling, and, of course, eating. The colours, the forms, the nuances of each space co-existing with, enhancing, and heightening the pleasure of the meal. All of the senses are being engaged. A confluence of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste.

Monsoon is the oldest of these dining stage-sets. It is a relatively small space inserted into a former 19th century shop in Armadale. The architects, Robinson Chen, enhancing the simple space with bold colours that echo the palette of the Asian inspired dishes that are served. Colours of curry and spice hues, radish and carrot embellishment, serve as a sublime backdrop for the carefully presented, colourful plates of food that are served. The space acts as a contemporary cave, carefully lit by the placement of downlights and skylight insertions for daylight. The dishes arrive from the

kitchen concealed in the depths of the space, and are presented at the table in this enhanced setting.

Rocket is a transformation of a well-designed, successful nightclub long since gone, in Victoria Street, Potts Point. Bill McMahon has taken the base elements of that design, removed anything superfluous to the workings of a restaurant, and added some drama. The stylish, existing terrazzo floors would have been a great shame to lose, and Bill has done well in using them as the base for his design palette. The existing attribute of expansive views of the Sydney skyline has been counterpointed with the painting of one entire wall in bright red. This wall flows through of the dining spaces on all four levels, further enhanced by the addition of artistic works. The drama of dining is well captured here, with the variation of levels increasing the act of seeing, both inside and out, and of being seen. The mood, and the food, is lively,

bright, and a true Sydney experience.

Darley Street Thai, in Bayswater Road Kings Cross, opens with a flourish - Iain Halliday of Burley Katon Halliday has created a truly theatrical gesture. With its gold-leafed entrance and ceremonial bowl, containing on different occasions, anything from flower arrangements to branches with golden leaves to fish, the diner is cued on the transformation from street-life to dining-life. Beyond the entrance, the

restaurant travels through a highly ordered dining space with colonnades and fluorescent pink seating booths, to a larger space with traces of the pink on one side complemented by a lime green external wall and a lit contemplation pool. Here is a setting where the dining performance begins with the waiter reciting the elaborate ingredients and mood of each selection on the menu - without notes!

All three of these

restaurants are contemporary spaces for contemporary dining. Like the food, there are certain allusions made - either historic or ethnic, but these are only subliminal cues for each individual to improvise their own experience of reality. The total package has been considered. Waiting staff join in the performance, either in casual engagement, or with a professionally rehearsed method. Amongst the diners there are those that choose to not play their part as fully as others - the opportunity to don specific dining attire is not taken advantage of, the chance to enter another realm, to be transformed - and I find this a great shame. But there are those that seek out these places, that wish to partake of the performance, to live in another reality, even if only for one meal - until the next time.

Stephen Varaday is a Sydney architect

Stephen Varaday at Rocket

Wendy Morrissey

1994 programme

Fiona Hall
Simryn Gill
Suzanne Treister
Mark Wingrave
Diana Georgetti
Axel Poignant
Destiny Deacon
Virginia Barratt
Jay Younger
Bronia Iwanczak
Linda Sproul
Julianne Pierce
Anna Munster
Leone Knight
Maude Davis
Bridget Haire
Licketty Slit
Anton Hart
Jenny Watson
Mehmet Adil
Mariana Tadic

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Recovery Ward
 Behind Pam Kleemann's backpage photograph

Accompanying the pillow portrait of a nurse on a hospital bed is a clipboard, and on it, this story:

Just Desserts

She was on night duty. Middle of the night, quiet, no dramas, not a lot happening. She was hungry; hadn't thought to provide herself with anything to snack on while the ward was sleeping. Neither had the other nurses.

Motivated by her desire for food, the Night Nurse found herself going through the patients' bedside lockers in search of something to eat. She found a bag of almonds which she happily consumed.

On her final round of the beds early next morning before going off duty, the woman whose locker she had raided asked if she had enjoyed the almonds. She was very embarrassed and profusely apologetic. How could the patient have known?

She promised to replace them the next night. The patient said, "No, no. Don't worry," and proceeded to tell the Night Nurse that the almonds had been a gift from a visitor, and since the patient hated almonds, she had just sucked the chocolate off them and left the kernels!

The photograph of Kate Wellsman was taken by Pam Kleemann and laser copied onto a pillow case as part of Pam's installation, *The Recovery Ward*, which featured a hospital bed, two pillow

portraits of nurses and clipboards for the viewer to read about them. Kate Wellsman works as Industrial officer with the Australian Nursing Federation (Vic.) after a career in nursing. She is also a textile artist with a great interest in African and Jamaican culture and music. In her portrait she is presented as the Night Nurse, referring to a song of the same name by reggae artist Gregory Isaacs, which she listened to constantly while on night duty in London. For the photo-session she posed in a turn-of-the-century nursing uniform. The border of the pillow is made up of contact prints of richly coloured fabrics collected while travelling in Zaire, Zambia, Mali and Senegal.

The installation was part of *The Art of Nursing*, curated by Megan Evans in conjunction with the Arts Committee of the Australian Nursing Federation (Vic. Branch) and opened at The Steps Gallery, Melbourne on International Nurses day, 12th May 1994. It was assisted by the Australia Council through the ACTU Devolved Grants Scheme. Pam's installation will shortly become part of ward life at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

Ways of Hearing

Susan Charlton sees 32 Films About Glenn Gould

It is clear from its name that *32 Short Films About Glenn Gould* is no ordinary bio-pic. Gould was a virtuoso pianist, an intense and enigmatic figure who is still revered around the world twelve years after his death at the age of fifty. Canadian director Francois Girard and his collaborators have composed an inventive portrait of an inventive man. The film's episodic structure takes its cue from Bach's *32 Goldberg Variations*, which Gould played on his first and last recordings.

Even if you have never heard of Glenn Gould, these 32 cinematic reveries upon his short, startling life and work re-animate his very being. Actor Colm Feore allows Gould's wit, intelligence and physicality to inhabit his body and speak through his voice. And so the film, its subject, its authors and audience align as one.

Gould could read music before he could read words, and the film privileges sound

and music. Surprisingly this heightens, rather than diminishes the images, performances and language and gives them an orchestrated musicality. Music 'appears' in the film in very original ways. In any one scene it might fade in and out, move from background to foreground and back again, and seem to come from changing and multiple sources. Apart from its aural representation on the soundtrack, music is also seen to have come from musical instruments, records, radios and tape recorders; via headphones, microphones, film projectors and telephones; and from soundtracks to films within films.

Music also appears as pleasure in the faces of listeners and propulsion in the play of their bodies. In one film the sounds of overlapping conversations in a roadhouse diner compose themselves into a jazz soundtrack. In another, Gould's head is filled with music that conducts through and

animates his body. These short musical epiphanies are not hermetically sealed. Sometimes they bleed a little into each other or one story foreshadows the next. Often they are framed by scenes of the physical and intellectual labour that is also music: in a Los Angeles Concert a female usher leads Gould to his destiny through the corridors and stairways behind the stage. Unbeknownst to her and the audience that awaits, this 1964 performance will be his last. He stops to sign the program of a stagehand who has worked at the auditorium for 30 years, before stepping out to face his audience for the last time. We too are ushered into the heart of each short film and out to the next.

Gould's seemingly premature departure from the concert stage at the age of 32 was not just the idiosyncratic whim of an eccentric provocateur, but a conceptually rigorous decision. For Gould was not only a musician, but also a writer and composer, a radio producer and documentary maker. He was a sound artist who theorised his own role and that of the audience. To him the ideal audience to artist ratio was 1:0. He also supposed that for every hour that he spent with people, he needed x number of

hours alone - perhaps 2:7. He preferred to reach his audiences directly, individually and anonymously. He hated what he called 'the non-take-two-ness' of live concerts. Rather than agreeing to be part of a star system, he worked against the grain, and preferred to speak about land rights for native Americans than his personal life. He produced an interview-style dialogue for two Glenn Goulds as his witty reply to the endless stream of questions - ranging from the banal to the acutely sociological - that we see being put to him in *Questions with No Answers*. In his own interviews he spoke to surveyors about literature and theologians about technology.

If a narrow-minded dance-music puritan and classical illiterate like me can be swept away by this film, trust me anyone can. It was the early high point of the last Sydney Film Festival and only grows with intensity and intelligence on second viewing. Director Francois Girard has stated elsewhere that the film is 'made for filmgoers, not for music buffs'. Nevertheless the film leaves you with an abiding desire to follow through Glenn Gould's project and hear more.

Free Willy: or One More Time For Daddy

Adam Cullen takes his critical hacksaw to performing animals

How long has it been since you've seen a movie that makes pancreatic fluid rise and swim gently in the back of your mouth as you rock backwards and forwards humming? I thought *Man Bites Dog* was a special offer - up to date, probably one of my favourites - but *this* spineless mollusc of misplaced inspiration deserves instant applause for vulgarity. Remember *Salo*?

Free Willy makes it look like exactly what it is - an ultra-daggy 70s art design film.

On a purely narrative level, *Free Willy* is a jaundiced filmic lump held together by a sinewy, but brilliantly sardonic, plot. You may go thinking it's a mere under-12s film, but be prepared to be sickened to the point of oral satisfaction. *Free Willy* is an emission in our collective darkness.

Enough of the praise. A filthy rich juvenile delinquent is sent to stay with foster parents. They have longings to be nuclear, but like most Americans have something wrong with their sense of self-parody and, in this case, their reproductive organs. This is the edifice from which relations between the rubbery-skinned lozenge, Willy, and the juvenile delinquent begin. Willy is a captive exhibit at an aquatic funland galore type complex. The delinquent lands a job at the poolside, meets Willy, realises they share a rare kind of pubic flux and teaches him to perform a cavalcade of astounding tricks.

On opening day, Willy decides that he's too smart to perform for this fair, so he starts acting like a dumb whale. As a result, the owners of the centre decide to get rid of

Willy and claim the insurance money. Very civil. Very civic. Willy is inevitably released into the bay of a local fishing village by the delinquent, his foster parents with the martyr complex and an Indian man who collects miniature whale sculptures.

Free Willy is a filmic abomination about a squeaking, pumped-up limbless icon and the equipment of fixation and hatred. It's high-strung, convoluted and you get the feeling your psyche will buckle at any moment. If you're bored with art-house pretension and artistry or if you don't feel at home with the bio-mass, go and buy the video for a unique excursion into the distillate of evil.

Adam Cullen is a visual artist who shows at Sydney's Yuill-Crowley gallery.

Phantasms

Haunted By Popular Culture. Mikhali Georgios encounters Adrian Martin's Phantasms.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Adrian Martin's absorbing collection of essays, *Phantasms* (McPhee Gribble), subtitled "The dreams and desires at the heart of popular culture", is how completely we seem to have accommodated essentially American "dreams and desires". Just how unquestioned is that acceptance, at least at the popular level, can be gauged by the reaction Martin got when he went on the ABC-TV program *TVTV* to talk about *Phantasms*: "The presenters there told me they loved my book 'because it's all American - we only want to talk about American programs'! So you get this paradox. There they are working on the ABC and you can't get the name of a British program out of their lips. They're sort of my generation, that really did grow up on American TV and it's all they want to discuss."

So much for all the effort and legislation brought into the business of television broadcasting by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) and its successor body, the ABA. While the 50% local content guidelines for free-to-air broadcasters has been achieved, it's obvious that it's the 34% of American programming which is having the most impact on the Australian psyche. "I think it's pretty much always been that way here," Martin feels. "Although I think

that's changing. I think Australian TV, particularly as spearheaded by SBS, is becoming a real mixture of things. More and more British shows have appeared on commercial networks, where once they would have been only seen on the ABC."

However, like many of his generation, Martin has a problem with the concept of 'quality television' as espoused by both the ABC and British film and TV producers, seeming to prefer American popular culture. And that, essentially, is what is explored in *Phantasms*, an admittedly highly selective and subjective look at a number of inter-related themes that he sees as "like urgent but repressed messages emanating from the unconscious of our culture." Those "messages", as defined by Martin, run from the flippant debate on political correctness to the recognition of mortality by the *Thirtysomething* generation, the complexity of the dysfunctional family as portrayed by *Roseanne* to the rise of "aggro" as a legitimate expression of social frustration.

"It's not a book with a rigid sort of thesis. For me, it's a more poetic book, a selection of different impressions that I had. I'm fully aware some of the essays contradict others, but for me that's a very human thing. Contradiction and ambivalence are part of living in a culture. I tried to write the book in the sense of

someone stumbling through a culture from day to day trying to make sense of what they're seeing."

One of the strongest impressions of what is being seen is the rise and accommodation by mainstream society of aggression. Commenting on the problems the censor had with the film *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, Martin points out that one scene that passed unscathed involved the bludgeoning to death with a sparking television of "a fat, instantly unlikeable salesman. The truth may be that the scene got passed...because it is an uninhibited scene of boisterous aggro, one which demonstrates that even a psychopathic serial killer can win our secret complicity for a moment by sticking it to one of those loudmouthed, overbearing assholes who tick us off daily." It is the logical extension of Peter Finch's cry of frustration in the film *Network*: "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it." But it paradoxically also correlates with the sudden celebrity bestowed on mass murderer John Wayne Gacy, his 'prison' art and media execution, the logical extension of which was the prime time screening of an execution "live" on the Donahue program recently.

"I think the whole aggro thing is getting into the mainstream more and it's a difficult thing to pronounce upon morally. In a way, I think it is a real expression, and if more and more people are expressing in the arts and television greater aggression, it's because the world is getting really difficult to live in. It's the world that's getting dysfunctional, not just the families that I discuss in the book. It's not the unemployed punks of Brixton or disaffected blacks of Los Angeles who are feeling the need to

express aggro. It's an awful lot of the population that relate to aggro. That film *Falling Down* is a prime example of mainstream aggro, where you can have Michael Douglas looking like some demented punk blowing up phone booths and smashing into people on the freeway. It's got to make you wonder about where we're going, but I don't think the response to that should be to censor it. I think you do have to discuss it. Where the aggro stuff gets really scary is when it is totally undirected, when if you just happen to be in the way, too bad."

The "messages" discovered in *Phantasms* certainly aren't all as dark as those discussed in the chapter on aggro or the modern thriller or the films of Martin Scorsese. Much of the "trash" culture is light, humorous and instantly disposable. But even here there is a darker subtext which suggests that perhaps we're allowing things to go further than we might imagine. On the one hand we can smile at the children in the film version of *The Addams Family*, "playing at electrocution or decapitation...savoured as good, healthy, imaginative fun - one of pop culture's wisest philosophical positions" and wonder how far we could actually follow the prescription of French surrealist Georges Bataille and seek access to the realm of the sacred "via the path of sacrifice, with representations of mutilation, ritual murder." Is that what people who flocked to see the grotesque cast of self-mutilators that travels the world as the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow were seeking? The general public has always preferred the circus to the cerebral, but now the two may finally be merging, and, as Martin points out, who can say if it is wrong or right?

Festival A La Carte

Bon vivant Leo Schofield recently launched his vision for the Melbourne Festival. Simon Hughes casts an eye over the menu

It was a good move to schedule the launch of the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts (MIFA) for 10.30 am. This was evidenced by the staggering number of scribes, publicists and the like who did *not* avail themselves of the free booze. An hour later and the elegant surroundings of Mietta's restaurant would have resembled the running of the bulls at Pamplona. So we all sucked on our cappucini and waited for the TV crew to set up their equipment.

Leo Schofield, the self-titled frontman of MIFA, was surprisingly nervous and apologetic. "We may be accused of some oversight or error of judgement this year but not the next." Oversight? Error of judgement? This was not the hard sell we had come to expect from festival directors in this country. Where we had been used to hubris, here was humility. The several portraits of Mietta smiled Giaconda-like from their vantage point.

In fact, Schofield and his committee have no need to make excuses. Given the financial constraint and the fact that the most sought-after performers are booked up to a time in the future which even Nostradamus would have difficulty in predicting, the 1994 festival promises to be very good indeed.

The two masts MIFA have nailed their colours to are Joffrey Ballet and the Canadian Opera. The Joffrey's major offering is the full-length work *Billboards*

comprising fourteen songs by Prince (gawd). The several video screens displaying excerpts from the repertoire had devotees of dance drooling, while confirming the misgivings of balletophobes.

Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Schoenberg's *Ewartung* form the Canadian Opera's double bill. Directed by Robert Lepage, the program was the sensation of the 1993 Edinburgh Festival. It will make a nice change from the usual confectionary of Toscas et al.

More high art to set the taffetas rustling among the sip and sup set are Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* performed by, among others, Roberta Alexander and Markella Hatziano with the Tasmania Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marcello Viotti. The divas will also give independent recitals. Katia and Marielle Labèque are offering a blend of jazz and classical piano, while Hartley Newnham will be teaming up with David Wicks and Jonathan Mills for *Not Another Lieder Recital*, which advertises itself as "a witty and eclectic mix of Dada, blues, art songs and vocal pyrotechnics".

In his opening address, Schofield was at pains to inform us that this festival will be "unashamedly popular". Accordingly, there will be an evening of Cole Porter, another of Barbara Cook belting out Broadway tunes and, lastly, John Farnham narrating Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. A sop to the punters, perhaps, but they deserve something after last year's twin disasters of the two Titus Andronicuses, for example. It also fits in with Schofield's insistence that his festival will be optimistic as opposed to Richard Wherett's introspective bash.

On the subject of theatre there is nothing startling. No Indian epics in quarries or Eastern European interpretations of Russian classics which were the highlights of recent Adelaide Festivals. All the same, there is Steve Martin's *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* at the Playbox and *Frank Pig Says Hello* by Patrick McCabe staged by Dublin's Co-Motion Theatre Company. The latter is based on McCabe's novel *The Butcher Boy*. The only Australian play featured is Richard Roxburgh's production of *That*

Eye, The Sky by Tim Winton. Something to leaven all this optimism is *The Truman Capote Talk Show* starring Bob Kingdom. Another bitter-sweet evening is assured when Lynn Redgrave reveals all in her one-woman show *Shakespeare For My Father*.

This year the festival has been shunted from September to October, an act of the sheerest perversity when you consider that October is the wettest month in the Athens of the South. How I fear for all those buskers and jugglers and jolly folk who make such a misery of the ordinary citizen's life during festival time. My advice for northern visitors is to seek the indoor security of the Writer's Festival.

Even while book clubs from Mirboo north to Nhill mourn the loss of the ridiculously photogenic Peter Hoeg (*Miss Smilla's Feeling For Snow*), who seems to have taken a set against our hemisphere, the organisers have put together one helluva bash. E. Annie Proulx, Seamus Heaney, Jim Crace, Edna O'Brien, Will Self, Shashi Tharoor, and the normally reclusive John Fowles (even his publishers are surprised he's coming) - and that's just the international brigade. (I can't tell you who the locals are because they're not mentioned.)

A festival would not be a festival without art and there is plenty of that including an exhibition of Aboriginal masterpieces. A lot of people remember fondly John Truscott's triumphal arches which spanned St Kilda Road adjacent to the arts ghetto on Southbank. Sadly they were dismantled and trucked off to the junkyard of grand visions. What we do have, however, is a return of the enormously popular *Botanica* with a recreated Victorian conservatory as its centrepiece. And inevitably, considering the antecedents of the artistic director, there is a *Gastronomica*.

Leo Schofield and his committee have gone to lengths to ensure the exclusivity of many of the events. It puts a circuit-breaker in the usual practice of festival hopping. More importantly, for the cultural kaisers, uniqueness enhances the city's art image and attracts punters from afar.

wanted something that was more intimate and more direct. I think Spoken Word is a much more powerful medium". Australian label Insipid Vinyl has now released a two CD recording of her work with Australian artist Roland S. Howard and members of the Birthday Party. One CD is a compilation of songs called *Trance Mutation*, the second a live concert performance of her occasional band, Shotgun Wedding. This release precedes a three-CD boxed set retrospective of her Spoken Word recordings, *Crimes Against Nature*.

Mikhali Georgios
Lydia Lunch is touring Australia in September with Roland S. Howard and Shotgun Wedding. Sept 2 Prince of Wales Hotel, Melbourne. Sept 3 Phoenician Club, Sydney. Sept 8 Club Original, Perth. Sept 9 The Synagogue, Adelaide. Sept 10, Van Gough's, Brisbane. Spoken word performances Sept 5 Metro Theatre, Sydney. Sept 6th Universal Theatre, Melbourne.

Ross Harley's installation placed video monitors in the room, at that time completely gutted. The monitors showed an afternoon weekend movie with interference by the electronic ghost of the room's previous inhabitant: a Tarot reader well known on the streets of Kings Cross.

Coming up are installations by Jon Cattapan, Matthew Jones, Lindy Lee, Mikala Dwyer and others. As the room's renovation nears completion, each artist will need to respond in a different way, incorporating sculpture, paintings, clothing or any other medium which seems to fit. Matthew Johnson is intrigued by the disorientation which is part of a hotel experience. "Transience is part of the vocabulary of a hotel," he says; in Room 32, it is part of the challenge to artists.

At Short Notice

Performance

SIDETRACK'S CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE WEEK is back for the fifth year running, September 26-October 1. Offering performance skills outside the normal theatrical ambit, this event ties training to process and to the creation of works within the course of the week. CPW is also the site of premiere performances with national forums, a real hothouse of performance activity where beginners and experienced performers share new ways of working. The CPW5 programme is still being finalised and late submissions are still being taken. The workshop program will include classes on movement, voice, electronic media and performance making. Local and visiting international practitioners to be advised. Information: Sidetrack Performance Group Ph: 02-560 1255 Fx: 02-5609167

After partially soiling and seducing their audience in the debut work *Screening Desire*, premiered at the 1994 Adelaide Fringe Festival to ecstatic reviews, SAFE CHAMBER INC, Adelaide's unique purveyors of interactive, multi-media performance return with a new work *The Voice of Contempt* an hour of investigative ritual, filmic suspense and simulated violence at the Odeon Theatre (August 23-27). Information: 08-234-3599

Melbourne's LA MAMA features a provocative line-up of Performance works in Explorations running throughout August. Season includes mixed-media (Jaqueline Grenfell), opera (Theatre of Simultaneity), improvised performance (Michael Cook) audio-visual performance (Sliding Theatre), performance art (Stelarc's Absent Body/Involuntary Actions) and collaborative works by Lloyd Jones and Black Belt Goju champion, Ragnar Purje. The programme also includes Sound Poetry and Explorations Musical and Fictional. Information: Maureen Hartley 03-347-6948.

LEGS ON THE WALL have found the way to negotiate The Family - acrobatically. All of Me returns to The Performance Space, Sydney. August-September.

PLAYWORKS, the national organisation for the development and promotion of women's writing is not only interested in plays but in the many forms of performance writing - multi-media, collaborative, multi-lingual, cross-artform. PLAYWORKS will be in residence at Sydney's Performance Space October 3-9 and would like to speak to women with performance texts/scenarios who can use the services of PLAYWORKS to develop their ideas. Any writers/creators should call Clare Grant or Sally Richardson on 02-262-3174. As part of their residency PLAYWORKS will also present a public forum on women's writing for performance as well as a presentation of new performance works in progress.

Theatre

Two new plays by women writers in this month's theatre releases: Melbourne playwright Margaret Kirby's *My Body My Blood* will be performed in the heartland of Anglican decision-making in the Chapter House, St Paul's Cathedral August 19-September 10. It was here that ordination was strongly supported for twenty years before the Australian Church eventually passed legislation in 1992.

A Joint production of Playbox, QTC and STC, *Falling From Grace* is a new play from the author of *Hotel Sorrento* "I wanted to celebrate the way women's talk can range within minutes from a quick exchange about Chaos theory to Camille Paglia, to whether one is inflicting irreparable psychological damage by steadfastly refusing to serve on the school tuck shop," says Hannie Rayson. Opening in Melbourne August 9-27 and touring nationally to Hobart, Brisbane and regional Victoria from September.

A Room of One's Own adapted by Patrick Garland performed by Pamela Rabe in Adelaide will open in Sydney at Belvoir Street Theatre from August 16 followed by a season at Melbourne's Russell Street Theatre. "Because Virginia Woolf's book was written to be spoken, the opportunity to release her playful, radical and original ideas from between the covers of the book and present them live on stage was irresistible," says Pamela Rabe.

meanwhile ...

ROBIN Henry RAMSAY Lawson, the old Bastard (Lawson not Ramsay) is back on the road touring nationally in *The Bastard* from the Bush September-November.

Spaces

NAPIER STREET THEATRE ('Never a dull moment') is Melbourne's centre for independent, non-mainstream performing companies and individuals. It operates with a unique funding arrangement from Arts Victoria which allows a subsidised rate of theatre hire to unfunded groups. The result is that both established and up and coming theatre artists are offered a chance to produce their work in a professional arena without risk of significant financial loss. The 6 month programme includes 16 new productions, 16 new Australian plays, 148 local artists, 194 individual performances. The venue now also features a late night program. August programme includes CHAMBER MADE OPERA in Two Executioners, adapted from Fernando Arabal by Douglas Horton, composed by David Chesworth (August 4-20), and *The Drought* by Tom Petsinis

Lydia Lunch: Spoken Word and Shotgun Wedding

"I take the challenger's position," says former punk singer turned writer and performance poetry exponent, Lydia Lunch. "The underdog, the sexual minority, that's the position I see things from. That makes it confrontational by nature, because we're dealing with basic, bottom line emotions and reality. Most people in the so-called entertainment field, which I'm not in, don't concern themselves with those issues, so it's a confrontation." The quintessential New Yorker now living in Berkeley, California, Lunch became fascinated with the power of words when she was 12 and, by 16, she was fronting and confronting audiences flocking to the punk explosion of 1978 in the band *Teenage Jesus and the Jerks*.

She's never seen herself as a singer, however, using the punk medium as a platform for her words and, in 1984, she founded Widowspeak Productions as an organ for her written and performance poetry work and what she describes as "simpatico creative renegades". She decided to do performance poetry "because I

Room 32 Whats in a room

John Potts peeps into an unusual installation space

Every weekend in August, and into September, the Regents Court Hotel in Sydney's Kings Cross is giving over one of its rooms to artists. Room 32, which is being renovated, is the site for installations by ten artists, each responding to the state of the room on their particular weekend. Matthew Johnson, organiser of Room 32, has chosen an eclectic group. Bill Seaman

kicked off the season in late July with a computer-generated video work which could only be seen through the peep-hole of Room 32. The screen contained a sentence which changed every 15 seconds: over the weekend, the sentence was never the same. The hotel room's transient environment was mirrored by the shifting contents of this screen.

(September 1-11) preceded at 5 pm by a production of Samuel Beckett's Footfalls. In September-October Melissa Reeves' spectacular and hilarious new version of The Emperor's New Clothes (cf Canberra Youth Theatre's Pied Piper at the Gates of Hell) Ph: 03-686-4066.

ILBIJERRI ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER THEATRE CO-OPERATIVE is the only theatre company of its kind in Melbourne, totally Aboriginal/Islander initiated, controlled and administered. PO Box 515, North Melbourne 3051 Ph: 03-326-8371

WATCH THIS SPACE is an artist run initiative and exhibition space established by a group of artists in Alice Springs to provide a venue for innovative and experimental work in any medium. Local and visiting artists who are interested in exhibiting and/or talking about their finished or in-progress works are welcome. If you have ideas about using the space (a converted ice works) contact Jan MacKay 089-531-896 or Pam Lofts 089-52 8656

Sydney's largest Victorian Hall, St. Georges Hall in Newtown, is the venue for ONE EXTRA DANCE COMPANY's new work, Cannibal Race (featuring Sue-Ellen Kohler, Trevor Patrick, choreography by Julie-Anne Long) opening in October. St. Georges Hall looks set to become a much needed new space for dance performance.



Trevor Patrick in *Cannibal Race*

Lohr

PACT officially opens Sydney Street Theatre Space (cnr. Sydney Street & Railway Parade, Erskineville) a new youth performing arts venue August 1. Information: 02-5502744

THE EDGE is an open space theatre venue equipped with light and sound system suitable for performances, classes, workshops, seminars and rehearsals. Reasonable rates. Information: Kinetic Energy Theatre Co. 02-516-1954

Photography/Film

The Centre for Contemporary Photography (Melbourne) breaks the minimal mould of most visual arts publicity with an informative programme for August/September: Lynne Roberts-Goodwin's A Certain Blindness deals with the representation of the domesticated-civilized-fetishised-toxic-aesthetic-wild-preserved-portrayed body. Naked and Unashamed: Rod Mcleish. "In a corner of the school library, a hidden stash of National Geographics, the ones with bare natives, pawed and creased and giggled over. Scars, tattoos, taboos, sexy tribes. Naked and unashamed the imagined native provides a perfect receptacle for repressed adolescent desire." Helen Schutt's In the Van : "By transcending the medium and not being ruled by the technical processes, I am able to capture my own spontaneous dialogue with the camera" and Guy Benfield's Autoportraits is the visual realisation of a drama acted out in visual terms - a personal conflict reflected in aesthetic conflict between abstract, photographic and automatic subconscious elements. Information Ph: 03-417-1549

More striking postcards in the mail from STILLS GALLERY continuing its policy of introducing images/installations by new photographers with Deborah Kirby-Parsons (The Inheritance) and Lui Xiaoxian (Lost Memory) August 3-27. Elizabeth Street, Paddington. Ph: 02-331-7775 Fax: 02-331-1648

Film

The AFI AWARDS SHORT LIST this year (announced August 8) will be culled from the long list of 17 Feature Films, 57 Short Fictions, 11 Short Animations and 16 Documentaries.

RONIN launched its Early Show programme (screenings

of new Australian films at 5.30 pm) with 40 YEARS OF SILENCE directed by Ned Lander with Carol Ruff at THE ACADEMY, Sydney.

Pauline Chan's TRAPS will be released nationally in August.

Liz Thompson and Tracey Holloway-Groome's THE LAST MAGICIAN will be screened by ABC TV September 21. While two chiefs in Papua New Guinea debate the conflict between tradition and development, their uncle, the magic keeper, tries to resolve where his spirit will go after he dies, the Christian Heaven or the traditional place of the dead, Tuma.

Music

SIMA (Sydney Improvised Music Association) offers a lively programme for August - The Mike Nock Band, Alistar Spence Trio, Bernie McGann Trio, Spare Parts Octet, Sonic Fiction, Paul Cutlan Quartet, Jeremy Sawkins Band, Gregg Telian Quintet. The objective of SIMA is to facilitate the performance and recording of contemporary jazz and improvised music. If you're in Sydney, performances Tuesdays and Wednesdays 8.30-11.30 p.m. at Strawberry Hills Hotel, cnr. Elizabeth and Devonshire Streets. Ph/Fx 02-938-2180.

SYDNEY ALPHA ENSEMBLE, a group of musicians dedicated to the presentation of significant new music, with a particular commitment to the performance of works by Australian composers presents BANUMBIRR at the Eugene Goossens Hall. Program features: Banumbirr by Michael Finnissy; Kakan by Anne Boyd; Xiang Aspects by Maurice Weddington; Laudes by Nigel Butterley; Sinfonia by David Lumsdaine and Derive by Pierre Boulez. September 11 at 3 pm. Information: Ph/Fax: 02-428-2960

American saxophonist, DEWEY REDMAN (member of Ornette Coleman's great bands of the 1960's and 70's and a key member in two of the most popular jazz groups of the time, the Keith Jarrett Quartet and Old and New Dreams) begins his Australian tour at the Melbourne International Festival of Arts October 14 followed by Brisbane, Sydney, Armidale, Canberra, Wangaratta. For this tour, Dewey Redman will be joined by Leon Parker, a new young player on the New York jazz scene and will also collaborate with two Australian musicians, pianist Barney McAll and bassist Lloyd Swanton. Presented by SIMA.

Hobart's IHOS Opera Experimental Music Theatre Troupe working in large-scale multi-media events is currently developing a new work MIKROVION from the Greek word meaning 'small life' or virus. IHOS's largest project, yet - a five-scene drama of immense proportions - 50 singers, actors, gymnasts, dancers and instrumentalists from around Australia will combine with installation artists, engineers and technicians to produce the work. Audience will be drawn into the unseen, microscopic world of the virus and experience the devastating anxiety it brings to the human psyche. Performers will work with roman rings, suspended steel structures and moving stages. In six languages English, Ancient and Modern Greek, German, Hebrew and Chinese. It is planned to tour the production is planned to tour.

Visual Arts

The 4TH AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART FAIR September 29-October 2 (Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne) will feature more than 50 contemporary art galleries showcasing the work of more than 500 artists, this will be the largest of the Australian Contemporary Arts Fairs held biennially in Melbourne since 1988. Contemporary paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, photography and tapestries will be on view and the public will have the opportunity to meet prominent artists in the series of artists talks which will be held during the Art Fair. A Forum - Where does the artist's money come from? will investigate the sustaining and financial support of artists. Representatives from the Australian Commercial Galleries Association, State Arts Ministry and the Australia Council will present papers. A Critics Forum will be addressed by three newspaper art critics - Christopher Heathcote (The Age), Susan McCulloch (Herald Sun) and Robert Rooney (The Australian) on 1 October 2.30 p.m.

As part of AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART's Esensual Fragments program, cyber-feminists VNS Matrix perform/present Pathogenic Vectors in conjunction with their public intervention project - computer generated images at various sites throughout inner Melbourne this month. Also showing at the Centre, the work of Brisbane-based artist, Marian Drew (rotating video projections and large drawings layered, crushed and bent to break the smooth wall surfaces of the gallery), Melbourne-based Leah King Smith (large scale reworkings of family photographs taken by her father and recorded conversations with her mother combine to create a picture of an Aboriginal identity) and Sydney-based, Eugenia Raskopoulos (a photographic/video installation). August-October.

PERTH INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART to August 21 presents ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER, the dark alleys of psychology, eroticism and eating, timeless dialectics; NATURE/CULTURE, product & process; ROMANTICISM AND PRAGMATISM. installations by Christine Poller, Edward Arrowsmith, Mehmet Adil, and artist-farmer R.D. Frost along with visual artist in residence, Margaret Roberts working with local artists in the gallery space AND Rakini and the Kalika Dance Company Radha & the Elements of Worship in the performance space.

A new regional gallery is the SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS GALLERY located in the Old Station Masters Cottage, Argyle Street, Moss Vale opens with an exhibition of The Etchings of Sydney Long. Information: 048-691-1901

Spoken Word

As Spoken Word increases in popularity the world over, nice to see Mds (55 Danks Street, Port Melbourne) announcing CD/MCs from the Californian label Gang of 7". Among its new releases: Spalding Gray's Monster in a Box and The Terrors of Pleasure, Hugh Brown Shu's Bomb the Womb, Lynda Barry's The Lynda Barry Experience, Andrei Codrescu's No Tacos for Saddam , Rick Reynolds Only the Truth is Funny, Barry Morrow's Bill for Short, Tom Bodett's Exploded . Also a new issue of the CD mag VARIOUS Vol.10. This issue includes Lush, Credit to the Nation, Pulp, Trans-global, Underground, Gigolo Aunts, Echobelly and Gene.

Performing in Galleries

ARTSPACE (The Gunnery, Woolloomooloo) confirms its commitment to Gallery Performance with Inflamed , contemporary dance-drama by Chin Kham Yoke with music by Jen Anderson. Born in Malaysia, educated in Australia, Chin Kham Yoke spent 15 years in Japan training, performing and teaching in the Fujima style of classical Japanese dance, Nihonbuyo and Kanze Noh drama. Yoke has created a number of collaborative performances with fellow Australian artists including the percussion ensemble Synergy, sculptor Joan Brassil, composer Jim Franklin and poet Terry McArthur. For this new work, Jen Anderson has created a musical score featuring violin, viola and synthesizer. The work is inspired by the Japanese Noh drama Kinuta in which a faithful wife dies after waiting for a husband who never returns. This work transforms the concept of the waiting woman into a celebration. ARTSPACE, Sydney August 3-14

To coincide with the Renoir exhibition, QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY presents The Renoir Recitals , performances of the music of Renoir's contemporaries Ravel, Debussy, Schmitt, Roussel, Franck and Ibert and the poetry of the French Symbolist School exemplified in the work of Verlaine and Mallarme. Featuring various ensembles from string quartet to seven piece ensemble, Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra will be joined by Fractal Theatre for this event. FASHION SPREAD ON TOAST August 6: Appetite A fashion performance by special events guru Ellis D Fogg, sound-man Ian Plowman, stylist Melissa Bruce, choreographer Vivienne Miller and Alison Holland. TOAST Gallery/Function Space 19 Alberta Street, Sydney is accepting submissions for 1994/95. Tel: 02-264-8668 Fax: 02-264-8671.

25 YEARS OF PERFORMANCE ART exhibition which opened at Sydney's Ivan Dougherty Gallery is now on tour: IMA Brisbane August 4-27, PICA Perth November 17-December 18, EAF Adelaide February-March 95, ACCA Melbourne April-May 1995. Excellent catalogue includes essays by Sarah Miller, Jane Goodall, Nick Waterlow, Mike Parr and Noel Sheridan.

Performance in Print

Representation, Discourse and Desire . Contemporary Australian Culture and Critical Theory edited by Patrick Fuery, published by Longman Cheshire includes a revealing chapter by Hazel Smith on the work of Performance poets, Amanda Stewart and Ania Walwicz. "The idea of the voice - who speaks, who controls discourse, who is heard has important implications for the Australian context. If we are to speak of cultural identities it is necessary to know how they are articulated, not just what is said".

Peggy Phelan's Unmarked is published by Routledge: a controversial analysis of the fraught relations between representational visibility in contemporary culture through a feminist psychoanalytic examination of specific performance texts with some hot examples. Peggy Phelan, the Assistant Professor and Associate Chair of the Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University is currently writing and speaking sex and gender in Australia (see next September/October issue of REAL TIME for interview).

Performing Bookshop

ARIEL BOOKSELLERS 42 Oxford Street, Paddington. August Performance/Reading Programme August 7 (3-5 pm) Jazz with Rick Falkiner (acoustic guitar) Steve Taberner (bass). August 13 (3 pm) The Familiar, first poetry collection by Ian McBryde published by Hale & Iremonger to be launched by Chris Mansell, with readings. August 21 (3-5) Queer Space - Gay readings. August 31 (6-9 pm) Launch of local crew BANG, furniture designers acknowledged in the 1994 International Design Yearbook, coincides with BIG shipment of design books.

Festivals

As we go to press, no programmes from Melbourne's Fringe Festival or Perth's Artrage and just a quick word from CANBERRA'S THEATRE FESTIVAL: Australian Opera presents scenes from Moya Henderson & Judith Rodriguez' Lindy and Alan John and Dennis Watkins' The Eighth Wonder. The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra performs Graeme Koehne's score to a screening of the 1927 silent film The Kid Stakes. Playbox presents David Williamson's Sanctuary. Canberra's Vis-a-Vis Dance Company performs Succulent Blue Sway. Also DeSoxy Theatre in The Falling Scale , Townsville's Dance North, Fremantle's Deck Chair Theatre with Ningali, Alison Bronowski's The Gap .

SHOCK OF THE NEW , a cross artform experimental arts festival to be hosted by Brisbane's LA BOITE Theatre October 31-November 6. La Boite is committed to offering non-mainstream artists and companies the opportunity to use the theatre as a venue to present and discuss their work. They also want to encourage links between art forms and provide the Brisbane community with alternative and experimental arts

activities. The programme is already looking diverse and sizeable but if you are an artist or company exploring new work, multi-disciplined performance or cross artform collaborations contact Rosemary Herbert at La Boite Ph 07-369-1622

This year NAMBUDAH FESTIVAL of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Arts will again be held at Belvoir Street Theatre in Surry Hills September 23-October 9. Three weeks of music, dance, cabaret, stand-up comedy, theatre, film, forums, food, exhibition and readings. If you're interested in being involved as a performer or lending support, call Lydia Miller at Belvoir Street Ph: 02-698-3344 Fx: 02-319-3165

1994 FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY ASIAN THEATRE at Belvoir Street Theatre (August 31-October 1) includes The Return by Ta Duy Binh, a work in English & Vietnamese; Full Circle by Monica Wulff using traditional Indonesian mask & live percussion; The Cantata of the Warrior Woman by Merlinda Bobis, a retelling of Filipino myth. Dead City Awakening by Nicholas Jose, a play set in Shanghai and An Evening of Indian Classical Dance & Music with Ashok Roy (sarod) and Nrimal Jena's traditional Odissi Dance Company. Information: Cheryle Yu 02-698-3344

The 39th ASIA PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL opens in Sydney August 28-September 1. Festival screens 35 recent feature films plus shorts from across the region. Films include: The Bride with White Hair a supernatural martial arts film from Hong Kong, Eat Drink Man Woman (dir. Ang Lee from Taipei), Akira Kurosawa's latest film, Madadayo, and Once Upon a Time from Thailand's 1992 Director of the Year, Bhandit Rittakol. All films will be screened at the Village Cinema Sydney with additional screenings of selected films in Parramatta, Melbourne and Hobart.

Youth

NSW Community Arts Association presents YOUTH ARTS a two day seminar on Training August 9 & 10. How to present youth issues through mediums of music, large scale events, drama and theatre, film and video. Powerhouse Regional Arts Centre, 1 Casula Road, Casula. Information: 02-821-2210

CANBERRA YOUTH THEATRE's production of Piper at the Gates of Hell combines the true story of the Pied Piper of Hamlyn (the Children's Crusade of the 12th Century) with the imagery and obsessions of contemporary youth fantasy. The production is cross artform. The performers combine tribal, rock and contemporary musical rhythms and technical wizardry from the 21st Century

And The Winner Is ...

This year's NSW Women & Arts Fellowship of \$15,000 has gone to Sydney-based performance artist, Barbara Campbell.

The 1994 PAUL LOWIN AWARD of \$45,000 has gone to Melbourne based composer Julian Yu for his work Three Symphonic Poems. His composition Hsiang-Wen won the inaugural Paul Lowin prize in 1991. Brenton Broadstock won the \$20,000 prize for his song cycle "Bright Tracks".

The GLORIA PAYTEN FOUNDATION and the GLORIA DAWN FOUNDATION (launched July 29) have been set up to provide Fellowships for actors and directors to travel overseas to broaden their professional knowledge. The Foundations are the bequest of the late Gloria Payten who established International Casting Service in 1961. Gloria was so strongly committed to the Australian entertainment industry that she bequeathed her entire estate to developing the careers of actors and directors through these Fellowships. The Foundation will ultimately be valued in excess of \$1.5m. At the request of the Trustees the Fellowships will be administered by National Institute of Dramatic Art.

Seminaring and Conferencing

ARTS LAW CENTRE presents Multimedia and The Law August 3. Seminar topics include The Creator's Perspective/ Negotiating and Protecting Works/ How to get the Right Rights/ Using multi-media in Marketing and Showing it in Public. As with most Arts Law Centre events, papers are available if you can't get there. Information: 02 356 2566

Australian Cultural Development Office announces CREATING CULTURE, A NATIONAL CONFERENCE 11-12 August, Parliament House, Canberra. Themes will include the shape and size of the industry as a whole and where it's heading, productive links with other industries, export potential and the future of the cultural industries. For more information; call (06) 275-4444 or (06) 275-4447

At Short Notice

is a brisk survey of what's coming up over the next two months. Send your information to

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