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RealTime is based in Sydney but its ambitions have always been national as is confirmed in its extensive coverage of theatre, performance and youth arts across the country and the growing number of interstate writers. Beyond the hit and miss video-clip TV arts programs, the valuable but theme driven Arts Today, there are only the newspapers whose arts coverage is mostly local, save The Saturday Paper which dominated Friday edition and its Saturday puff pages. Critically, it’s the worthiness that these arts reporting modestly ignore - at least seen in snipers on SBS's Imagine or discussed on Arts Today - that RealTime serves; sound, the techno-arts, spoken word, performance, innovative theatre, hybrids. In this issue that coverage is bigger than ever and more nationally committed. We’ve begun the process of appointing state editors with Natalie King and Rachel Fensham (recently ex-WA) joining us from Victoria. Other appointments will be announced in RT7.

Real Time is committed to the spread of arts information and to critical reviews. Surveying exhibitions and performances across Australia is beyond us logistically and financially at this stage, besides we’re keen to promote the experiencing of new work rather than throwing it immediately into the ‘recommended?/bad’ bins of newspaper reviewing. However, to alert you to what’s coming up, RT6 introduces Venues & Reviews: brief assessments of books, films, videos, CDs, CD-ROMs, radio, television and film programs where advance copies are available.

The 1996 Adelaide Festival is certainly coming up and Barrie Kosky is leaving us in no doubt about that with a dynamic flaming Hills Hoist poster and an international architectural competition. Nor are some Adelaideans slow to air their anxieties about the local properties being fiddled with by foreigners. First it was Kosky’s taking over Writers Week, that very popular but tired and hitty tea party, now it’s Artists’ Week, already assaulted by Christopher Hunt in ’94. The autumn issue of Adelaide’s Artlink goes in books and all, declaring Kosky’s visual arts announcements ‘unpromising’ and the use of suburban sites for Artists’ Week “an awesome disregard of ordinary considerations of public access both physical and otherwise.” The involvement of “probably the most conservative body of art professionals in Australia”, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects with their convention “will be in effect the substitute for Artists’ Week as we have known it.” The Adelaide inclination to condemn sight unseen is alive and kicking, surely a worry for the Festival in a state where suspicion along with a sustained recession mentality can be damaging at the box office as it was for the last two festivals.

Of suspicions, the Adelaide Council’s Peer Assessment Review looks so far removed is the Council and its assessment practices from the like of the Sports Rorts affair that this event looks like another cave-in to the opinions of the anti-train lobby. In the meantime the Performance Arts Board, inspired by the Music Committee’s radical reduction of some eighteen funding categories to three, has designed user-friendly categories and application forms for each committee’s applicants. While this might be helpful in encouraging a greater diversity of applicants, and while it might ease criticism of the Council as tooing politically correct lines, the fact remains that none of this will be much consolation for the good artists who don’t get funded - because there aren’t the funds available a greater diversity of applican and while it might ease criticism of the Council as toeing politically.

The 1996 Adelaide Festival introduces the Hermannsburg mission to his final resting place at the Art Gallery New South Wales, where advance copies are available. The death of Strehlow is the locus of the sound and cultures; a proposed exercise. The presence of the word (both in the biblical and linguistic sense), is overwhelming.

With Raft, the issue of translation and transcription is crucial; the journey across languages and cultures can only ever be a proposed exercise, incomplete, as evidenced in Strehlow’s work.

Translation is risky business, there are in-betweeness which are perilous, cavernous. The Level 2 project space at the Art Gallery New South Wales is the first site for Raft. Rauck Lewis has conceptualised and constructed the piece. Paul Carter has supplied texts and produced a set of sound recordings. These primary sound sources are derived from a field trip following Strehlow’s last journey from the Hermannsburg mission to his final resting place at Horsehoe Bend in Central Australia. The moment of the death of Strehlow is the locus of the sound component: it rewrites the meditative footsteps of Strehlow’s son after his father’s death, it reflects upon a poignant moment of farewell.

Rauck Lewis’s character transcriptions allude to Strehlow’s project of “patternning”; a tragic story is told in six languages. 24,448 characters, several thousand words, are inscribed on the surfaces of 168 lengths of timber or rafts. Raft is a readable yet illusive text. The work invites scanning and utterance; it holds over onto itself, partially obscure narrative continuity. In reading or translating Raft, the audience engages in ‘sounding’, a second aural component to the work—poetic mouthings, making phonetic shapes, a form of ‘singing the text’. In this sense Raft is a set of theatrical or performative gestures which require different correspondences between object and audience.

For ease of naming Raft may be called an installation, but the musical term ‘chamber’ comes closer to the true intention: the enclosed, funereal space of mourning. In essence Raft is a sad, sombre piece. It moves the tragedy of Carl Strehlow’s last journey and the legacy of the possibility of exchange between cultures. Raft becomes a gesture of reconciliation, a model of exchange - in this sense Raft is a set of theatrical or performative gestures which require different correspondences between object and audience.

Why could I! God permet at least a cool breath of air to fan his tortured body...? God had said ‘not’, a last line of communication had been severed, finally, entirely.

T.G.H. Strehlow, Journey To Horsehoe Bend.

Raft, at AGNWA until May 2, in the Project Gallery. Level 2. Rauck Lewis will talk about Raft on April 21 in the theatre, level 4, 1pm.

Daniel Cole

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Celebrating the Site

Keith Gallash interviews 1996 Adelaide Festival artistic director Barrie Kosky

The first stage of the Adelaide Festival was launched by Barrie Kosky recently in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. It signalled a fresh approach, entailing architecture and the city as not only a theme but as the subject of installations along a walking route on the River Torrens, inspired by Peter Carter’s spotters project for the Sydney Festival.

Kosky’s festival promises to be distinctive and committed to Australian artists in a manner not seen since Jim Sharram’s 1982 Adelaide Festival, though the smaller Canberra Theatre Festivals directed by Robyn Archer have shown there is no shortage of front-line Australian talent.

KG: Are you reinvigorating or redefining the Adelaide Festival or all arts festivals and transforming them into festivals of culture?

BK: I wouldn’t be so grand or presumptuous to assume I was reinvigorating or redefining. I think I’m building on the tradition that’s been established over a number of Adelaide festivals in its multi-art nature. It’s wanting to get Australia to deal seriously with most of the art forms. However, I think with tradition one should always analyse and develop and fracture it occasionally and let it branch off in different directions. I’m very intrigued by a number of smaller European festivals that fall out of the centres. People seem to know the Salzburg Festival but there’s much more interesting festival on the same time doing a three-year program called Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. The Hamburg Festival and the festival in Vienna are also very interesting because while they provide large scale productions of theatre and dance and music they also provide a very exciting program of visual arts and literature that is linked with readings, discussions and debate.

KG: Is there a sense of a ‘forum’ or ‘forum’ in Australia have become these terrible words. People are absolutely fearful. It shouldn’t be the case that people have a serious two to three hour debates within a Festival context. There should be at least one event that is the case. I’m fearful whether it’s a free rock event or an exhibition or show. However, we can’t forget the fact that the Adelaide Festival is an arts festival with an emphasis on arts. You can have a very exciting synthesis between entertainment and serious thinking and provocation.

KG: The details of the competition. Rants of the Future, employ the words ‘the swelled of the intellect and wit’. It’s unimportant to see these words used in this context.

BK: The curator of the project, Leon van Schaik, comes from a tradition which says that you challenge people, as I try to do in my work, I think too. It’s thing to go do with seriousness and make people feel less intelligent. It’s about providing forums whether they’re performing arts events or visual art, whether it’s discussion concerts that can give something to people not just on an emotional level but a cerebral level. That’s what I am working at.

KG: You say that Artists Week won’t be about ‘abstract art’ but ‘art usually done in the suburbs’ that it will locate artists in different spaces. Are you bringing to the festival the expanded notion of the arts or culture?

BK: Installations and interventions have been part of the Australian artistic landscape for a long time. It’s nothing new. However, I think in a Festival you can get away with a lot more and in a way you can walk to it which is important.

KG: Will there be a place in your forums for discussing new forms?

BK: There are two debates happening in Australia in terms of the arts at the moment - Hybrid and Technology - that I think must be concerned with. While I’m all in favour of both hybrid art forms and forms that explore technology, let’s not forget the work of artists who express themselves in their ideas and their passions - not the marble or the piece of paper. Peking Opera is a hybrid art form. The Russian Constructivists and the Surrealists in their theatrical productions and the Dadaists and other absurdist forms with hybrid art forms. So it’s not new. Technology has been with us in various forms for a long time and I have the notion that you can use Technology or Hybrid as definable categories.

KG: Nonetheless, you say that architecture in Australia should be embracing other artforms in their debate. Is this part of the pragmatics of town planning?

BK: Absolutely, but I don’t view the relationship between architecture and visual arts or music as a hybrid thing. It’s a completely different world, something the European, Japanese and some North Americans have done for years - relationships.

KG: So it’s not to do with intermixing of forms but overlap of influence?

BK: Overlapping is the best way to describe it. Intersection. Not intermixing.

KG: I grew up in Adelaide and lived there for 40 years. There’s a very strong tradition taken from France. From the likes of Hugh Stretton, The Adelaide Review and Peter Ward, an ongoing debate about the city. You have always had an interest in architecture from the time I was studying music at university. When you’re studying 20th century music, you can’t avoid the idea whether it’s Schoenberg or Xenakis. A connection between form and sound. Schoenberg was a painter and Xenakis was a composer. The construction of their music has strong parallels with architectural thinking. We’re looking at a number of people that deal with sound, architecture and music. I have a great interest in Australian architecture, why it’s different from its European relatives, need to talk to the real world of other art forms and with a community. Paul Carter’s writing a new book about Colonial Light. Adelaide was at one stage going to be called Utopia. The way different cities in Australia have people who drive the people and breathe the air and, the grass, the sky, it’s important that you’re out there. And part of the experience is to actually see works and realise that they’ve been placed in an environment which is just as important.

KG: In an age of tech-art, mediation of the body by high tech forms, you’re an umpire to get back to people’s bodies and go out into suburban spaces. Is this a return to a kind of warm humanism?

BK: I don’t know. Some people have said to me that this festival could be construed as quite reactionary because it’s rejecting a lot of current notions of what we should be concerned with. We have some kind of ideology to see them in some sort of relationship to the past and the present then they’re irrelevant, meaningless or in some way it’s quite old fashioned - you’re going to walk to see this thing and you’re going to relate to the city and talk to people in backyards.

KG: But it takes people out of galleries, out of theatre seats.

BK: It’s very Australian. I look forward immensely to a forum in Artists Week that takes place in a big back garden under a Hills House.

KG: So your festival is a response to Adelaide?

BK: Absolutely. It has to be.

KG: Given the input and inspiration of Paul Carter, the RMIT connection, the rumour of a kind of ‘new’ Melbourne artists -

BK: A false rumour.

KG: - are you bringing Melbourne to Adelaide? Are you giving Adelaide the festival Melbourne should be having?

BK: That’s a very provocative question. No. There’s going to be a number of fantastic South Australian artists involved. There’s stupendous work happening in Adelaide, as there has always been, but it disappears in the cracks because it’s out of the centres and it doesn’t get seen. The same situation in Perth, in Hobart and Brisbane. I work in Melbourne. I do work with Melburnians but I don’t believe that I’m supporting a Melbourne consciousness or that, as Margot Osborne wrote a few months ago, I am bringing to Adelaide - what was it? - “gendered, European, Melburnian Jewish consciousness”?

KG: You couldn’t do this kind of Festival in Melbourne? It wouldn’t be possible to have an Adelaide Festival in Adelaide would it be different other things because of its history, and the place is different?

KG: I suspect there may be many Melburnians tempted to come to Adelaide for your festival.

BK: I think we’re offering people an experience they could not get in Melbourne. I’ve always been critical of Melbourne’s claim to be the cultural capital of Australia. It’s a hideose concept. To be an arts capital.

KG: What does the function mean? Does it mean our Premier booking in Beaui and the Beauty of Australia, or is it a hideose concept? Does it mean erecting Edwardian things in Swanston Street or does it mean Melbourne’s got lots of theatres, galleries, various institutions. Melbourne? It’s also interesting that the Melburnians involved in the Festival have been the ones who have been misused or abandoned in Melbourne. People like Carter, Corrigan and van Schaik live in Melbourne - some of these things would be realised in Melbourne but they should be people who are turned towards a very for a lot of very important decision-making and instead we get what is the wrong people making decisions. Part of my joy with this festival is to say to these people - and there are to the others from Sydney and Adelaide and wherever - "Come".
Spin Cycle
Katie Lavers on the inside with the Christie Parrott Dance Company

Spin has been initiated entirely by the dancers within the company as Christie Parrott herself is on sabbatical in France. The dancers decided to take a radical approach and invited me, as a visual artist working with hybrid art with a particular interest in collaborative working processes, to work on the project with them as visual consultant.

The idea of the season is to create an unusual and exciting event for the audience. This huge old warehouse will be completely blacked out (no mean feat as the roof has acres of skylights!) and the audience will be led through the space by a surreal guide from one event to the next. Each event will be like a strange fragment of thought which will emerge out of the blackness in different parts of the space and then disappear.

Each of the company members will choreograph one of these fragments and there will be an additional one from guest choreographer Sue Peacock. I am working with each choreographer to develop the best possible use of the space, lighting and the use of colour in the sets, costumes and props.

Claudia Alessi decided to combine gymnastics, circus skills and dance in her fragment. Her work will use ropes, trampolines and mesh walls. Helene Emb ling, the French aerialist, has been brought in to work with the dancers and develop the necessary rope skills. As Claudia wanted the audience's eye level to coincide with dancers in full flight - up on ropes and jumping up from trampolines - her work is positioned down in the loading bay of the warehouse with the audience up above on the ramps around it. The piece will use a landscape of ropes, side lighting and slides projected up through the trampolines onto the dancers. As the predominant colours of the ropes and trampolines are greys and browns we decided to restrict the palette of the slides and to work with echings and drawings.

One of Claudia's central ideas is an exploration of the human desire to fly so we concentrated on this and will use the extraordinary Leonardo drawings of flying machines as projections, interspersing them with her anatomical drawings of the body.

Paul O'Sullivan wanted to develop a solo in which the only light source came from lights fixed to his body. We use smoke in the environment to make the shafts of light emanating from his body more visible. We are presently working on making his fragment more site-specific - his climb up into the roof will make the audience aware of the height and scale of the building and the piece will start to explore the relationship in scale between the dancers and the huge old warehouse.

Lisa Heaven decided to explore a dark emotional story. Through extended conversations an austere aesthetic emerged of black and white lighting and black costumes. The physical presence of water appeared as an important element for her.

We decided to introduce a slight shimmer of water falling like mist into the circle of light she is dancing in. A solo cellist will improvise in another circle of light. The other element is a male dancer suspended on a wall and transfixed in a beam of light which travels the length of the warehouse to make a circle of light around him. The circle of light parallels the Da Vinci drawing in that it transcribes the exact limits of the reach of his limbs. Throughout the work the dancer traces the limits of his own body. The distance and blackness between the elements in the piece and the lack of contact between the performers heightens the dark sense of stasis central to the work.

Sue Peacock is choreographing a fragment to take place in the centre of the space. She wants to investigate lasting human values and emotions and has positioned her work in the heart of the space. Her work will be viewed in the round and is to be lit by a ring of fire.

Jon Burtt's fragment takes place within a sculptural form composed of eight vertical shards of light in a ring. It is an interactive work which has been developed by myself, Jon and John Patterson, a sound artist, and uses information technology to create an environment of sound and light which allows the performer to generate sounds through his position in space. It becomes a tool to allow Jon to extend the potential of improvisation.

We also worked with performance artist Matthew Ngui, originally from Singapore but who has lived in Perth for around five years. We asked him to sing the first Chinese song which he could remember - a haunting and beautiful tune. It turned out it was the theme tune for a Chinese TV show! The dancer moves slowly within a circle of lights which shine vertically onto the floor. When she is facing the camera she triggers by half-recalled memories. As these snatches of song start to layer over each other interpretations develops which explore different understandings of time and memory.

Kylne-Jane Wilson is interested in extreme athleticism and fast intensive movement. She suggested the use of Intelligent Lighting and we are working on developing ways of using it with smoke to generate huge sculptural forms in space - cones and sheets of light that inform the choreography by delimiting areas for the dancers to move in.

Peter Sheedy decided to explore the nature of work. His piece, 'Grind', looks at the fragmentation and specialisation of tasks which have occurred in the workplace since the indusrial revolution. He uses gestural, minimal and repetitive movement language to reflect this. We decided to further investigate these ideas through the use of lighting states which only partially reveal the space and the dancers in it. One of the lighting states is a horizontal channel of light at waist height which reveals fragments of the dancers locked into repetitive, gestural movement sequences which echo the processes of workers on an assembly line. Another vertical shaft of light partially reveals a person suspended, working on a chain hoist.

The final sequence is danced with the dancers' backs to the audience, their faces never revealed. The lighting shines from behind them towards the audience through a chicken wire fence. The patterning of the shadows cast by the mesh fragments and conceals the bodies of the dancers.

It has been an intriguing and challenging experience for me as a visual artist to work with seven choreographers with such differing aesthetics, collaborating with them to help develop visual environments that complement the full intention of the works. I hope that this radical initiative taken by the dancers of the Christie Parrott Dance Company will pave the way for many more such inter-disciplinary collaborations.
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The Jumping Game

Melbourne's Crying in Public Places let Rachel Fensham in on the act.

Jump - jump - jump - step
Jump - jump - jump - lunge
Jump - jump - jump - point
Jump - jump - step to the side
Jump - jump - jump - swing
Jump - jump - step back and smile

There's a cowgirl and a schoolgirl and a starlet and a superwoman and they are jumping and smiling and telling stories and singing and humming and jumping. It's a show, not surprisingly, called Jump! and it explores jumping, trying to jump or having jumped - why and where to next?

Five years ago a group of Melbourne performers developed a show called Crying in Public Places (this is now the group's name) that was both satirical and sad. Doubling between short narrative fragments of personal experience and the bittersweet parody of popular culture songs it represented the limit condition of crying with delicate pathos. The theatre group - with songs found themselves performing also as a part-time singing group, and the show lived on, including successes at festivals in Sydney (they performed for the 1994 Mardi Gras), Hong Kong and Singapore. Having honed their voices, they wanted to work together again theatrically and this time found a point of departure, literally, in the jump. Taking up that new moment for feminism when Thelma and Louise leap off the cliff in their car - it was a jump but there is no landing. I'm gonna be a big star!! I'm gonna be a marine biologist. I'm gonna be a big star!!

And what are you going to be?

Maude begins a monologue about the many selves that once were and the many selves she might just step into but every step is blind and the path is rocky. Many tiny steps, many tiny steps. And then she steps and slips and it hurts! If you could only be the girl you just were she would have made the right choice but... many tiny steps.

Annie Davey, Jane Bayly, Maude Davey and Karen Hadfield are busy women who have been associated with companies as diverse as Circus Oz, Handspan, Arena and Karen Hadfield is a writer and lecturer on Performance, recently re-located from Murdoch WA to Monash VIC.

Theatre, Mill Theatre, Club Swing, The Kit Cat Club, Chamber Made Opera, Death Defying Theatre and more. As performers they also develop and present their own work and have been associated with adventurous cross artform projects.

Although finding the time to work together was a struggle, they committed themselves to developing this new show at Napier Street Theatre, a home to independent performance seasons, by funding it themselves from their singing savings. Freed of grant conditions and delighting in their complementary and shared skills - writing, singing, circus, movement, acting - the collaboration feels like a holiday. The process of composition shifts from talking, telling stories, to writing under instruction or improvising with their voices. All the songs this time are to be original. The collage of material mounts and mounts until finally it must be distilled, pared back to that heightened moment when "1, 2, 3, now jump". Complex ideas come across as a capella harmonies and rhythms and the situation registers as sweat and bones.

"What can crying and jumping possibly have in common?" I ask Karen Hadfield. "Nothing really, except that they are both moments of vulnerability, when the mask
Insects Inside

ZsuZsanna Sobolay talks to Nikki Heywood about Creatures Ourselves

It's been a long time since I've been followed in the street by the crows of Greek gentlemen, scammers in the rag trade who pace and measure the streets of Surry Hills from trade haunt to haunt, surfing out business and measuring the body of a passing possible mannequin they assume is off to lunch from packing buttons and breathing fibres into her lungs. Three gold chains, one medallion...

It's been a long time since I've felt the echo of being a slip of a girl, wanting to become a honey being stored. Brown path of chairs turned and rotated like part of being a lip of a girl, wanting to become a piece about being minutely being a writer, about being a writer. It's been a long time since I've been immersed in the rag trade who come, and I remember Chin Kham Yoke's Shocking, totally apt: the workers are so much more. I had problems with that: I don't have a specific history (you called it 'the sewing stall' in rehearsals), or do they ask what it might mean to be there, feeling out a relationship to it? A distinctive experience of Bush is that rehearsal is performance: the meaning is the 'magic' that in other forms you open to on opening night.

The edge between the very feminine/eastern approach versus western focus on the external was what we set out to explore. The differences define focus, completely changing body attitude. It also affects the relation to the observer. Bush makes a state available for an observer to enter into. How willing are people to accept that invitation to enter the state you offer?

NH: I remember Chin Kham Yoke's Middle Dance when she broke her distance from the audience, made eye contact, came up till her costume touched people in front row and sprinkled us with rice. I didn't know what to do with that relationship because I had been so firmly put in a place of mutual starvation with her. I know she deliberately broke her "spell" in some sort of connection to a western audience but that breaking reminded me of what I normally was, and not what I had already become by virtue of the work.

NH: Min Tanaka used to put you in extreme positions until you were just an existence. That relationship of will and circumstance to training is very hard to sustain here.

NH: And yet you are asking questions of definite shapes, relationships, men versus women...Where is your working leading to?

NH: I'm not interested in developing my work like a career; I'd rather go into an empty space and investigate what it means to be there. Perhaps I'm even losing interest in presentation as a performer.

Creatures Ourselves rehearsed for two weeks then transferred for a two-week season to Sydney's Performance Space, ending on March 12. The performers: Garry Bradbury, Steve Cope, Art Ehrlich, Matthew Jargar, Claire Hague, Nikki Heywood, Daniel Mitchell.

ZsuZsanna Sobolay is a writer based on the NSW South Coast.
Slippery Sex

Kerrie Schaeffer surveys Club Bent

As the Chrisray Amphlett/Divinyls' recording of I Touch Myself started playing, onto the stage at The Performance Space strode "Romeo". Wearing blue denim jeans, a checked western shirt, heavy black leather work boots, a sleek ponytail and a five o'clock shadow, Romeo swaggered about on stage - his stance as broad as his shoulders. After some moments of admiring and preening his appearance, obviously thinking himself the object of everywoman's masturbatory fantasy, he began to strip. Off came the work boots, socks, jeans and, lastly, shirt so that he stood full breasted in bulging y-fronts. Despite the incongruity or perhaps inspired by excess, Romeo strutted across the stage flexing his muscles and casting seductive glances towards the audience. He then decided to get down to some action and so pulled up a seat which he sat astride. Leaning back, Romeo stuck his hands inside his pants and, at this point, slowly and seductively extracted a long, blue feather boa. With that over, Romeo wrapped the boa around his neck, got up and flexed one last time, unperturbed by empty y-fronts, and swaggered self-assuredly off stage.

Although listed in the program notes for Club Bent as 'performed by Romeo', this was the first of three pieces performed by Moira Finucane and directed by Jackie Smith including Romeo, Drag Sams Boa Mit Chenille and Meat. The queering of drag effected in and through these performances was a particular highlight of (and occasionally a relief during) Club Bent, a late night cabaret presented by the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in association with The Performance Space, February 15 - 26, 1995.

More than a simple reversal of male to female drag, Finucane's Romeo negotiated the crossing from female to male and back again. Stripping away the accoutrements of an assumed rampant male masculinity, the sexed (female) body of the performer was presented in the space normally reserved for outrageous gender constructions. She repeated this in Meat, displaying once again an ambiguous sexuality by appearing in a generic towelling bath robe and lip syncing to a husky male voice singing I am what I am before throwing off the robe at the end of the song to reveal a naked female body. In Drag Sams Boa Mit Chenille, a high camp exploration of female desire and sexuality, there was no ambiguity surrounding the persona of the diva/goddess Argentina Gita Catalina. Dressed in a scarlet, vinyl costume - thigh high boots, suspenders, corset and arm length gloves with scarlet red lipstick and long black curly hair - she told the story of an affair with a woman in an alley using the metaphor of her corpulent pet dog and their feeding frenzies to describe the women's sex. Finucane placed the sexed (female) body in the place where gender is normally paraded and parodied. She thus collapsed the distinction between the sexed body taken as fixed matter and gender conceived as a social representation amenable to change. In Finucane's performances the sexed body is already a product and is always situated within and formed in relation to ongoing processes of power, knowledge and representation (or materialisation as Judith Butler reformulates it in Bodies That Matter).

The same precisely drawn bodily postures and gestures which made Romeo and Meat so theatrically compelling were also present in Drag Sams Boa. In addition, the extraordinary text accompanying Drag (in the genre of magical realism), carried her performance somewhere I'm yet to return from. After intimating to the audience how she got so wet, although "it was not raining", she wished the ladies in the audience a "good night" and exited.

A surprising counterpart to the conceptual complexity of Finucane and Smith's work or the supreme virtuosity of a Dean Walsh piece, was Azaria Universe's performance to the very tacky soundtrack, Total Eclipse of the Heart. To lines like "Once upon a time there was light in my life, Now there's only love in the dark..."

Universe lost herself in a wild physical display in which she threw her naked body about the stage in abandon. Somehow (I'm still working out how), she managed to build a many-layered emotional/expressive piece which was, at the same time, complex and skilfully performed (moving as she did on very high platform shoes), and which obliterated the barriers of performance to seduce the audience in a way in which some other performers didn't.

Thanks to Julie Browning, Kerrie Schaeffer is a PhD candidate in the Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney.
NEXT STEPS will be a program of short new works from emerging performance makers and follows the success of STEPS 1, in 1994. NEXT STEPS is curated by Leisa Shelton. The program will be made up of work from seven invited performers, a photographic exhibition, audiovisual presentations of contemporary Australian physical performance and the integration of performance film/video.

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Splintered States

Fiona McVilley steps into Pure Theatre's Second Scream

A splinter of Splinters! The result of a desire to make different work; to challenge themselves and their skills base; to step out of the limits of expectation and assumption that surround a Splinters' product; to be able to concentrate on the performance without the distractions of converting other spaces for technical and audience requirements; to break the mould.

Patrick Troy and David Branson take the bait and make Pure Theatre. On an amateur basis (in terms of finances, rehearsal schedule and space) they produce Second Scream by Graham Henderson and perform a four night season under the promotional banner of the Canberra Festival at The Street Theatre, a slick and clean new theatre.

So, a scripted play for Splinters? Not actually so extraordinary. If you avoid the seduction of the fireworks spectacular and actually look at their history you'll find a quantified interest in text and the use of scripts (eg Stray Toasters Theatre 3, 1992; T.H.L.R.S.T. Christopher Barnett, EPIC, 1993). And, remember, Second Scream is a production not of Splinters but of Pure Theatre.

Pure Theatre is a close relation of Splinters', of course, but there are conscious decisions that make them structurally different. While Splinters is seen to use a collective approach, Pure Theatre sets and works to the parameters of responsibility assigned to the specific roles within it - director, actor, producer, publicist etc. They have long had a desire to work with text and in a purpose built theatre; they feel they have worked through a good number of gimmicks and tricks in the Splinters spectaculars (which have not been forsaken, by the way), but they now feel ready to "work" something in another realm.

Second Scream appealed to Pure Theatre largely because Branson likens Henderson's writing (embellished, literary) and Troy liked the confrontational nature of the work (sexual, psychological). After a reading late in 1994 they were convinced they had something worthwhile. As a partnership, Troy and Branson have the intent, the combined vision and the absolute determination to DO IT - whatever "it" happens to be at the time, in this case Henderson's play.

The connection with novelist Graham Henderson comes through Branson's work in Melbourne where he both performed in and directed some of Henderson's other works for theatre (MEAT and Glass War). Second Scream has previously had only a rehearsed reading, directed by James Clayden in Melbourne in 1989. Henderson was delighted by Pure Theatre's interest in a play he had no expectation of ever getting produced.

Henderson himself was unable to be involved in any of the rehearsals even to see any performance. Troy and Branson had little or no contact with him during the whole process but worked with his presence in their minds and accorded him due consideration and respect in the treatment of his work.

Troy's approach as director was to "serve the script", that is, to examine the text and work for clarity. His interpretation of the work grows in the on-going development that actors and audience should allow to occur during the life of the production. "The show on opening night is not the end product" he emphasises, still craving conversation with his audience.

Second Scream is produced with filmic soundtrack and lighting effects. Intelligent Lights are standard in discos. Over the years of 'Ding' Troy and Splinter's technophile Clint Hurrell have developed a keen interest and knowledge of what is new and standard in commercial entertainment tricks. In Splinters and Pure Theatre, they like to remove and re-use them in other contexts.

In Second Scream, computer controlled roving lights observe, even spy on grotesque figures whose lives and murders and lusts bind them together in intricate knots of subterfuge and impersonation. Gangsters, their molls and their associates, one with no legs, one cross-dressed, another with the appearance and manner of a ventriloquist's doll who satisfies his taste for women's urine with the aid of a catheter, all try to out-wit, out-spy and out-pin each other (a temporarily debilitating stab with "the pin") for the sake of the potato which harbours "the golden egg". The gangsters are verbal and non-emotional; the molls are effusive and manipulative. Dreamlike, even nightmare-ish, characters exist fully in the moment with an implied but never explained background, and change their identity to either suit the plot or confound it. As Troy himself suggests, it is full of caricatures, Big & Bold. Now there's need to explore the subtext. And the limitation? As always - time and $$.

Second Scream was written just before Henderson was diagnosed as schizophrenic; a socially convenient label, a label actor Khalid Juredini passionately believes needs to be written out of a person's过于. With the same passion, he perceives the play as a manifestation of the landscape of a mind. As such he sees and is intrigued by the possibilities of therapeutic benefit available to any audience.

The future? Troy is excited to have a production with finite cast and requirement, a novelty for the ever adaptive and all inclusive Splinters. On the cards is a season in July in Byron Bay, and since there, why not Brisbane? Why not elsewhere again?

Fiona McVilley is a Canberra writer-performer.

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Running Away to the Circus

Janine Peacock is a lighting designer, most recently on Orientalis at The Performance Space, and theatre technician. She travelled to Europe in 1992 to work with two of France's contemporary circus, Cirque O and Volière Dromesko as well as England's Station House Opera and contemporary dance company DV8. She still keeps in touch with some of these companies. Virginia Baxter asked Janine to draw on her European experience to reflect on some connections between Circus and Performance.

VB What was it that made you want to run away to join the circus?

JP An attitude to life and art I think. The New Circus movement started in the 70's. That's when Circus Oz started here (1978). In Europe, there were (and still are) the traditional family circuses, the gypsy circuses and then in the 70's these new people who were into counter-culture deciding to make a living as a circus as part of a lifestyle choice. What came out of that was a new artform.

VB How were the lifestyle and the artform linked?

JP The male and female roles were less delineated, the physicality of the women was as challenging as the men's. And the new circuses were a comment on circus itself. For instance, the tightrope walker would be radio-miked and he would talk about his relationship with the audience as he was performing. "Look, this is really easy but I'll make it look hard". A lot of performance is like that - a performance and a comment on performance.

VB How did you find your way in to the circus?

JP In 1990 I heard Archaos were coming to Australia and I rang up and asked them for a job. It was as simple as that.

VB Well not quite that simple. You were already experienced.

JP I'd been working freelance for quite a while. They took me on as a follow-spot operator and assistant electrician on the tour to Adelaide and Melbourne. The Archaos visit was a mind-opening event. There was a lot of skill-sharing between Archaos and Circus Oz. While they were here and the Archaos performers set up introductions for some of the Circus Oz people to train with one of France's top trapeze artists. It's interesting that some of the people who went to Jean de Palacy's school - like Annie Davey are now working in companies like Club Swing (See RealTime 4). For all of us Archaos expanded the way we thought about performance.

VB Can you describe Archaos?

JP They borrowed from things like Punk culture and Mad Max - that was the image they had of Australia and took for themselves. Instead of animal smells and sounds, they had petrol fumes and explosions. They borrowed a lot from circus archetypes and commented on them. The physical feats were embellishments of a concept or a mood or a feeling rather than something that everyone would applaud for the skill alone. Skills were used to illustrate a theme that ran through the show. New-form performance does this. It's often not text-based, often not narrative driven. It's a theatre of atmosphere, image and mood.

VB Describe the way a physical skill might be used by Archaos.

JP The light comes up on a contortionist. Two men pick her up and squash her into a TV set - an image in itself. They carry her centre stage. She's like a living sculpture. She's lifted from the TV set by the "evil" crew and she goes through her act. She's lowered to the floor and there's a group of men standing in a half circle, laughing at her. They put a glass behind her with a milky liquid in it and a rope is thrown over her as she picks up the rose. Meanwhile they're standing behind her obviously setting up a joke at her expense. She straightens up with the rose in her teeth and the milky liquid runs down her face. All the men are laughing. A very ugly scene really. But then with great dignity, she bows to the audience and walks through the line of men. They fall silent. None of them can look her in the face.

VB So you wanted to run even further with the circus?

JP I'd worked at The Performance Space and was interested in flexible performance areas and the ways you could use architecture and space differently for performance. I thought this kind of circus could give me experience and technical skills I could use in my work. So with a little help from the Australia Council I headed for France.

VB And which circuses did you work with?

JP I discovered that Archaos was probably a lot closer to traditional circus than others in France who didn't even call themselves circus. Their names translated as Theatre of Atmosphere or Theatre of the Horse, or Volière Dromesko (Travelling Aviary). These were the companies I wanted to see. I went to work with Cirque O. They're the next generation on from the new-form circuses from the 70's. They formed in 1991. Thiers is a commentary on circus and very minimal. You enter the tent and you see nothing but a grey ring. Nothing to even imply that there will be circus acts. Their program says: "The only decoration is the invader of the spectators on the grandstand. They encircle the round desert which is accessible from four entrances symmetrically opposed. The space is surrounded. The O represents emptiness, the centre, the movement, the beginning and the end; a space where the dimension of the game is circular. Nothing. Everything is possible."

VB So what happens?

JP The show comes literally from the six performers interacting on their way through the circle, criss-crossing, again an embellishment of the atmosphere they produce rather than a set of tricks. There's no time for the audience to sit back and applaud a particular performer's prowess because they might miss something.

VB I can't quite see it.

JP It's difficult to freeze in a moment. One act was called Tresses. These two strongmen enter from opposite sides of the ring and all they do is twirl their very long plait together.

VB That's the act?

JP And highly erotic it is too! They basically got their ideas from sex and if that's your starting point, you've got a lot of feeling to give out. The circle theme is repeated. There was some very unusual characterisation, no words.

VB Music?

JP The music was exceptional - harmonica, violin, percussion and voice. All played live by two musicians. The trapeze was accompanied by simple whale sounds. The musicians were in the dark until the end. The audience was amazed that just two people could produce all those sounds. Lighting was minimal - two-colour-correction, one colour and the rest was white. I helped to put up the tent and take it down. Everywhere they went, the stage had to be perfectly flat - quite a challenge on some surfaces. They were training me for the job of "stage boss". Then their lighting person had to go to Germany to set up a traditional French operator - beautiful state-of-the-art German equipment, brand new lights and board.

This company weren't funded. They had a rich Swiss producer, Ueli Hirzel, who had his own circus in the 70's called Aladin. He'd made some money along the way and had seen the performers in the final show at the National Centre. Afterwards, he said, if you ever want to set up I'll support you. He took them to his chalet in Burgandy. It took them five months to work up the show. They paid him back in eight months. Cirque O were very popular.

VB How long were you with Cirque O?

JP Nine months. We toured to Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, all round France and to Chile.

VB And then?

JP Volière Dromesko for a short time, where the set up of the tent was my major interest. Dromesko were part of the 70's movement. I met up with Jean-Pierre, one of the clowns from Archaos and he showed me photographs of Cirque Bidon who used to travel in the 70's during the summer in covered wagons. They'd set up in a village, do a show open air, and pack it up and move on. That's how Circus Oz started and the people from Otto Circus or New Circus who used to travel around in trucks in the 70's. All the faces I'd seen from Volière Dromesko and Archaos were there in the photographs. These people had branched out and made their own circuses. One was called Cirque Allegro - a circus of rats and horses. From that came Zingaro (a horse circus) and Volière Dromesko. Before Jack Laing became director for Ministry of Culture under L'Arche, he went to the national centre for Circus Arts. After Mitterand, they were funded by the Ministry for Culture.

VB What sort of funding do they receive?

JP Because France holds its artists in high esteem the way that they support art is totally different. Volière Dromesko are not funded by the government except when they travel outside France. However, one of the distinguishing characteristics of Volière Dromesko is their tent - architecturally designed, a see-through roof and all the inside supports are art nouveau lattice work - an unbelievable beautiful tent. That was paid for by the City of Lausanne and the National Theatre of Bern. The City of Bern gave them a factory site where they could make and rehearse their show and not be pressured by time. So they had a place to work and a tent - the means to make a living. Once they're up and running they're on their own. They all earn very good wages.

VB Describe this circus.

JP The show starts at sunset. The audience walks into an aviary within an aviary. The birds are already inside the tent.
with some unusual images in a very quiet finale. Beautiful.

VB Legs on the Wall are an important company. In works like Off The Wall and Hurt they were really breaking down the tricks and dealing with some very adult issues like obsessive compulsive disorders and pain in life and performance. All of Me and Wildheart continue in that line. The narratives about domestic abuse and feral children.

JP They've dissociated themselves from circus - it's more a physical theatre.

VB Bat the same tradition. Melbourne's Desory's another one. A dance/ performance company who use circus skills in amazing ways.

JP Stalker continually cross the bounds of circus/theatre/street theatre. I worked on their last show Angels ex Machina. That used a fragile narrative to do with angels returning from some cosmic catastrophe/Armageddon and finding their way back to the heavens. But it was more a series of thought-provoking images made other-worldly by the use of stilts and the outdoor setting.

VB Club Swing is another good example. Their show Appetite has no narrative, no words. It's based on a series of events that provoke a mysterious and erotic connection between performers and audience.

JP And they use the fact that when you're doing those kind of physical skills, you often have crotches in faces. And let's face it, that's something that does cross your mind when you see any kind of physical performance, even though you're not meant to see it.

VB Some of the same performers are in The Partyline - another provocative women's circus/movement/performance company. So what do I need to join the circus?

JP Like the outdoors?

VB I could get used to it.

JP You need to have a strong sense of yourself.

VB Yep.

JP Strength of character.

VB Not a problem.

JP And you need to be able to live with an artist's passion.

VB How do you mean?

JP It's difficult in Australia. Here, it sounds like you're an adolescent romantic if you talk about your life in that way because you have to teach or drive taxis or wash dishes to be an artist. You rarely get to choose to really live the artist's life. That's why I had to run away for a while.

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Monday Cirque O meeting - Janine Peacock in sunglasses
Young at Art and Grumpy
Keith Gallasch talks to Canberra Youth Theatre Director Roland Mandelstrom

KG How many adults are involved?
RM Full time staff of two, part-time secretary. It used to be a full time staff of three up until the end of last year - two artistic staff and an administrator, but one director had to leave because of lack of funds. The Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council has been shrinking their money to us over recent years and the local mob also cut us by another 20%, plus we've faced increased rent.

KG What was the rationale for the local funding cut?
RM We tried to work it out - something to do with 'the cultural return wasn't sufficient for the investment'. I asked them what was 'cultural return' and how do you measure it and they said, "You tell us". It's all part of a new policy to have lots more money available to young people by not giving it to organisations that work with young people. They gave some to young people and another youth organisation was cut completely.

KG Direct to young people?
RM They ran a sort of a special grants round so we had a lot of young people come to us for help to apply for and administer their grants.

KG Youth companies and centres and the Come Out Festival claim a clientele of 5 to 25 years of age. Is this a curious extension of childhood?
RM Yes, but the other end is it's a way of investing in young people participating in arts on their own terms rather than you or I might define it, and also about encouraging and investing in emerging young artists. These aims are applauded right across the country but no one has more money to do it with. The result is both with the PAB and here in the ACT the money is spread thinner ... and they hope to god they've picked some winners and that they in turn look good!

KG How has this affected the day to day life of the Canberra Youth Theatre?
RM It's stopped us consolidating and - developing work of substantial quality. We've got 200 members and its hard to say "We're down on funds, so piss off!" which would be much easier on one level. There's an obligation - they are my constituency.

KG You must have cut back on something?
RM We can't compensate entirely - we're squeezing the tutors to work for the usual $30 an hour instead of the hoped for $55. We're doing Animal Farm the Musical in July as a big co-operative project, a 'bring home the bacon show' and people are contributing their time and energy. We don't like doing that but it's okay once every couple of years as a community effort. I'm working very long hours and I've stopped keeping a record of them. In terms of the arts my salary is probably quite good but in terms of the duty of care for 200 young people, organising workshops, productions plus advocacy for the industry ... The Australia Council gives $35000 towards that salary. If I was an equivalent primary school teacher I'd be in the high forties. Instead of employing three people at a poor salary, we employ two at almost reasonable salary.

KG What are then the joys of the job?
RM I suppose I still believe in theatre, in doing things live, working with young people, enjoying seeing them find ways of giving shape and form to their lives. I did my first workshop in 1967 with Carol Woodrow who set up this company when I was in sixth grade, some when I was a uni student. I was a performer with Gail Kelly's Troupe, a semi-professional offshoot of CFT when you worked with us 1982-83 on Black Rainbow. I've been associated with Canberra Youth Theatre through the whole time.

KG Is youth theatre an area of innovation?
RM I was in the UK this last year and was talking to people in it. It ranges from radical to conservative while Australia mostly sits at the radical end of the spectrum. We are into young people making their own stories, processing their view of the world - that's my line, so that you can have a stake in the society around you and make this world as much in your own image as any one else can.

KG What about theatre skills, Shakespeare and Peter Handke? In Sydney, Antoinette Blazland's work with ATYP and Anna Messariti's work at PACT have met with quite a bit of critical approval.

RM Great, and a good job, but not what I like. But do service the needs of our members who want to develop their theatre skills. Our emphasis is bringing young people into contact with artists with something and to say and a particular way of working. I think it's alchemical, to do with the relationship between the artists and young people.

KG Your work is not conventionally theatrical.
RM And I have to fight young people about that especially when they first come in to work with us - "Where's the script, what's my character?" I want them to contribute and want that identity with other people. We can all gain from working in groups. Don't put your own ego in, negotiate with other human beings.

KG What kind of artists do you bring in?
RM Some are qualified drama teachers, artists, Leisa Shelton with her Decroux based movement theatre which works well with unskilled performers. Leisa has a strong vision and works with the young to throw up the material and she edits it into shape ... she's a great editor.

KG Who introduces the topic?
RM She might, or we might say here's your topic - she's about to do one with us involving older women and teenage girls: When I'm Old I shall Wear Purple. This will come together intensively over a few months. The kids come in a minimum of two hours a week for workshops and more for projects. On the other hand we have a Giant Raider, a Canberra Raider, five metres tall made with sponsorship. We take it in the football matches and operates it and there's an audience of 30,000 people at a pop to whom it means something.

KG Totemic?
RM Yes but I'm tired of fire and tribes of young people saying "wow this is really deep" - the old ritual school which can be valuable ... but: ... trouble is I'm so blooded broad-minded I don't have a coherent body of work. I'm looking for different opportunities for young people - we do computer animation; I'd like to have Vietnamese water puppeteers to do a big water show with us and others; David Branson from Splinters works with us (and involves young people in) puppeteers' productions' on multimedia productions and great spectacle street theatre. I'd like to do more multi-media but it costs time and money. And sponsorship is hard to get even though Australia is a leader in many ways in the youth theatre area. We travel the country and the world, Hong Kong, Broken Hill.

KG So how do you people join CYT?
RM We don't audition. They pay a membership fee.

KG Is there an access problem?
RM We do charge and I think that prevents a lot of people from making that first step to join us. But geographically the centre of Canberra is attractive in a bland city, so we don't have a problem of drawing kids in. The membership is also very culturally diverse and there are lots of kids from single parent backgrounds. But because of the fees and because theatre is essentially a middle class the limitations are inevitable about who joins. And youth theatre is also an intellectual environment - young people come into contact with intellectual artists and something to say. However we have moved away from issues a long time ago - 'Not this issue again'. We've done that issue. I'm more thematically-based and there are issues in themes of course. A show we're touring to Broken Hill at the end of July and August is on employment/unemployment, but it's not about how the unemployed are treated badly, its more complex than that. It's called Wrong Way Go Back and is directed by Monica Barone. It's funded by Playing Australia.

KG Animal Farm is a bit of an issue book.
RM Originally I was going to do the Three Little Pigs, get in the ankle-biters, make some money, but the young people weren't sure. Someone said let's do Animal Farm. And a 12 year old, Lydia Connell, to give her credit where credit is due, said that she thought Animal Farm was about how as soon as you separate yourself from the environment, or as soon as pigs separate themselves from the other animals that's when those issues of power arise. I guess that'll become the theme rather than capitalism versus communism. That was great.

KG Do the members say very often what they'd like to explore?
RM It's a welcoming environment in which they enjoy coming in, hang around, talk, get in the way and do work and help and consider they've had a good time. It's as easy to try to make it less ad hoc and say 'Why don't you come in these dates and do this ... ' but I don't do that. So a lot of the program starts evolving about now for 1996 and ideas like Purple keep coming back because the young people are so dead keen to do it.

KG An interest in old age?
RM More their view of themelves in term of the future as opposed to how people now old view their lives. Another project we're doing is called Belonging - about clothes and fashion and body image but it's not about anorexia, it's about a whole lot of ways of belonging and defining yourself in terms of look and behaviour. We're working with the fashion design students at TAFE. Kim Rogerson is the designer. I have to think about how nourishing these projects are for the artists involved and then in turn for the kids.

KG There's a lot going on.
RM I try to have projects look after themselves.

KG Anything to add, anything metaphysical, the future of Roland Mandelstrom?
RM Sometimes I wonder. I've made enemies of late because I've been so cross: everyone says this area of work is valuable, exciting, fantastic but the funding is drying up. I get fed up with the way I've over-worked myself, it's my fault it's.

KG And you've invested a lot in it.
RM And it's an area I'm happy to keep working in. I love it. I'd like to have a bit more room to do other work as well.

KG What about your own creativity?
RM I do comedy stuff on the radio with a friend, political stuff, some stand up, MC-ing. Sometimes that Elizabeth Parker was funded for, working title The Monkey Show, with Leisa Shelton and myself.

KG Good for your sanity ... or insanity?
RM You need them both. And as much as I'm down on it all, it's really nice to have a job in the arts, for god sake.
Youth Arts: Shifting the Centre
Chris Thompson talks to Real Time about St Martins Youth Art Centre, Melbourne

CT It's an unusual centre within the youth arts field and quite often misunderstood. The usual model is held in a company structure, an identifiable theatre company, funded to do an annual program. But we're in the process of a move away from that into being an arts centre for young people. We service our own members numbering between 650-750. Out of this number various will be active. At the moment in workshops there will be just under 200 doing a two hour workshop each week for nine weeks. In creative development programs there are currently five projects starting up like Dreaming the Floor with composer Natasha Moorsin.

RT These are one-off?
CT Initially, we're approached by young people wanting to pursue a particular artform or by an artist saying I've got something I'd like to try with young people. We break the idea into segments, develop the idea as a script or a movement piece... then we can ask this is ready to go into production or does it need further development. Particularly in working with young people it's a process of trying to slow down the pace of enthusiasm to the benefit of the project without losing the energy.

RT You monitor that?
CT With two other staff members. There are between 80 and 70 working in this area now in the first half of the year. You go from 200 or so in the workshops to maybe 60 in creative development. Then the product or presentation end of the program is dependent on project funding with a group of 15 to 30. And there a lot of smaller projects.

RT Like books performed for radio, exhibitions in gallery spaces ...
CT When I started I used the quiet of Sunday afternoon to work on grant applications and this and that. Now there are two theatre spaces, gallery, rehearsal room and church hall space, scenic workshop and a meeting room - it's hard to find somewhere to work. This weekend the Bad Service project is out at Collingwood for the Walk Against Waste with a street theatre performance, then a Book Gig performance here, plus workshops, first Dreaming the Floor workshop, auditions, ... 

RT What about during the week?
CT 10am to 6pm it's administration, open to the public 12 noon to 6pm negotiating projects, school groups coming for things like backstage workshops. Soon the Department of Business and Employment's Leap project start up - providing training spaces for young unemployed people. A by-product of drama classes is an increased sense of self and confidence.

RT What size staff runs this huge project?
CT A small one given the size of the program - other companies think we're well off. We see it as a battle. Full-time they're myself, an administrator and a venue manager - we form the management committee. The venues are sub-leased. That's about supporting young people as well. Part-time there's a project manager, who works with me, an education coordinator for the schools community program (separately funded by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation), and a workshop program coordinator: with me these make up the youth arts program. And there's a part-time administration assistant, secretary, receptionist, a public on an annual retainer, a technical coordinator and a technical assistant.

RT Is there a broader cultural definition at work beyond theatre?
CT That's right. It's a funny history. When it started I was one of the first people to be here as an actual young person. I'd belonged to the Melbourne Theatre Company youth theatre in

workshops from Warrandyte, Geelong... Some drive, use public transport or their parents bring them as with the show with young deaf people last year. We had someone coming from as far as Bacchus Marsh for three rehearsals a week.

RT The shows for 1995. What about the mixed media piece with Theresa Blake and Margie Maddren?
CT We didn't get the money from the Hybrid Arts Committee of the Australia Council. You need to invest in young people as soon as possible in this area to develop artists and a young audience for Hybrid. So we're disappointed. We haven't given up on this one, it's too good to let go. It targets ten schools that run strong visual arts programs with photography and gets the artists into these schools in the city and the regions. We do the photography and feed the work back into performance.

RT What about Witness for the Prosecution?
CT A strange one. In Victoria police can find themselves prosecuting in court. As part of their training they go through mock cases in courtrooms with real judges and lawyers and under as much pressure as possible. They approached us last year looking for people with impo skills to act as witnesses, to think on their feet. We trained it, and it's working there's a lot of excitement about the theatricality of the courtroom.

RT What about Black Mamba in June?
CT Last year I was a guest of the Okinawa International Festival for Young Audiences which led to a series of workshops in Tokyo. In Japan there's a strong theatre tradition but not of the participatory kind for young people even though they do have children's centres. I thought Black Mamba the company most capable of delivering the young they're actors and teachers who have formed an almost 'guerrilla tactic' group. They move into an area and do large scale role-play. They have a sense of community influence and to recreate their own culture and that's why they base the work around Ninjas and origami.

RT What will they do here?
CT In late June they'll do the Ninja workshop for 8-9 yr olds who will learn some of the skills and be sent off on a task - a dragon has been captured and has to be rescued. Five members from Black Mamba will do workshops for 20 to 30 young people. Then Takashi Kinajima and I will do a talk and theatre for young people in Japan at the IDEA Conference in Brisbane in July.

RT What's Head On?
CT Our newest venture. What's missing is a professional company in this centre. We have to lure the other companies here - one in Geelong, one in Ballarat, and Anna have their own theatre as do Polyclay. We want to see more young audiences here for work for young people. And away from the 70s model - 4 actors playing 28 characters in the show. Our young people who are the characters they're playing. This has been a theatre practice where there hasn't been an expectation that the actor become the character. This model has served in its purpose, raised its audiences expectations but they don't want to see that anymore, issues yes, but not issue-based.

We'd like to take developed work in performance by young people and translate it into professional theatre for young people. In 1993 Pipa Bailey and I did Head On about youth 'driving culture' drawing directly on young people's experiences and we wrote it up and directed it with the young people who told the original stories, very good material we want to use a professional cast. We have a large pool of professionals teaching here and some young performers ready for their first professional work. This will create a very different theatre for young people from young people in a venue for young people. Initially it'll be a collective structure with me taking leave to direct the show. If it works then we seek financial support.

RT What about the centre's literary connections?
CT The Victorian Youth Literature Programme is unique. It's funded by Arts Victoria and the Literature Board of Australia. It really started hitting its straps last year with Book Fights (performances by young people based on a book with the author present and Book Talkers (panels) getting out into the regions with Write Away Victoria. The author, performer, director and the literature officer travel together by bus to many locations. It's had a great response achieving more than we thought it could and enormous support from the publishers. It's great for St Martins and its young performers to be involved and confirms our commitment across the arts.

"YOOTH" yooθ, n. state of being young; early life; a time when you learn to make decisions for yourself; budding with raw energy and idealism... "NINJAS" nin'jaz, n. application of skill to production of beauty and works of creative imagination; sharing things about yourself with a whole heap of people you don't know; production of ideas and imagination explained for understanding; expressing opinions, thoughts, experiences, and emotions for others to interpret; experimentation and exploration; celebration of human emotion and spirit.

"ARTS" artz, n. application of skill to production of beauty and works of creative imagination; sharing things about yourself with a whole heap of people you don't know; production of ideas and imagination explained for understanding; expressing opinions, thoughts, experiences, and emotions for others to interpret; experimentation and exploration; celebration of human emotion and spirit.

[Image 0x0 to 798x1188]
In The Telling
Performer Ningali Lawford talks to Geoff Vivian

Ningali’s one woman show has played in Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, Canberra and Melbourne in 1994 and will be seen this year in Melbourne, regional Victoria, Berlin, Bonn and Edinburgh.

GV In a year or two your story’s going to be very well known, but at the moment not a whole lot of people know it. You were born in ... Christmas Creek, was it?

NL Yeah, south-east of Fitzroy Crossing, in the Kimberleys, on a small cattle station. I grew up on a cattle station most of my life, went to school in Perth for a little while, and went to the States (Alaska). I came back, hung around Fitzroy, went to Sydney (the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre) for three years and then, back here and did Brum Nea Dar.

GV How do you manage to actually juggle everything, keep everything going at the moment?

NL I’m quite lucky because of my Aboriginal background, and my background is very spiritual and very faming. I’ve internalized, and not going to be easily forgotten. I mean I balance myself well in both the white and the Aboriginal world but I’m always true to who I am and I just keep it that way.

But like if I do feel I’m losing it sometimes I really feel like I have to go home. I have to go back north. The Kimberleys for me is my cocoon. I go back and re-birth myself and re-centre myself and going home is the best place to do it.

GV Where do you reside?

NL Well I’ve been of no fixed address for the last four years I must admit. I do base myself in Broome, it’s easier for me to get in contact with me in Broome, because we don’t have telephones where I come from.

I mean there are certain sacrifices that you have to make job-wise, but my biggest sacrifice is my son, and I will never let a job come between me and my son. I would rather take things at my pace.

I’ve seen lots of things, I’ve done lots of things in my time, now I feel wise. I’m glad that I went out and did all the things at a young age. Now that I’ve got my son I can take time, and do things slowly and enjoy my son.

And with this play, I don’t make accusations at people, I just give them my account of the story, what I saw when I grew up, the changes that I’ve seen when I grew up. Like planting a seed more than anything else, trying to provoke the mind rather than make people tearful.

GV It means it’s only now that people are starting to listen to Aboriginal people. Nobody really gave us the time of the day before.

Yes so it was a long time in the talking phase I suppose, until this year when it became a reality. Angela came up and said ‘you’re ready, were gonna do this play’. I was pretty shocked, because I didn’t think as an actor that I was ready. Nobody had ever heard of me before, I was thinking to myself. I was really scared. As I said before, I haven’t been there long, what have I got to give? And the thing is, I didn’t have anything to give but myself.

And I know myself better than anyone knows me. So that’s all I could give. But I had a rich background of material because I grew up in an era when there were changes. So, I think I lived in a sort of rich thing of life and it’s still going to be happening I suppose.

I didn’t want to be old to tell my stories, I probably would have forgotten, I wanted it to just go out now. You look at people’s biographies, people are doing biographies of their life and it’s really shit, I want more information in me now, I’d rather give it out now. When I get older, I can go back and add things to it. These are not my stories, they are mine through my eyes, what I saw through my eyes, but they are the stories of the people that have lived the way I’ve lived.

Stations, people that got taken away, everything. They are stories for those people and it’s worth being told.

Aboriginal people have always been visual people, physical and oral people, and that’s the way I wanted to present my story. Straight. Straight from the heart.

I love talking to people, and I’m glad that people don’t find me intimidating. I’m glad people come up and talk to me, which is everywhere starts their education, they have to talk to each other more freely.

You know, those people out there, the young Aboriginal people, I try and target them because I’m a blackfella and we have very important things to say.

GV It is not only that you are very good at talking to other Aboriginal people, but the way you present the story to white people. Works very well. You are really showing us going from high English to pidgin English to Walmajarri and back again. That’s a real achievement. I don’t think so many people who could do that.

NL I think the reason is people are so used to listening to other languages, European languages or Asian languages, but nobody ever really heard Aboriginal language.

People tell me, “Speak something in Aboriginal”. Fuck why should I? I mean I speak it fluently, that is my language, my first language. It’s like, somebody speaks Italian as a first language, and you don’t go up to them “speak Italian”, you know.

But people have never heard that before, and another thing that really shocks people is I’m very young, and people have asked me “how do you feel about laying your life, your whole life story bare there and there at such a young age?”

I don’t really want to say about wanting to say things and shaping this country, and I’d rather do it now than do it later. So I didn’t want to wait.

Geoff Vivian is a Perth-based writer and visual artist who has lived in Broome.

Tour Dates: April 29 tour of regional Victoria commences; May 24- June 3 Beckett Theatre, Melbourne; June 17 Berlin; July 7 Bonn; Aug 15- Sept 5 Edinburgh.

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Save the Pantomime in Vietnam!

Andrew Worssam talks to Bruce Keller about his work in Vietnam.

In November of 1994, with the assistance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Australia Council, Bruce Keller travelled to Hanoi, Vietnam to direct a contemporary Vietnamese mime play entitled The Leper Poet. An allegory of modern life in Vietnam and the rapid changes the country is facing, it is also a story about Han Mac Tu, one of Vietnam’s most renowned 20th century poets, Sarah de Jong, with Vietnamese composer Pho Duc Phuong, created the music for the piece.

A: Did you feel that your approach to directing theatre differed from what the actors were used to?

BK: In Australia we have conventions of theatrical presentation which differ from those in Vietnam. For example, towards the end of the rehearsal period, we were workingshopping the climactic scene. In the lyrics of the song an eagle is soaring above the earth looking down, whereas what’s happening on the stage is that the poet has recognised his complete corruption and he is at his lowest ebb. He looks up at the moon and he yearns for it and goes towards it. However, the more he strives for the moon the more it is beyond his reach. At the end of the scene the collapse. The actor playing the leper poet was literally enacting the words of the song. I was saying no, play underneath the song, you don’t have to parallel it. I think that for the actors this was quite unusual culturally. It wasn’t resisting but they were used to the movement echoing the sentimental words of the song. This actually brings up an interesting point. Later on the same actor asked me, “Is the play going to be Brechtian or Stanislavski?” I thought what the hell does he mean? What he meant, he said, was that in using the Stanislavsky method, in emotional truth etc., you would become the eagle, whereas with Brechtian techniques you would play against the meaning. Often, we would actually be talking about the same idea but there would be some initial confusion because of limited or imperfect translation.

It’s a challenge to use particular training techniques or approaches towards emotional truth in rehearsal, when you realise that there is a very different philosophical base in Vietnamese theatre. In one scene, when I was trying to get the actor to express an emotion, he performed a figure of eight movement with his fingers. He explained that he was showing the shift of yin and yang within himself.

A: Can you give me an example of some of the difficulties that you had interpreting the translation of the text?

BK: “He vomits forth the beautiful girl.” It’s one thing to ask, “how do you represent this on stage?” and another to ask what it means. The image comes from a choreographic action in the tuong (a Vietnamese classical opera form). What it meant was that when the character “vomits forth” it is because he is now utterly corrupted and can no longer contain anything of beauty within himself.

A: In what ways does a Vietnamese audience’s expectations and the relationship of the audience to the performers differ?

BK: All the actors had a wonderful ability to readily bring their emotions close to the surface. In Vietnam, audiences are used to seeing this often on stage, unlike here in Australia. A director I once worked with told me that for an Australian audience the interesting emotional moment is when an actor is about to burst into tears. Once the actor actually bursts into tears all the audience can do is watch. In Vietnam it seems that the opposite is true...

The actors were very interested in the workshop techniques I introduced in rehearsals. These techniques were based on workshops I’d taken in Sydney, in particular those which had a strong Japanese influence, and of course through my ongoing work with Entr’acte. An important cultural difference became apparent when we applied these techniques. For example, there’s an exercise called ‘slow walk’, which is a neutral, beautiful slow walk. The idea is that the actor does not openly express the emotion, but the audience feels that emotion and works to fill in the gap.

As I said earlier this idea seemed not to apply in Vietnam. To illustrate this, there was a scene in which the emotion would be expressed through Sarah’s music in contrast to the containment of the slow walk. As it turned out the scene was very successful, but whereas in Australia you could sustain such a scene for a long time, in this production it had to be much shorter. The reason for this we were told was that the audience would become restless with its slackness.

We became aware of cultural differences in the expectations of audiences and how plays are constructed in Vietnam. Structurally most Australian theatre builds up to one climactic moment which subsequently leads to catharsis and resolution. But in the case of Cai Luong (a popular 20th century Vietnamese musical theatre form), it’s like 19th century melodrama. You have crisis after crisis after crisis. In discussions with the playwright Nguyen The Minh Nigo and the poet Dinh Trung Chinh, about an Australian play that we could perform in Vietnam, we looked at Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, to see whether it was suitable for Vietnamese audiences. After reading it they said no, it would be considered boring; firstly, because it leads to no only one major climax, and secondly because Vietnamese audiences would not understand why anyone would reject the concept of marriage. In their theatres Vietnamese audiences want to see crisis point after crisis point because that reflects the reality of their everyday lives. And it must be laced with humour as well, as a release from the hardship of their lives.

A: So, would you say that the production was a success?

BK: Well, working on The Leper Poet in Hanoi was a very difficult but ultimately rewarding experience. When Sarah and I arrived we were told that the whole company was in decline and that this production must “save the pantomime in Vietnam” (with a show and a workshop - rehearsal period!). I personally learned a lot from the challenge of overcoming language and cultural barriers over such an incredibly short rehearsal period and I am proud of having had the opportunity to help “save the pantomime in Vietnam”. For a long time the mime company had wanted to do serious, full-length works but had only ever been allowed to do ten minute comic pieces. The Leper Poet was their first major full-length movement piece. Our audience was primarily Hanoi’s artists and intellectuals. The word is that they were excited by the project. We hope that our work on The Leper Poet will lay a firm foundation for future cultural exchange projects involving Australia and Vietnam.

Bruce hopes to bring The Leper Poet to Australia. In mid-November he returns to Vietnam with Australian actor Doug Binh Ta (Entr’acte, figura) and the Vietnamese/Australian poet Nguyen Tien Hoang to participate in a conference on Country, People and Culture of Australia organised by the Research of International Culture Center (RICC) at the University of Hanoi. Andrew Worssam is a Sydney writer.

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Full Moon, Bondi Beach, January 17. As part of the year’s first Sydney Fringe Festival, a group of children and artists including Sue Pedley, Virginia Huyard, Nigel Heyer, Michael Keogh, Nella Justo, John Hughes, Arribale Novan, Brian Thompson and members of Shopfront Theatre used buckets and spades and a large grader supplied by Waverley Council to re-shape Sydney’s most famous beachscape. They dug and pile sand into a shape resembling images of the original sand dunes. And at night, hand in hand, on the edge of the sand they danced by the light of red marine flares.
Beyond Statistics

Vitalstatistix's Margie Fischer looks forward to the writer's life in an interview with Keith Gallasch

MG: How long have you been writing?
MK: When I was in second class in primary school, I was writing, performing, producing and doing publicly. We did theatre shows for the Red Cross. So I consider myself as being able to do many things and I don't like to choose between them all the time. What I realise now is that I'm a writer and a performer but I don't want to do all that the time because it takes me a while to accumulate the life experience that I need to work from.

MG: You're good at producing and I'm good at raising money but nobody will do it for me, for producing my writing, so I've got to do it. Now after ten years, more than half of which has been producing other women's work, I'm writing my own stuff and only what takes my imagination.

Margaret Fischer in The Gay Divorcee

In my work with Vitalstatistix that means I'm stepping away from a lot of the fundraising and producing but I am passing on the skills. I'm writing a play. I'm writing two plays.

KG: Not for the company but for yourself?
MK: One for myself but I'm also speaking with the progressive Jewish community in Adelaide. They want me to write a show about Jewish divorce and that'll be a community show with the Sisterhood of the Progressive Temple in it. I find work well. I write for myself while and then have a good creative process with other people, leave it and then start up again. I'm leaving it like bread to rise.

I'm working on a play called Wanted with Rosalba Clement, Kerry Dwyer with Tobsha Learner as dramaturg. I've just finished working with Rosalba and Kerry in a week of workshopping in Sydney. We all thought we were a marvellous creative team. I'm with Kerry's at which now is a lot of psyche, developmental work and lots of visualisation and writing from the spirit realm.

KG: Another way of writing rather than just hoping for inspiration?
MK: When I'm sitting there and have an idea, I don't feel that it's come from me. It came from somewhere and I was kind of where it came through.

MK: Rose kept meeting Jesus because she's Catholic but, of course, not Jewish. So now I'm writing the first draft and then we'll do more work. If only one could still be in that room enjoying oneself and it would all be bringing creative teams together. Now I'm into the discipline part. It'll be funny but I'm also letting myself be serious.

KG: Are you an experimentalist, playing with form? It's interesting that you're working with someone who works with Sue Ingelson on something that's marvellously huge, poetic and discursive, but I'm also working with Sue Ingelson on something that's marvellously huge, poetic and discursive.

MK: I'm always working for a popular audience and never thought that a popular audience couldn't handle whatever I wanted them to handle. I've created a whole new form of my work because the Vitalstatistix audience is not the same as an inner city audience at, say, The Mechanical Performance Space in Sydney. But we've actually achieved something interesting in Adelaide which is getting a theatre audience and an intellectual audience to come to the same thing that a popular audience comes to. When I think of my work in Pippi Storm and where I came from I've always done that.

The thing I find most difficult is to be serious. I write comedy and a lot of people say that's more difficult but I find it scarier to be serious so now I'm going to let myself be serious. I think after a while you like the silence of people just listening. If you're not used to it's a bit frightening but I like to do it when I go to the theatre so that's what I'm playing with. Though Jewish humour is serious.

KG: Where do you come from?
MK: I'm from Sydney and I worked here in the seventies with Pippi Storm for popular audiences in the streets, festivals, schools. Eventually it will be documented, the things we all did which were so extraordinary with that background of group-devised work.

KG: Were you writing with Pippi Storm?
MK: Co-devising, I felt I was part of a team. Then in 1981 I worked with Bronwyn Vaughan and eventually wrote a show called The Dresses - a theatre show for ourselves to perform. That was very successful in Melbourne and Adelaide and in Sydney for the Women and Arts Festival.

KG: A critical moment.
MK: Yes. That was my entrance into theatre for adults only. I'd had enough of performing for such a broad range of people. I also wanted to perform what was happening to me. That was the beginning of that. Then I started Vitalstatistix with Roxxy Bent and Ollie Black.

KG: That was in Adelaide?

KG: What made you decide to stay in Adelaide?
MK: I got to the end of one stage in my life. I didn't know it. I went to India for seven months and I came back and all of a sudden a whole chapter of my life had finished and I had a mental breakdown, the first of several - partly because I had such trouble adjusting to change, I didn't like it. The era of working with Pippi Storm had finished and I didn't know what was going to happen next. It was very frightening, so during that time I went to Adelaide to see a therapist and I got better and looked around and thought this is a good place to begin again.

KG: A good place for creative tunnel vision because unlike Sydney or Melbourne there are so few distractions.

MK: As happens after mental breakdowns, when I get clear of it, I was incredibly creative. I got a job as a builder's labourer on the Adelaide Festival Fringe that year and I wrote a show about shit, probably because I was having toilet issues. I suppose I'da Rosenblatt Gets Her Shit Together. It was about me getting myself together but it was also completely about shit.

KG: Did you perform it?
MK: I performed it. It was a success. I was being a labourer in the day and a performer at night. I knew Ollie Black and I met Roxxy Bent in Adelaide and we thought we'd employ ourselves and we'd work with women's creativity and see what happened. And what happened was Vitalstatistix. We found a wealth of fascinating issues and creative energy. This was 1984 and you have to remember that now it is eleven years on. At the time there were very few opportunities for women directors, writers, designers or production people and we created an enormous amount of work. We had so much energy.

KG: Where did you start?
MK: In an old Holden factory in Port Adelaide that I loved and I moved there. I'd known if you like, that was a good place for creative inspiration because unlike Sydney I could be with my own company. We won a Tourism Award. It's grown now to include theatre, music, visual arts, youth craft, drama, music, a whole range of things. We've produced Vitalstatistix in Port Adelaide and I've worked there with Vitalstatistix, creating an enormous amount of work. Roxxy and I moved in together and started Vitalstatistix and we've been working together ever since.

MG: What's the future of Vitalstatistix?
MK: We're looking at being a production company, making and producing our women's theatre work in South Australia and nationally for projects that they feel passionate about and then assisting people in producing them, helping them find the financial assistance they need. We're doing another series of Winter Play Readings this year and we're developing some scripts at the moment - Katherine Fitzgerald and Eva Johnson are working together and Pat Rice and Kate O'Brien are working on a show about breasts. Anne Brookman's writing a show.

KG: Are the same women working in Vitalstatistix who set it up?
MK: Ollie left four years ago. Roxxy is now exploring film and TV. It's a broader team now. We've got a project called that we're working on. Now I'll be able to do my work.

KG: You have to give yourself space.
MK: When you're skilled in a lot of areas it's fantastic, I found I was able to get other people's work up but when it came to my own ... I just want to concentrate on my own creativity for a while.

Four of Vitalstatistix's plays have been published - Weighing Up To, A Touchy Subject and one for children called Are You Annette and A Trip To The Light Fantastic in an anthology of SA women playwrights both published by Tainbridge Press. Vitalstatistix can be contacted at PO Box 435 Port Adelaide 5015
Phone (08) 47 6211. Fax (08) 47 7577.
Orientalia
The Performance Space, March

The synthesis of east and west in performance is dangerous territory, charged of appropriation and exploitation abroad, while the long engagement both ways in music seems, at least on the surface, less troubled. In Orientalia, the creation of Sally Susman at Sydney’s The Performance Space, André Greenwell’s music, especially in its juxtaposition of the jinghu (a sharply pitched bowed instrument) and marimbas in original compositions and a version of the final aria from Madam Butterfly, is the least troubling but quite dynamic aspect of the production. Orientalia appears to be a critique of Orientalism but at times it seems to perpetuate it: a kung-fu sequence is funny, but nothing else, excerpts from traditional (The King Forever’s His Concubine) and model Peking Operas (Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy) are performed by Peking Opera artists (now resident in Australia) with skill and passion, but are presented with an uncritical reverence.

Curiously, the three western performers have no equivalent set pieces, western performance traditions are not invoked as part of the current western self-laceration in face of apparently pure eastern traditions. Nonetheless, Orientalia offers powerful moments, disturbing and estranging in a way that (himself usually treated with low church reverence in our theatre culture) may well have approved. The 1935 meeting between Brecht and the great Peking Opera Dan (female performer) Mei Lanfang in Moscow (with Stanislavsky, Eisenstein, Meyerhold and others) helped Brecht crystallise his alienation-effect notion, and inspired this production, especially since Brecht conveniently misread what he was seeing, particularly underestimating the emotional involvement of the Peking Opera performers in their roles.

Two scenes in Orientalia evoke this meeting - Brecht watching Mei Lanfang perform Concubine and, more significantly, the banquet at which Brecht had seen the ‘opera star’ perform in a dinner suit and without makeup. The latter scene is grandly theatrical with the protagonists linked neck to neck by a huge table-cloth, cum napkin the length of the performing space and a trio of interpreters struggling to communicate Brecht’s ideas to Mei Lanfang and deliberately distorting the messages in the interest of ideology. Another moment, in a sustained sequence, not so a narrative, about gender and orientalism, has Brecht and Mei Lanfang mirroring with surprise each other’s movements as if succumbing. This resolves in Mei Lanfang, in dinner suit, repeating his sword dance suicide from Concubine but singing, in that alarming Peking Opera falsetto, part of the final aria from Madam Butterfly. The power of the scene is quite cumulative having moved from the obvious (projections of eastern imagery onto women’s bodies), to a Peking Opera performer in western drag being instructed by Nigel Kellaway/Brecht, to the kung fu cliche and, finally, the Brecht-Mei Lanfang duet ..., or is it simply an exchange between performers? It’s certainly a catalogue of the orientalisms through which we view the east.

There’s a similar power in the closing of the Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy scene. Zhang Zhiqun sustains his revolutionary gestures as he is pushed on a moving platform (not unlike a huge Chinese lantern and lit from within) across the space to the recorded sound of stirring, violent Soviet Russian orchestral music (presumably an influence on the Model Operas). Brecht/Kellaway approaches from the other end of the space on a similar platform declaiming stridently, alternating between a glorification of an east-west synthesis and a condemnation of it with, I’m told, naive phrases taken from Peter Brook, Grotowski, Eugenio Barba and their successors. Mei Lanfang walks slowly between these two platforms picking sequins from an opera costume, an activity, I’m told (but which wasn’t made at all clear in the production), enforced on performers during the Cultural Revolution along with other indignities.

Orientalia alternates between the obvious and the complex, between the obscure and the utterly direct, appearing at times like a work-in-progress but performed with commitment, with enough ideas and images that work to suggest greater possibilities.

Tiger Mountain by Strategy: Take Two
Trevor Hay in the audience Theatreworks, Melbourne

‘Model operas’ of the Cultural Revolution began to enjoy some kind of revival not so long ago in China, and in February 1992 one critic wrote, after watching a performance of The Red Lanterns, “the exciting scenes of twenty years ago appeared again, and performance after performance played to packed houses and many young people expressed great interest and enthusiasm”. I know there is a great market for Mauss nostalgia in China, but I am struck by the irony that the “eight model works” of Jiang Qing must seem almost as exotic to young audiences as the old ‘ghost plays’ which they were intended to replace. Perhaps their revival should be regarded as part of some ultimate ‘black line’ in literature and art, an example of the way that even works specifically intended for the masses can wind up being a collector’s item for those cultural cockroaches who can survive absolutely anything - the bourgeoisie.

So, I was fascinated to see a production of Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy at Theatreworks in St. Kilda on a murderous hot night in February. I mention the weather because the play opened with an athletic, bull-roaring flourish of huge red revolutionary flags, which prompted the dripping, half-naked audience to utter the kind of involuntary gasp of appreciation Jiang Qing could only have dreamt of On the Deck or The Red Lantern. However, David Pledger’s production used the original "revolutionary modern Peking opera" only as a starting point for a variety of things, amounting to “a muscular, fiercely concentrated, heightened sense of comedic ritual” and I found myself absorbed, puzzled, moved and occasionally irritated by the power and directness of the performance.

The publicity for Tiger Mountain says it “cartoons the crude political propaganda of the original play by way of investigating the means by which mass society of all political persuasions is manipulated to support ideology as product and product as ideology.” I don’t believe this statement does either David Pledger’s production or the original much justice. In fact, even the “crude political propaganda” of the Peking opera was not just crude, but an attempt to do something interesting with Chinese dramatic theory and tradition - and certainly it was more than a mere parallel with modern consumer culture. Certainly there is a great market for Maoist irony, but I think the power of the scene is quite cumulative having moved from the obvious (projections of eastern imagery onto women’s bodies), to a Peking Opera performer in western drag being instructed by Nigel Kellaway/Brecht, to the kung fu cliche and, finally, the Brecht-Mei Lanfang duet ..., or is it simply an exchange between performers? It’s certainly a catalogue of the orientalisms through which we view the east.

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This is also true of the disruptive effect of humour in the work. It might have backfired and it certainly is at odds with the ‘heroic’ tone and purpose of the original Tiger Mountain, but it made it point well enough about the absurdity of propaganda, of language set adrift from imagination. Jiang Qing, it must be said, was not striving for that particular effect, although she certainly achieved it - not because her model works were so bad, but because they were not ‘models’ at all. They were almost all there was.

That is one major area in which the “eight model works” backfired on her, and on “revolutionary modern Peking opera” in general, but at least a fragment of Tiger Mountain has survived to provide some fine contemporary inspiration.

Trevor Hay is a Melbourne writer, author of Tartar City Woman (MUP) and co-author of East Wind West Wind (Penguin).
Animal Acts

Keith Gallash interviews Grahame Gavin, artistic director of Perth’s Barking Gecko
On May 10 Barking Geckos are presenting the keynote performance, Ivory Circle, to open the 30th Anniversary of ASITHE, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People, at the Seattle International Children’s Festival during the One World Theatre Festival and Symposium.

KG: Has creating the trilogy Visiting Relatives, Ivory Circle and Dolphin Talk been a satisfying experience?

GG: It’s funny calling it a trilogy, as if there aren’t going to be anymore plays about humans and other animals.

KG: Then these plays are part of an ongoing body of work?

GG: It is for me. I find human relationships with animals engaging and thoroughly interesting - how you portray another species. When we’re in Seattle we’ll work with an American Indian company from Alaska who we first met when we took Dolphin Talk over there four years ago. We’re talking about doing a co-production about the orca covenant which is one of those traditional legends about the links between humans and orcas. This will be a collaboration - we won’t do it on our own. It’s a direction I’d like to move in now over our company’s productions and more of using these meetings as an avenue for international collaborations.

KG: Have you thought of looking at our relations, say, with the animals closer to us - domestic animals or the ones we eat?

GG: I don’t have pets but I am interested in why we develop relationships with animals and what that says about us. The very first early work that we did when I was a member of Woody Jumpers in Geelong was a play called These Features Creatures which included stories about people and their pets.

KG: So you’re interested in the animals at some distance from us, the so-called ‘wild’ animals, the ones we invest with spiritual or totemic values or, more recently, the ones whose existence we threaten?

GG: Dolphins aren’t particularly threatened as a species, but a marine world here called Atlantis was looking at closing down so the issue of the future of the dolphins was very much in the news. The next stage of the work. I think, will be about our spiritual relationships with animals. This is already developing through the play Ivory Circle which is set in Thailand where elephants are very much defiled. It’s going to be interesting to see how the Thais deal with the potential extinction of elephants in a country where these animals are considered ‘honorary humans’ especially the white elephants who are given legal protection. There’s a whole play in this.

KG: Will you do this? You have been to Thailand. Could you work there as you will on the orca project?

GG: In Thailand we didn’t develop a relationship with any arts groups, we worked with an elephant group. But there is a lot of interest in creating a play for Thai people to see, perhaps using elephants in performance. I’d love to play a consultative role in this. There are people interested in exploring the historical role of elephants in their culture and re-teaching that. Many people, in Bangkok for example, have never seen an elephant.

KG: How much of this is your vision and how much Barking Gecko’s?

GG: We have a floating pool of performers of ten or eleven of actors who have worked with us over a long period. Initially it was very much my vision but these are performers very interested in developing script and performance through performer-based research rather than working through a commissioned script.

KG: Do you work with writers?

GG: With Dolphin Talk there were writer-performers and a writer-director, and Visiting Relations involved two of us with writing skills. I would be reluctant to commission a script in this area. I think that the physicality of the performances is integral.

KG: How do you represent animals - mime, imitation, abstraction of gestures?

GG: We take different strategies with each play. With Dolphin Talk the impetus came out of being in Geelong around the Mill Theatre. James MacCaughery directed Dolphin Play. I was a student and fascinated by it. One of its stories in our play. They used a contemporary dance approach with Namette Haswell choreographing. We’ve taken some of that using a mixture of modern dance movement and gymnastics. In Visiting the Relatives, knowing that humans and orcas are ninety-seven percent identical genetically, we made a deliberate decision to feature one actor who is constantly moving between orca and human and minimal physical transition from one state to the other so that most of his human characters have orca-utan qualities while the orca-utan characters have been slightly humanned to blur the distinction. We were reluctant at first to do Ivory Circle because I couldn’t see a way into the physicality of it. Then I met an African woman, Marie-Ange Clarke, who teaches African dance here, saw a lot of her work and thought of African dance as a metaphor - a group of actors using it to represent elephants. It was somewhat successful - elephants are tricky to represent.

KG: You claim an audience of five to twenty-five years of age. What does this say?

GG: These works are for ten or eleven at the youngest, where children can think about issues that are complex, though I’ve never thought of our work as issue-based. But most theatre - Being Nice Is a very issue-based play. It is important to show young people that theatre is an avenue for making observations and statements about world, and that includes people into their 20s. The subject matter of this work has been unusual and has drawn interest from a wide age group. And the theatricality of it, the theatrical tasks demanded by it, have created work that makes people want to watch.

KG: You, mainstream companies don’t tackle these subjects. Do the works change?

GG: There is space here to allow work to develop. We are rehearsing Dolphin Talk with an almost totally new cast for its fifth season and the work has never been allowed to and I think that’s quite unusual.

GG: Continuity exists in companies like yours, in performance companies and circus or so-called physical theatre groups but conventional theatre is still largely conducted by show.

GG: The preoccupation is still with the well-made play, it’s quite destructive and I love being in a situation where process is seen as long term. You might get a production up to performance level but it still can be added to and changed and evolve.

KG: And a lot of the performance is not in the script, it’s in the bodies of performers. Is your future with Barking Geckos?

GG: I’m keen to continue to be involved here but with associate directors working in the company as well. We create a lot of product and it can be difficult to be an artistic director over such a long period. I would like to help directors with a body of work they have in mind for this company. James O’Hara has been director of the Uxley Youth Theatre in Adelaide and will come back later this year to work with us. I think we can have an associate director who is resident in South Australia or Sydney or wherever. We’re moving into a new age but theatre seems to be quite lethargic. We need alliances between companies nationally and internationally to share expertise, things we otherwise wouldn’t see or experience.

Speaking of Voices

RT speaks to Isabel Kirk, co-convenor of the Third Australian Voice Symposium, NIDA, Sydney, May 19-21

The symposium aims to bring together people who work with voice in the varied fields of art and science. Five international speakers have been invited from areas of dialectology, singing, speech pathology, voice science and voice teaching. Themes include the physiology and acoustics of voice, voice problems of professional vocalists, performance enhancement, emotions and voice. The symposium should be of interest to actors, dialectologists, singers, speech pathologists, teachers of singing and voice and voice scientists. Isabel Kirk who set up the first fully accredited Voice Training Course at NIDA is one of the organizers.

IK: We’ve attempted a number of times to bring together arts, science and medicine but programs have been seen as either too rigid for artists or too loose for scientists. Voice teachers have never had the same status as surgeons and pathologists. On the other hand academics like Kristin Laskitter (author of the seminal Freeing the Natural Voice and currently Professor of Theatre and Director of Actor Training at Emerson College, Boston) have been using laryngoscopes and the like in their voice training courses for a long time now. Kristin Laskitter will speak at the plenary session on Friday May 19 on Emotion and Voice.

RT: So have you successfully broken through the scientists’ defense?

IK: Our aim is certainly to present such a variety of takes on the voice that delegates are bound to find themselves crossing lines. Papers will be short and varied with a range of practical workshops and masterclasses also on offer. Everyone will get a taste of lots of different viewpoints. The territory will switch from the physiological to an emotional focus of the voice.

RT previewed the symposium’s program which offers an intriguing selection of papers that sound like titles for new works by Oliver Sacks or Robert Ashley: An Academic Instructor’s Hymnbook, The Neglected Voice of the Classroom Teacher, Performance Effects: Ten Choral Timers. There are papers on the voice characteristics of Australians of Anglo, Greek and Italian origin, the changing voices of girls, arthritics, and the erotics of the female voice as experienced through opera and contemporary performance practice, spoken work, and as box and women’s spoken voices. The international guest lineup includes Professor Daniel Boone, School of Speech and Hearing, University of Arizona, author of Is Your Voice Telling On You?, leading US dialectologist Professor Robert Sataloff, author of the Text Book of Performing Arts Medicine, Stockholm’s Professor Johann Sundberg, an accomplished singer as well as academic and author of many papers on the acoustics and physiology of the singing voice, and Professor Ivo TIZE Professor of Speech and Hearing Science at the University of Iowa and Director of Research at the Recording and Research Centre of the Denver Centre for the Performing Arts.

RT: What’s your input to the Symposium?

IK: Until recently, voice in Australia has been taught mostly by the voice teachers. This year, when I decided to find out more about it, I had to pretty well find out for myself, devise my own course. I went to the US to work with Kristin Laskitter and Jo Esel. As I needed to know more about the physiology of the voice, I sought out courses in Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, and the Theatre of Voice and Speech Pathology. I’m off to Wales for another International Voice Conference that includes a focus on the healing possibilities of vocal training. In helping to organise this symposium, I’m contributing my own holistic approach to the discipline.

Kristin Laskitter will give a number of masterclasses as part of the NIDA Open Program. Call Amanda Morris (02) 6977 7626
The Perilous Beat

John Gillies surveys the works of drummer Tony Buck

Q: What do you call someone who hangs around with musicians?
A: Drummer.

Drummers and their instruments have always been at the intersection of the exotic of tone and the ‘non-musical’ as it is used to be defined. In Mozart’s time percussion was introduced as an exotic embellishment, the instruments being appropriated from the Turkish military bands which had recently become popular in London and Austria, but by Mozart’s time were in retreat. Perhaps it now felt safe to let some percussion into the European orchestras.

Percussion has in this tradition always been despised as something non-musical, primitive, brainless, or praiseworthy and surprising. Dionysian. Even today cymbals bare the trademark of the Turkish fan and all the neutral tymbars are variants on those carried on horseback by the Sultan’s armies.

In African-American tradition, percussion was never percussion, as being composed of the ‘traps’ or drum kit, where one musician could play bass drum, snare drum, cymbals and more; maybe adding exotic woodblocks or toms from China or cow bells and claves from Cuba. In Forist style the whole body is used, replacing three or more percussionists in the marching band. As well as rhythms for dancing rather than marching, the drummer could provide ‘effects’ or ‘noises’ for magic acts or, later, film. It became a tradition in cinema to use ex-drummers to create sound effects for films; like stand-up comics these people had timing.

Lancers, drummers use their whole body as a technology, long before noise notions of the extended body or the cyber should be seen as the long line of drummers at R.S.I. clinics. Drummer Tony Buck has collaborated with dancer Melissa Lovic, a member of the Belgian group Daidakudakan. In their performances Lovic could fire off Buck’s equipment, incorporating Buck’s interference, intervening and subverting his playing, whether kicking the shit out of a giant red heart suspended and spotlight centre-stage, triggered loud harp arpeggios from Buck’s samplers, or gingerly shuffling in pastel blue fluffy slippers triggering more sound. At the club Crocodile in Tokyo early in ‘92 this collaboration was joined by musicians Yoshishide Otomo and Hideki Kako. These three musicians plus guitarist Michael Sheridan became the core of the band Peril, touring Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, China and Europe with Einstuerzenede Neubauten. Buck’s collaborator in Peril, Otomo, who has also worked with John Zorn, collides records on his turntables, free-jazz sax solos, People’s Liberation Army choirs and Gagaku court music, parallelled his obsession with ‘noise’ or ‘non-musical’ sound in the Taiwanese action cinema in the sonic realm.

Similarly Buck collides genres and musical styles, exploring other parts of the territory carved out by John Zorn and his many collaborators. At the launch of the CD Solo Live at Kinels in February, the performance began with a tiny music box playing ad nauseam Forbidden Colours, Ryuichi Sakamoto’s beautiful and saccharine theme of cross cultural longing and desire. This was slowly eraed by a delicate percussion solo, à la free jazz, then by jerking 2/4 speed metal tempos, heavy funk grooves, musique concrete collages and fractured swing, generated by sequences, sample drum machines, digital delays and live drums. Like Blue Mort, the New York based percussionist who performed at last year’s Experimenta in Melbourne, the tempo control is used fluidly on the sequencer, pulling and pushing tempos, defying the will to dance.

Buck and Peril’s view of cultural mixing and the Australian cultural pull into Asia is to lampoon and confuse. The Tokyo metropolitan government hired Peril mistakenly believing them to be an Australian bush band, but they did perform their version of Waltzing Matilda. In Exchange Rate, samples compare the rate of the Australian dollar to the Yen. With Buck’s solo work what is surprising is that it never degenerates into an extended drum solo, albeit a highly virtuosic and excessive one, but remains a dizzyingly visceral rather than academic experimentation. There is no fusion or resolution of musical styles and forms and as with Peril, there can never be any resolution of cultural and sonic difference, simply the energy which their meeting creates.

Tony Buck is currently designing a new performer and electronics interface at the STICEM research facility in Amsterdam. He returned briefly to Australia in February to perform in Sydney, Melbourne and the Byron Bay Festival and to launch Solo Live, (Wright Recordings, distributed by Shock).

John Gillies is a drummer and video maker. He lectures at the College of Fine Arts, UNSW.

The Ion Age

John Potts talks to composer Ion Pace

1995 is a busy year for composer Ion Pace. His work is featured twice in the upcoming Sound In Space at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, while he has an April residency at The Performance Space with his new ensemble of performers. This is in preparation for another performance/installation work to be presented in the second half of the year.

The common factor in all these events is the composer’s exploration of sound in its many facets. That is, sound not only as an aural phenomenon, but as reflected in physical movement and sculptural form. His ensemble works will include musicians operating Pace’s self-made music-machines, movement artists, sound installation and sculpture. All these elements, both human and mechanical, are part of the overall production of sound.

In several ways, these works represent a culmination of Pace’s work over the last few years. The Sound In Space project, Sensations Of Tone, stretches over two sites, incorporating both ‘sound objects’ and machines which involve human interaction. Pace has been building his own sound machines for six years, with a distinction between ‘instrument-machines’ and ‘sound object’.

“As instrument-machine operates like a machine of its own accord, once you turn it on,” he explains. “The sound objects can make sounds, but often I exhibit them mute. They will make sound if you manipulate them, but it’s not the most important part of their character.”

Do they have names? “Yes. The Performance Space ensemble works, we’ll be using two acoustic counting-machines, a violin machine, a drum modelled on Japanese or Indian drums, sampling machines, and hopefully I’ll construct some instruments from old space...”

Why did he start making machines?

“Because I got bored of writing traditional music. I was tired of writing something about tone and rhythm, and produced sound instead of note. I’ve never been interested in writing music for the sake of writing music. I’ve always been interested in how sounds work together in a texture in time. My goal has always been to create a live sound machine.”

He lectures on composition at the Royal Conservatory of Arts in Melbourne, where he teaches his students to compose music ‘in sound’. Pace has been described as a composer working with sound ‘in the round’. “I’m interested in manipulating sounds together to produce sound effects, instead of using the music itself. It’s a sort of scul...
Orchestrating Youth

RT talks with Tony Ingersent, administrator of the Sydney Youth Orchestra.

RT The Sydney Morning Herald review of the Sydney Youth Orchestra's latest concert was glowing but lamented that only a small audience got to enjoy Scaldborpe's Sun Music 1 (all four will be played in this year's program), the Walton Viola Concerto and Mahler Symphony No 1, a more interesting concert than you're likely to encounter in many a night in the Opera House Concert Hall.

TI We've been under-publicised. It's a question of budgets. We're a small arts organisation and we can only advertise in a limited way - we can just afford two advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald. I've been involved since 1983, initially part-time. My 'real' job is as an actor but mature character actors aren't very much in favour. We went through a critical phase and I was offered the full-time job of looking after the orchestra. It's just me - gofer, administrator, publicist - Henryk Pisarek is the overall musical director and there are five conductors for each of the orchestras. Colin Piper of Synergy conducts the Philharmonic, the second orchestra. The Peter Seymour Orchestra is conducted by Stella Bakopouli. We're a mall

RT One of the emerging women conductors?

TI The older of the two string orchestras, the Chamber Strings, is conducted by Jenny Mee, and the younger by Barbara Cranz. Carolyn Bounds conducts the Flute Choir.

RT Do you have tutors as well?

TI Indeed. The senior orchestra is predominantly tutored by members of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. It's Henryk's policy that young players be tutored by practising performers, especially orchestra players.

RT When do they work?

TI Saturday afternoons on shifts between 1.30 and 5.30pm, some 300 kids. On a tutorial day when the orchestras break into ensembles it's astonishing. We operate the best part of twelve months, especially the senior orchestra over half of whom play right through to Carols in the Domain.

We play to 100,000 people and millions watch it on television but Channel 7 still doesn't really plug the youth orchestra which is the group that keeps the thing going. The kids like it, not so much the music, but the event and they do get paid for a change (instead of paying us). We do get a lot of requests for things like weddings - a brass quintet or a string quartet - so occasionally we can point our players in the direction of paid work. After a few weeks' holiday the orchestra was back playing at the second of the Intervarsity Choral concerts, doing the Holst Oratorio, the Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes and, with the choirs, the Orchestrating Youth

TI We're actually. Henryk is keen on 20th century music, including Australian, though the Mahler is technically late 19th century. The players love it - they're getting stronger and stronger because Henryk chooses these challenging programs. They're been screaming for Mahler for a long time. The only one we've done before was No 5 conducted by Stuart Challenger with Songs of the Wayfarer on the same program.

RT What kind of repertoire for the other groups?

TI The Philharmonic does mostly 19th century and, soon Smetana's Masada.

RT Are the SYO and the other orchestras a cohesive group?

TI They go on a music camp early in the year, they make friends, there are new people every year, some progress all the way through. We blend people into their ensembles as quickly as possible. And the St Laurence Arts Centre is the home of the SYO though we're no longer involved in its management.

Not all our players want to pursue a professional career in music but we do serve as a training ground for players performing with all the major Australian orchestras as well as overseas ensembles.

RT What future do you hope for the SYO?

TI The Australian Youth Orchestra is well-funded now as part of Creative Nation and we're well represented in that orchestra - in 1994 seventeen past and present players of the SYO were part of its tour of Europe. We'd like to be in a better position financially too, especially to publicise our work. This means searching for sponsorship and it means fundraising especially since we re-started almost from scratch financially in 1993, mostly through membership fees, after splitting from the St Laurence connection. The orchestra is very good, it needs an audience.

The winners of the Australian Music Education Board-SYO Concerto competition have just been announced - Linda Stuckey for the Malcolm Arnold Flute Concerto and Jemima Littlemore, violin, for the Bela Bartok Rhapsody No 2. The Sunday May 21 concert at the Sydney Opera House features the concerto winners, Scaldborpe's Sun Music II and Holst's The Planets.

TI We have a commitment to large scale works. The presence of Australian work is indirectly dictated by the funding bodies especially the Australia Council.

RT Are you happy with that?

TI Yes, we are actually. Henryk is keen on 20th century music, including Australian, though the Mahler is technically late 19th century. The players love it - they're getting stronger and stronger because Henryk chooses these challenging programs. They're been screaming for Mahler for a long time. The only one we've done before was No 5 conducted by Stuart Challenger with Songs of the Wayfarer on the same program.

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Recording Aloud

Tall Poppies’ Belinda Webster talks to Nicholas Gebhardt

"Tall Poppies is going in several directions simultaneously and I feel oddly schizophrenic about it." These words of assurance came from amongst the cozy chaos of Belinda Webster's office near Rundle Mall, headquarters of the Tall Poppies recording company, and distribution site for some of the most challenging and surreal contemporary music being produced locally. A recent recording with Riley Lee in the (temporarily empty!) Centennial Park water reservoir highlights the operation of a catalogue of recordings that includes everything from Mozart to Machine For Making Sense. The focus though is definitely on local musicians and composers working with a range of musical and sound practices that stem from a commitment to new works that both expand and question the sense of a national and international culture.

Tall Poppies is all about developing "...a really broad listening audience that I can reach through a variety of music. My aim with this company is to develop a reputation, which I think it already has, whereby anything that is out on Tall Poppies will have a certain quality. So if people are curious about getting into something that might not be part of their normal musical horizon, they will at least know that if they buy it on Tall Poppies they can be assured that the music is really quite good."

After all, sound projects like Rik Rue's Ocean House, Ross Bolton's The Country of Here and Dunstan's Xmas YSB are not easily categorised or promoted. And yet, Webster points out that "I've been involved in radio on 2MBS-FM and have been fascinated by soundscapes and radiobroadcast work for a long time. I think in the future there will be a much bigger audience for these works because there's going to be more activity in this field. People will sit down in their home studios with computers and decent recording equipment and create these works which don't necessarily have a performance basis."

It's understandable that, though live performance is always more exciting and interesting than a CD, if I had choice of sitting at home and listening to a CD and going out to hear the same music played live in a pub or a concert hall, I'd go out. Simple as that. I'm the wrong person to be running a recording company. But that also means being aware of the potential of live performance. You can't get the spirit of a live performance, although when you're actually recording you can try to bring that sense of immediacy to the music so that it doesn't sound dull, so it doesn't sound like you've done twenty takes before you find the right one. That's hard to do.

Tall Poppies has been instrumental in developing certain strands of local improvised music and for Webster, the... recordings that I've been most involved in and most intrigued by and most excited have been the recordings of improvised music. Depending how you do them, in several instances the recording process itself has been a part of the composition in that the musicians are listening to how their ideas are being translated into sound. The producer becomes involved in the creative process. I find improvised music about the most exciting music happening at the moment."

Watching the local music scene, Webster maintains that "...a lot of people's musical programs have become more conservative over the last ten years, simply because there don't seem to be that great challenge to expand boundaries and define something new and really take a risk with presenting different ideas. This is partly due to the perception that I've found, which is the more conservative you are the more people are likely to come to the performance. Then you just don't seem to be people who are willing to go out on a limb, do something really outrageous, publicise it as something outrageous and therefore excite audiences to see and hear something new.

Governments and funding bodies are fond of urging a sense of national or cultural crisis to ensure more funding for the arts. In this kind of climate, Webster suggests that it is important "...to give a few people, with a lot of vision, a lot of money and let them really do a vision and take it somewhere. And those are the things that are going to change our culture and take it in new directions. Further you think it's good or bad, that doesn't really matter, because at the culture is changing and moving and not staying static and I think at the moment it's pretty static.

Composition

Composer David Chesworth discusses his new ensemble with M. Billson

In this piece, he utilised a five-piece ensemble and it was the player of the instrument who prompted him to pursue writing for that format. "When I write, I don't normally write for the composer but I do take a lot of who are one-offs which are really hard to put on again, so when they suggested we play some of the music I'd written for the opera in a concert format, I started to consider it seriously."

Joining Chesworth in the Ensemble are: Hope Graffian on violin and Helen Mountfort on cello, both from "art pop" group, My Friend The Chocolate Cake; jazz players Bill McDonald on bass and John McCafl on piano and keyboards; trombone player Simon Myers; vibes and marimba player Xenia Hausiak; and orchestral and "exotic" percussionist Peter Nevill. Chesworth contributes keyboards and strange noises.

"I wanted to get back to using a lot of orchestral instruments which had a lot of gestures attached to them; I've got cello, violin, trombone and two percussionists and they've all got to get big, sweeping motions with the arms in order to make music. That was the thing that most struck me about MoNa's group when I saw them in concert last year - you could see these people working hard, the music coming out of their instruments rather than from young people."

Chesworth's ability to transcend the boundaries of cultural genre is also apparent in his commitment to bringing new and interesting music to the public. His latest project, "Betty Carter," is the latest in a string of successful collaborations with female jazz singers. "I think this is the most exciting group of young talent," says Chesworth, "and I'm proud to present her at the Tall Poppies Festival."
Seeking the Luminar

M. Billsson long distance with composer Rodrigo Leao

There is a new generation of composers from across Europe whose work seems to straddle the once impossible gap that existed between the avant garde classical and contemporary pop areas of musical expression. It is a generation that sees no boundaries between the work of, say, Philip Glass, Steve Reich and Michael Nyman and that of ‘pop’ acts like The Art of Noise, Joy Division and The Durutti Column. Rodrigo Leao is very much a part of this ‘New Wave’ in what might loosely be defined as contemporary classical music, and his latest recording, Ave Mundi Luminar (SK 66744), recorded with his Vox Ensemble, is being marketed very much as a contemporary ‘pop’ album, rather than contemporary classical. In fact, in Australia, his label, Sony Classical, is undertaking a series of remixes of various pieces utilising local ‘dance music’ artists like Single Gun Theory to emphasise the ‘crossover’ quality of Leao’s music, prompted perhaps by the success last year of the soundtrack to the film The Piano, composed by Michael Nyman.

Rodrigo Leao is Portuguese, born in Lisbon, but Ave Mundi Luminar is very firmly rooted in the minimalist tradition of Nyman and Glass, as he himself readily acknowledges: “I wouldn’t say that my music is classical. I think it has some influences from the classical side but also from the pop side. I listen to all kinds of music but, of course, I think it has a strong minimalist influence.”

Discussing the creation of Ave Mundi Luminar with Leao proved a little difficult, not only because of the vagaries of long-distance telephone lines but because of Leao’s limited English and my complete ignorance of Portuguese.

For me, the most striking aspect of Ave Mundi Luminar is the contrast between the angular string arrangements and the almost liturgical vocal melodies that skitter so delicately over the top. “First there appeared the instrumental parts”, Leao explained, “and all the arrangements. After that I thought that I could put some voices in but use them like instruments and use the words for their sound alone rather than their meaning. So I was worried about each sound of each word, and trying to mix them with the instrumental parts.”

“About three years ago, I discovered that I could compose much more music using the computer. It is a great thing for me to be able to compose for a lot of instruments in this way. I started to compose several songs that seemed, or so I felt, to form a new musical experience. For me it was very important, the acoustic sound of each instrument, to get the right balance with the synthesizers. It was not a decision made in one day, assembling the musicians for the Vox Ensemble, but I think they were the right instruments, the violin and cello, the flute, English horns and harp, to mix with the strings and the synthesizers.”

Considering the Ave Mundi Luminar has sold more than 40,000 copies in Europe since its release there in October last year, the general music-buying audience seems to feel Leao has created “the right balance”. Leao and Vox Ensemble are putting this to the test as you read this. They commenced their first concert tour at the end of March, performing ten concerts in Spain, ten in Portugal, two or three in France and two in Belgium.

“I think people are becoming a little tired of listening all the time to the music of the pop charts, so I think they are interested in listening to all the new kinds of things that appear. I have already five new songs and I think they came in the line of Ave Mundi Luminar so I think what I will do next will be along the same lines. After the tour I stop to finish my second album for release at the end of the year.”

While Australia has yet to embrace contemporary classical music in the way Europe has, such as putting Gorecki’s Symphony No. 3 at the top of the UK pop charts, perhaps the sounds of Rodrigo Leao as filtered through the ears of Single Gun Theory might prove just the breakthrough the new generation of composers need to overcome our preconceptions about the accessibility of contemporary classical music.

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Enchanted
James Compton on devotional music at WOMADelaide

For those who can understand the poetry and lyricism of devotional music, listening is understood as a devotional act. Such an act involves the belief that feeling of eternity resides in an alien tongue, however, can also have an effect on the listener and approach what is best described as spiritually uplifting. At WOMADthis dialogue, two such examples were the ethereal Tibetan song of Yungchen Lhamo, and the more widely known music of the Sufis, as purified by Naqsh Farid Ali Khan.

The Tibetan holy man who named Yungchen Lhamo, a musician of Tibetan origin, wrote a book in English, her name means goddess of melody and song, and at 29 years of age, she is realizing that prophecy. Not that it took her more than a decade to begin to sing, but because she is beginning to reach a wide ranging audience. When she stepped (unexpectedly) off the three days of music at WOMADelaide, Lhamo was entranced by the audience's final taste of what had been a very special weekend. That morning, the heat and dust had so affected her breathing that she thought she would not be able to sing at all. But on stage, she stood alone, the only performer without an accompanying instrument - and she didn't need any. Her voice, a voice of holy human soul, carried with it a million souls, crying for solace, compassion and understanding.

"Buddhists must have been helping me tonight, I prayed for help," she said afterwards. The audience was left either crying or crying, not out of me sadness, but more as a universal release. The purity of Yungchen Lhamo's voice did not need any ornamentation.

Tibetan singers try to cultivate three main vocal qualities: breathing, sound clarity, and smoothness. To practice generating strength, Yungchen Lhamo rehearsed beside a rousing ring, developing a power that could compete with the sheer volume of the rushing waters. "I'd breathe into her voice, she would giggle to the gods under the great plateau of Tibet, and raise her voice around the landforms and through the valleys. And so to get the treacer of smoothness, she rehearsed beside the salt lakes, to flanoe and refine her vocal range. These exercises are usually conducted during the course of a pilgrimage to certain holy shrines. The journey itself is all part of establishing the mind and focusing the emotions. The pilgrims are imbued with the blessings of the deities who dwell at these sacred sites, and by these blessings the singer's voice is brought to a higher level.

To overcome the difficulty of language for Australian audiences, Lhamo has remarked some of the Tibetan melodies, and believes this has helped to convey the message. Even if listeners cannot translate her words, they can understand the sentiment - and react with just as much emotion as a Tibetan speaking audience. "Buddhists say it doesn't matter if you are Buddhist or not. If you hear the music, you feel better," said Palden Hundee. "Your soul will go up and down, she says."

Unlike Yungchen Lhamo, who says she is quite.comparable to herself when she speaks, Naqsh Farid Ali Khan goes into such a ecstatic state he doesn't speak to himself or anyone else. "I am part of 'party' by backing singers in spasmodic songs of indefinite length, Naqsh's objective is to praise Allah and the Prophet Mohammed. Although he never set target before I go on stage," he says. "Sometimes we know what we are going to sing, but we don't know what we are going to say, or what you are going to see - the point is not ecstacy, I don't know where I am, I totally get locked into the performance, forget time and place, and sing for the love of Allah." Naqsh's audience range from the borders of fellow Muslims who attend his concerts to Suhrs in Pakistan to private concerts for royalty - both have achieved the hyporic power of the sacred that has enabled him to attract a world wide following. As the party singers in rhythmic cadence, accompanied only by harmonium and tabla, it is easy for the listener to drift off into contemplation heading ideally, towards the holy state.

As to how he has been able to cross barriers of language and culture, Naqsh dedicts to the gifts of Allah and the Prophet. As a holy man, they would enjoy it more, but he is honoured to be able to present his music to any audience. "It is a message calling for love, unity, peace and brotherhood," he says.

But there is no denying that Naqsh Khan will become a waqwaw master. It took Naqsh 27 years of practice to attain his level of vocal control, often practising 18 hours a day. And then the show stopped, the lights turned off, the entire crowd went into Sufism to become where Naqsh is, the way a Sufi lives, and to put that message across - that's the only way.

Alfie Forster, the head of WOMADelaide, was able to convey the word of Allah, Naqsh is not a member of the Sufi clergy. "I am just an ordinary man, don't be fooled by a person - I have Sufism inside me, and I put that in view of me when I sing."

James Compton is a Sydney journalist.

Interactive House and Garden
Kate Richards explores the menu at The Australian Film Commission Narrative and Interactive Conference, Melbourne 9-11 March 1995

Task: Immersion in Conference. Game Play: /pick a name-tag identify/described via labelling/buffet suit-refitted refreshment queues/converse SC write amongst highlygifted ide/collect interactive exhibitreples tests of skills/reporting back on what has been seen/learned/understood/as a mnemonic for impressions and conclusions.

House Rules: Code-check technological bias - Interactive Multi Media (IMM) cross-store/addy formats (eg CD-ROM, multi-user required) as a design tool that is an evolved tool. But it is also an art form that all books, cinema, TV and passive are linear. FYI: Whilst all media are interactive, "Interactivity" is given as the potential for the user to activate pre-programmed responses and pathways as the way is received. Across the spectrum of IMM are extensions of previous genres, through to work that would not have been produced before computing.

Libraries: Enter this vault of many reference titles, and see publishing evolution. Design conventions and techniques - index, cross-reference, contact list, etc., to make a multi-user extension into an electronic realm allowing additional media (sound, "movies") and more mobile cross reference presentation. Interaction is more with content than interface.

On a micro level, narrative as oral history (movies and sound bits) is utilised in the education CD-ROMs by the University of Melbourne/Jewish Museum of Australia (speaker Ronald Brown, and "Angling Stories" (Kenn Flick and Dr Heather Goodall). Beyond these anecdotes are meta-narratives arising from the cross combination with factual information - this use of IMM challenges image of history as dominant myth, concerned with a sense of resolution.

At the Museums of Sydney, ethical characters deliver etiquette, bardic "tales" (originating in fact) connected by symbolic objects. A field of knowledge is evolved across visits - meta-narrative at the point of exhibition amounts to experiences of presence (Ross Gibson).

Rumplus room: Computer games extend the physical and verbal aspects of toy soldiers, trains set and adventure play formats. The content (horse, arcade, the net) is a product of the passest technology, the same as cards, comics etc. Identification at a psychological level is with the cursor - an iconic function as character (eg soldier) within an appropriate mise-en-scene (medieval battlefield) (Jon Collett).
Multimediocity?

RT suffers the first Creative Nation Multimedia Forum in Sydney

Multimedia Forum One—"Government Sponsoring a Creative Industry"—at Sydney Town Hall on 8 March, was the first of a series of forums arising from the interactive multimedia (IMM) initiatives announced in the commonwealth's 1994 cultural policy, Creative Nation. The event was primarily an information dissemination exercise—it provided a platform for besuited bureaucrats and corporate types to deliver monologues on the various programs established under the $84 million allocated in Creative Nation to the development of IMM in Australia. Absent from the vast bulk of the day's proceedings was discussion of the role of creative artists in the 'new' medium, or indeed of the content of the multimedia "product" the emerging industry will be assiduously merchandising.

Richard Heale of the Australian Interactive Multimedia Industry Association kicked off with a hubristic SWOT analysis of multimedia in Australia (that's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to those uninitiated into the arena of corporate doubletalk). Heale advocated "harnessing the opportunities created by the new technologies to grow our own industry" based on the production of internationally saleable content. We must steer clear, he helpfully cautioned, of "multimediocity" and "multimedia". He also referred to the establishment of the Telestra/Microsoft on-line network exemplified the total lack of a critical register in much of the thinking around CD-ROM and the infobahn, especially given the spectre of Australia as a wholly owned subsidiary of Microsoft. Heale warned of the "suspiciousness" of the industry to "market intervention" by big government, which he believes could jeopardise the IMM marketplace and retard its development. Paradoxically, he simultaneously applauded an estimated 150% tax write off for CD-ROM R&D, a replay of the infamous 10BA scheme which, in the words of one conference delegate, was "one of the biggest disasters ever to befall the Australian film industry."

Communications and Arts Minister Michael Lee stressed the forum's content and to develop a coordinated approach to industry development to ensure that Australia is not swamped by overseas product. Lee underlined the importance of the development of an "open access regime" guaranteed by government for the on-line services coming our way. He emphasised the "hybridity" of the nascent media zones of the late 20th century and the need for "collaboration" between software and creative producers. Noble sentiments, but the remainder of the forum provided little opportunity for the articulation of exactly how such a collaboration can be effective...

Gwen Andrews from the Department of Communications and the Arts reported that the Australian Multimedia Enterprise—a Commonwealth owned organisation—was allocated $45 million under Creative Nation—will fund, through one off grants or offsets between $200,000 and $700,000, "state of the art", "world class" interactive titles of the strongest presence in this installation is a snake-like form, woven from rushes and a periphery of vision. It has a light and gentle colour in the room comes from goldfish placed in the back stairs of Perth Art Gallery, and stencilled with the words 'export quality'. The bags are lit from behind with a violet light. The stairwell becomes a space in which to examine disquieting aspects of ourselves and our culture.

Moelono, from Indonesia, has also created a disquieting work with a political intent to inform of the destruction of an ancient way of life when a river was dammed to provide water for the industrial development of Surabaya. Slides are shown of the bulldozing of a village to make way for a dam. The strongest presence in this installation is a row of straw figures installed at head height. They sit, mute and accusing, surrounded by watermen.

The paintings of H J Wedge, Wiradjuri artist, installed with accompanying texts, are colourful and decorative, but defy easy categorisation in their exploration of the complex territory between traditional Aboriginal culture and the paradoxes and confusions inherent in contemporary Australian culture. The artist spoke of being taken away from his family as a child, losing his Dreaming and trying to assimilate western fairy tales, a tension evident in some of the work with curious resolutions. The works are maverick and visionary, another unique voice in this multiplicity of original voices.

Torque

Voices

Katie Lavers experiences the Arx4 exhibition in Perth

As soon as you enter the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for the Arx4 Torque exhibition, the first thing you experience is the voices of the artists filling the space as they talk about the experience of participating in the Artists' Regional Exchange 1995. Virginia Hilyard, one of the Arx 4 artists, has edited a series of remarkably frank and informal interviews with participating artists discussing both the stimulating and frustrating aspects of the Arx experience. This almost palpable presence of the artists informs the experience of the exhibition.

The sixteen artists from the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia shared a group studio in Perth for a five week residency prior to the opening of the exhibition which is a result of the residency. All the works have a sense of immediacy and invention and PICA feels animated and exciting. This is an account of my responses to some of the works.

Tony Leano, from the Philippines, has created an extraordinary installation. The floor is covered with dead leaves that rustle and fill the space with a distinctive smell as you enter the room. Five huge forms shaped like flat pieces of coral or segments of brain are lined up against one wall and in front of them are five shallow mud-bottomed pools full of water. The light is muted and there is a strange underwater feel. The brightest colour in the room comes from goldfish, which dart around in the pools. The experience is of elusive thought materialising through an aromatic resonance of memory.

Tim Barras, from Melbourne, has used a series of bunges to create a brightly coloured network which spans the entire width and length of the central gallery space. It is installed about four metres above the floor and hovers around the perimeter of vision. It has a light and gentle presence that plays with the notion of networks and transforms the gallery space scaling it down to more human proportions. Perth artist Carmelo Corvola has used natural materials she gathered for the banks of the Swan River. Two beautiful and delicate spirals made out of grass are suspended in the gallery and their shadows twist and turn on the wall below as they move in the breeze. Beneath these is a snake-like form, woven from rushes and following the twists and turns of the river itself. The form is placed inside a toxic-looking, shiny surround which suggests pollutants and contamination. The work is quiet and meditative.

Virginia Hilyard, from Sydney, has set up an installation on the back stairs of PICA: these are covered in graffiti and are usually closed to the public. Virginia has collected rubbish thrown out of cars along two of Perth's highways and placed it in orange garbage bags with the words 'export quality'. The bags are lit from behind with a violet light. The stairwell becomes a space in which to examine disquieting aspects of ourselves and our culture.

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"Ruins of the Future"

A competition under the aegis of the Adelaide Festival

judges: Barrie Kosky, Leo van Schaik, Ignaz Sola Morales and a member of the South Australian Chapter of the RAIA

Submissions: July 1995
Results: September 1995

Prizes: $5,000 AUD, $3,000 AUD, $2,000 AUD

This competition seeks entries from architects working with artists, art directors, composers, cyberneticians, directors, ecologists, fashion designers, interior designers, industrial designers, landscape architects, media workers, stylists, performing artists, and/or writers...

Entrants are to work with a site that transects with Paul Carter's exposure and evocation of what remains of Colonel Light's concept for the design of Adelaide.

Knowledge of the site may be derived entirely from secondary sources. Sources should be described.

Entrants are to design a polemical intervention on this site for the Adelaide Festival of 1996.

This intervention is to be the least possible adjustment to existing conditions consistent with the theoretical design intent.

Materials and methods of construction are to be stated.

Submissions should consist of sufficient information to explain the intent, including a written statement of explanation, and should be limited to four pieces that can be mailed. Entries will be retained, but entrants will retain copyright subject only to the right of the Festival to publish selected entries in a catalogue, in journals and to exhibit the works.

A selection of the submissions will be exhibited in a recognised venue in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney or Perth in 1996/7, after exhibition at the Festival in Adelaide in 1996.

Some entries may be selected for a further presentation in the UIA Conference Barcelona '96.

Entrants may be invited to be participants in a program of the Festival curated by Leon van Schaik for the Director of the Festival, Barrie Kosky. This program will include the construction on site of a number of interventions by invited international architects and their collaborators.

Such invitees will work towards a construction program of one month in February/March 1996. Selection will entail a visit to Adelaide in October 1995 and a commitment to supervise and effect construction in 1996.

The judges are seeking entries that extend their awareness of the contributions that designers and artists can make to the public realm.

Registrations of interest, together with a fee of $50 should be directed to
Ian Scobie, General Manager of the Adelaide Festival, GPO Box 1269, Adelaide, South Australia 5001

Competition briefs will be issued to registered participants from the first week of March 1996 until the closing date on Friday September 22 1995
Apple of the Isle

RT talks to Andrew Ross of the Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart

AR We're continually upgrading the centre. RT While retaining the special character of the building?

AR We've improved the theatre and recently upgraded the exhibition facilities. We've added another smaller exhibition space, one of which is an artist access space.

RT Access in what sense?

AR It's a hireable space, at a very reasonable rental, for artist members of Salamanca.

RT This is a large concern?

AR We have some 70 tenants in three tiers. First, commercial operations, mostly shops on the ground floor. Secondly, community organisations, non-profits, such as Contemporary Art Services Tasmania (CAST), Salamanca Script Centre, Arts Industry Training Board. At the third level we have artists and craftspeople in workshops and the public spaces, the galleries and the Peacock Theatre.

RT How many of staff?

AR We're going into three full-time and two part-time plus occasional project coordinators. Suvi Meade is the manager. I'm project manager, looking after the hireable venues, administering the annual arts program, marketing of the centre, public relations. We're now hiring a full-time office assistant-receptionist where we've had part-timers in the past.

RT How do you program the year?

AR The large theatre in Hobart is the Theatre Royal, owned by the City of Hobart and operated by the Melbourne Theatre Companies, and then there's ours, the Peacock, with a 150 seats. It's where ZooTango have done the majority of their shows over the years. They were the resident company until a few years ago but didn't want the burden of running the theatre so they handed it back to the centre. They still work here and have their office and rehearsal space. Terrapin Puppet Theatre and Tasdance all perform here. Tasdance are booked in for May under their new artistic director, Richard Allen. A couple of amateur companies also work here. We're developing an inter-venue program, gathering four Performing Lines who have been bringing shows here for the last four or five years. This year we have the brilliant William Yang's Sad/ed... last year we had Handspan's Viva La Vida, before that Sarah Carter's Walking on Steaks, and Moya O'Reilly's Workers Theatre Company's Funky Ground. In the instance of Sad/ed the centre is presenting that in association with Performing Lines and Tasdance. It's landing here, we're the promoter.

RT This is a new development?

AR The first one was last year with Legs on the Wall through Playing Australia. We had some risk capital to put into it. It worked out, we subsidised it, but didn't lose our entire subsid so we were able to put something into Viva La Vida. RT Is there a bigger role as producer in the future?

AR Our role is limited by funding but we do want to work with other producers.

RT Do you want more shows from interstate?

AR We've just heard that Back To Back Theatre's Ginger Goo Goo project has been funded here. We're not involved financially but we provide some infrastructure through our ground floor exhibition space and, of course, the theatre is one area we try to cover. The theatre is well-used each year and is heavily booked May to August, especially the Long Gallery is solidly booked.

RT The emphasis on Tasmanian artists with the 1996 season?

AR Again we don't program the space. We have an arrangement with CAST for 12-14 weeks of the year. We're here to accommodate the contemporary art ... that's our way of supporting that area of visual arts. There are a few good profile artists who have a booking each year, the art school and the university use it quite a lot. It's a high profile area with 120 plus days a year, sometimes as many as a thousand passing through ...

RT Artist-run by townies?

AR And Salamanca Place is busy, a centre for the community ... and prime real estate. We're in the heart of the action.

RT Are artists using Side Space?

AR We'd like it to be used more. It was old office space and a storage room. It can be blocked out, installations can be built - we're not precious about the space. The art school produces good young artists and this is one area we provide them access to. One of the reasons we opened this gallery was because the Chameleon art space had been lost to development.

RT What about Writers Week?

AR We're just recovering from it. It's the first year our writers' been involved, and we have the University of Tasmania - so it was jointly presented by three organisations. It has a strong cultural program and it's a good use of such a large area ... a fringe, a readers' and writers' fair in the Long Gallery, a young readers' and writers' day (hopefully a two day event next year), and workshops in the Side Space. So the festival has come back into the Centre where it had grown from. We've got another three years of funding, including Judy Tierney, who put the past of was around 200, this year a 1000 people were attracted to it.

RT What about this new furniture?

AR Not yet, but I've just received a proposal for a interactive music piece in-1996 in the Side Space - we'll be looking at this area seriously.

RT What about the future?

AR We'll continue our independence, given the commercialisation of Salamanca Place, keeping it as a space for artists and a community resource.

The Sculpturecy

Martyn Jolly reviews the Canberra National Sculpture Forum

-virtually all of the ACT is involved, in one way or another, in the Canberra National Sculpture Forum 1995. Canberra's four artist run art spaces, its seven commercial galleries, an artist-run gallery, artist-run funded galleries, as well as nearly all of its national institutions and ceremonial public places. We have either exhibited our artists, hosted performances, talks, panels, films, and related events. Interested by a group of Canberra artists who still nurture fond memories of the old Mildura Sculpturescapes and Canberra perform a couple of the ACT's, the Forum is eccenical, showing everything from traditional plinth-based sculpture, through heavy metal, to performance and site specific installation. As a small, amenity rich city at its crisp best in autumn, Canberra is the perfect spot for such a revival.

Although the Forum has been funded and sponsored entirely from within the ACT's half of its income is from hire by artists outside the region. Many of the 200 or so interactive and local artists who submitted proposals regard hiring space as the symbolically charged environment of Canberra, as a result most of the more interesting projects that have been approved and site specific installations which have ended up taking the Forum beyond its initial conceptual framework.

After Adelaide Installations, the last Melbourne Sculpture Triennial, and numerous other recent public art events, the jaded amongst us might regard site specific installation events as a flavour of the eighties which has shown its best at the Forum. But in Canberra there is the symbolic, civic, topographical and architectural specific they promote a capital to give a uniting edge to all of the site specific works. Everything in Canberra is actually framed along like a wining A-gradewards for kilomètres for improving avenues, the modernity of the installation a performative intervention. Amongst human it is bound up with theory of evolution. Darwin's thought irradiates like a radio signal... Darwin's thought interests Jones not because, as is commonly but mistakenly believed, he saw evolution as a directional development; but rather because, to the contrary, his theory of evolution was an anti-essentialist philosophy of flux, a continuity without fixed points or deterministic direction.

As we look at these videos the sound from the adjacent room leaks into the space. Different human voices in different languages are telling stories of erotic liaisons and going about their business, no slick Austraian-style narcissism or anthropomorphising here. The rough surfaces of cacti and rocks are also videoed, while the wind beats at the microphone. It was on the Galapagos Islands, supposedly, that Darwin began to formulate his great theory of evolution. Darwin's thought interests Jones not because, as is commonly but mistakenly believed, he saw evolution as a directional development; but rather because, to the contrary, his theory of evolution was an anti-essentialist philosophy of flux, a continuity without fixed points or deterministic direction.

Canberra National Sculpture Forum 1995

26 - RealTime 6 - April - May 1995

Martyn Jolly is a Canberra-based writer and visual arts lecturer.
Textual Maneuvres

Rex Butler on art criticism

After some passionate responses to Shaw Danes' critique of art criticism in RealTime 5, Condition Critical, the editors invited Rex Butler to continue the discussion.

What is the state of art criticism today? In many ways, it seems to me that the traditional role of art criticism has changed. The work of art is no longer to be seen and described, but instead offers itself as the site for a series of textual manoeuvres. The very act of looking at a work of art, the visualization of the work, are now only rhetorics within art history. This was the basis of an exhibition called Banal Art I put on a number of years ago at Sydney's Artpace. It was a show that a show and a show curated by Ian Burn at Ivan Dougherty Gallery entitled Looking at Painting and Reading in which Burn argued that there was still something at stake in looking at a work of art, that the primacy of a work making an argument in terms of the way it looks, but add that this itself can only be understood rhetorically today. A work of art is not visual in itself, but is itself about this kind of reading. I dream of one day re-curating the objects Burn put in his show, re-interpreting them all in this way.

For Ian Burn's reading of Banal Painting, see 'Less is More, More or Less,' Art Australia, Vol. 32, No. 2 Summer (1994). Banal Art was not about a new "banal" style in art, nor even really about the work Burn reasoned. It was an argument show about a third moment or stage in the history of appropriation in Australia: after the iconoclastic difference between the copy and the original (Paul Taylor's Popeye show) and the iconic resemblance between the copy and the original (Edward Gailes Design for Living show), the banal difference and resemblance of the copy and the original.

What then are the possibilities for art criticism today, what is it able to do? It is in matters of trying to halt its passage into this quotidianality or second degreelessness, but rather of accelerating it. Art criticism should no longer concern itself with the question of evaluation of art, but with the kinds of games that can be played with its inherent logic, to an art which is no longer made with an eye to critical judgement, quality etc., can only respond with an art criticism that takes this as its starting point and pushes it to its limit. The question for art criticism in an age of appropriation is how to get a work of art to do something, how to make it introduce a kind of difference into the way we live and think? This is perhaps the same question art has always posed, but today it must be accomplished in a new fashion. This kind of reasoning was at the basis of a piece I wrote on Gordon Bennett's The Nine Ricchots (Eyevine Winter/Spring 1992), his Moet et Chandon prize-winning appropriation of Imants Tillers' The Nine Shots, a work in which Tillers borrows motifs taken from the Aboriginal desert painter Michael Nelson Tjakamarra. The usual reading of The Nine Ricchots is that, against Tillers' appropriation of Aboriginal art, Bennett responds with a counter-appropriation of Tillers' own Larvian (white) heritage. This is a feel-good, PC argument, but it is not adequate for understanding the complexities of the work. How is Bennett, for instance, able to speak of an Aboriginality which is outside appropriation if he has to resort to appropriation in order to defend it? Would he not be himself guilty of appropriating Aboriginal art. "Virtual Reality", Timotheus, (ANG 1994). It is in this that we might find transgression, marginality and the destruction of the canon. Great art always wants to enter the canon but a canon rewritten in its name. It wants to double the canvas, to make it seem as though it were the secret explanation of all that came before hence Duchamp signing art history itself like a readymade, making all art history before him seem pre-Duchampian. Duchamp's readymades were not so much about the way a new work of art must double all that comes before it, re-interpreting everything in its name: the history of art remains the same, but now is seen through this new work, as though a new word or signature has been given to it. In other words, Duchamp signs the history of art like he signed his readymades, simply adding a new name to his own. See on this Thierry de Duve, "The Blank Canvas and the Monochrome", Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, London, Montreal, ed. Serge Guilbaut, MIT Press, 1989 and Rosalind Krauss, 'Bachelors', October 52.)

If one didn't believe that one's work could actually change the world, one wouldn't bother. But it changes not by criticising it, offering empirical evidence of trying to persuade. Rather, it operates by proposing a strategy, a non-empirical hypothesis, un demonstrable but irresistible, which the world can only follow.

The explanation repeats exactly what is, without changing a thing, but allows us to see it in a completely different way. It is only in this way that art criticism today could be truly 'critical'.

Rex Butler teaches in the Department of Art History, University of Queensland.

Stamp is small but pervasive, culturally powerful, collectible and aesthetically intriguing. Melbourne's Philatelic Gallery is presenting Colonial Alphabet from April 12 to June 23 curated by Paul Fox. The exhibition accessibility and provocatively arranges and juxtaposes stamps to show "how stamps (among the first mass produced images in the world construct a world where European images speak for distant places and peoples". Fox shows how stamps repeat history, "the heroic Image of Marines Raising the Flag at Iwo Jima which featured on a United States stamp in 1945 finds its echo in the 1995 commemoration of the liberation of Kuwait." Third world stamps, once epiphanies of European empires, become miniature tourist postcards. Fox comments further on these transformations, the "man and woman of Keap David Friedman's Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon (produced in 1974 as a stamp by West Germany) have been replaced by the astronaut's photo of the earth and the moon which appeared on Moon Flight of Apollo 8 in 1969. In both cases the stamp re-creates the original (on envelopes and postcards) throughout the world to create an international system of signs where the copy is the object. Against this background the United Nations' stamp of Masked Man Damaging Painting (1990) where the Mona Lisa, one of the most reproduced images of European art, is being vandalized, is a sign of the times."
But I can’t, it’s too late ... 

Linda Marie Walker experiences new sculpture works in Adelaide

The work of Joanna Harris and Philipp McMahon is visually, intellectually, but instantly, as you walk around, and then suddenly, unexpectedly, it undoes this relief, as if at the very moment you are about to arrive at a ticking clock, the clock has stopped. Looking becomes a stopstart process here, precarious. It’s almost like overhearing talk, understood in the level of language and stuffling at the level of topic. The hastening of voices, the spaces between, makes something that refrains untold, space-occupied, as if you are thinking on that it, as participant, must attend.

Joanne Harris Alan Croughshank

The gallery floor is the major surface for this exhibition. In fact it’s this gallery’s most beautiful & useful surface. Not exactly ideal, being brown parquetry, but providing a continuity, a sort of known value. The gallery, even though a ‘tactile’ space, and very often sympathetic, affects work perhaps more than some other local spaces. This is sometimes an advantage.

The two bodies of work are not cool and not hot. Each piece displays within itself a point of spooling, like a stain or tear, and this tense/density balances detail. (Example: the two felt cliffs in isolation, the positioning of the seven words ‘sinister’, ‘false’, ‘shame’, ‘fool’, ‘shame’, ‘false’, ‘sinister’. ‘Clouds and embers’, the bird-sized of the blue shapes in Constellation, the hardness of the black lines in Little Carl (McMahon).) An unevenly weighted balance, touching materials differently, and producing unstable, ambiguous meanings. Balance and imbalance set up motion, the terrible quiet discussion (overwhelmed, too near and yet so far. One extra noisy disaster: The work greetsplay right to its edge, is brimming. So, pleasure is one of several possible inscriptions (along with memory, strategy, humour).

Philipp McMahon Alan Croughshank

Pleasure is announced without doubt in Harris’ large Mentality, just around the first corner. The bright red fabric lying on and over the side (to the floor) of the black baby grand piano bags to be rippled off. Except it has assumed the right place, the sure role. It seems havoc on the future of question, because what could a question be, except perhaps, among the still stuff, a little daring, or a dare, a fresh bloody wound echoed above in the small square floral fabric which fills the space of a barely discernible owls. On that gaudy gathered wrong cloth the german word ‘liber’ (meaning over, and above & above, and exorcising) has become correctness. What’s more, and more alarming, is that ‘nothing’ keeps you metre away from the pianocloth: "Nothing is a grid of masking tape on the floor, in a circle. The pianocloth is on it. The only people who freely ignored the grid at the opening were kids. They didn’t seem to notice. Of the (mostly) comes from the piano and walls, there are three glass jars of gher (left over, rendered down) from Harris’ previous work (Kölnwerk, 1999). It’s perhaps the golden yellow. These are somewhat like, ‘aphasia’ a word used in had souda, a nearby wall piece. Also laying on the grid is a blackboard with several words written under our verandas charged with colour in the dry at last, now they are green too - not to mention, then it will brush the piano throughout. So, they say. Must remember to spray next time with Glen 20, kills the mould spores I think.

The walls does something else as well. It brings the Long Grasses inside, not right inside usually, but under the cover. A small entrance to 24HR ART becomes a sleeping place for Lionel and Daphne. They moved in it has smashed (Jack), an old Canadian, drove off in his 220 station-wagon, 50 kms down the road to Larrimah. Jack’s always saying he’s heading off to Cairns, he’s working on it for a while now. Meanwhile he’s parked over by the tunnel block in the middle of the square just opposite the Mexican restaurant. On the other side is Green With Envyspecialising in unreal plants, just down from Great Expectations Boutique for the very pregnant. I had just been to the Post Office getting the grant acceptance documents back to Visions so we can work on a show based around the artworks produced during times of importance linked to Land Claims and the like. Jack was munching on a sandwich and we had a chat about the next show Snakes and Serpents. It’s members’ annual show. The opening night should be a hit - Granne Gowe from the reptile park out at Humprey Doo is opening the show, reckon he’ll be able to pull out a few live snakes on the night. Tell Jack he should call in, have a drink and check out the work, it’s coming in from as far as Ernabella just over the SA border. Some bark paintings (contemporary art you better believe it) from Marninanga and Yurrkala to the East also whisper ink from Raminginning. There will be work from around Darwin as well, all kinds of snakes made from found objects. Cobweb can’t figure out which one of her snake images to include and Menge is hoping to put in a glass snail made in Suruli globes, how’s that to see what Geoff Sharples has put together, hear he got a good deal on a batch of rubber snakes. It’s high enough here we are just opposing Andrea Lea’s, that’s the shop with the groovy glasses, folk-like drink. It’s a holo ball, matted up on the floor. This Virgin Mary (crowded) definitely has un-romantic views on childhood.

Little Carl is also halo-shaped, but rests like a band on the floor, and maps a fragmented but linked art of words. It’s a lettered piece then, half words and thick black lines appear on fragile cones of tracing paper. It’s those that make the ‘carb’ or band. Whereas Constellation might end your life, you could crush Little Carl in a few steps, screw it up in your hands. And what would be left? Many little white leather bows, and a broken rabbit plate. Sterile of the Little Carl is that innocent thing: smalness. It’s a breath away from ‘tsrsal’, all the words smashed, words which have smashed off. The differing relationship of body to sound, to hearing, and speaking, to culture, moment to moment, is the generative subject of these two works. I’ve hardly scratched the surface. The exhibition is like ‘frolic’, serious frolic: psycos, ramble) one of details, where each detail in a ‘history’ of strange glimpses, and of uniquely and impolite ways. “She says: ‘Now I begin; now I close leaves and lose back. The body is a dynamic of movements the body and pronunciation, but it also follows a theme. Rather than a narrative centre there is an organic order (of space). Or, this is what I think now, when I must stop, because it’s over once again, too soon, and while there is so much yet to tell.


Wet and humid

24HR Art Director Steve Fox writes from Darwin

It’s called WET up here right now. Everywhere, everything is green; green, green; we have painting in here under our verandas charged with colour in the dry at last, now they are green too - not to mention, then it will brush the piano throughout. So, they say. Must remember to spray next time with Glen 20, kills the mould spores I think.

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24HR ART is the N.T.’s non-commercial artspace dedicated to assisting & exhibiting contemporary visual artists. Next deadline for proposals is April 21. Contact us with your ideas for our 96 program

April Ken Burridge
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24HR ART

NORTHERN TERRITORY CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

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GPO Box 28 Darwin 0801 ph 089 815368
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Steve Fox / Thelma John

Steve Fox is the Director of 24 Hour Art.

Wet and humid
Sound Trek
Nicholas Gebhardt interviews the curators of Sound in Space

In what appears to be open season when it comes to the sonic arts practices, with the arrival of a string of events, new publications and venues devoted to letting the ears know what tone it is, the Sound in Space exhibition opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney on May 12th. Following closely in the wake of last year’s Earsbrief in Melbourne, Rebecca Coyle, the curator of Sound in Space, has put together a challenging and comprehensive survey of sound arts in Australia that draws on the work of artists and ideas in a range of fields. In placing the emphasis on diversity of works, venues, practices - Coyle hopes to locate both the objective and subjective characteristics of sound within the broader context of the conventional gallery space.

For Coyle, the emphasis is definitely on the ears. "Sound art describes a certain sculptural space, a certain architectural condition, and the structure of Sound in Space is an attempt to explore andanalyse a space for sound art itself in terms of its history and as part of the contemporary art scene. In a sense, you have to ask, how does sound work within contemporary art and are there a set of distinct and particular practices that you could, in fact, call sound art?" She is insistent, however, that the exhibition is not definitive but rather speculative, and points to the obvious intersection of sound work with video art, sculpture, film, performance and music as places where sound art has had a chance to develop as an independent practice.

These connections are driving much of the activity that will take place over the three months of the exhibition. Apart from the twelve installations that are situated in and around the gallery, there are two nights of performances on the 27th and 28th April at Artspace in Woolloomooloo. Nick Tsotras, the director of Art Space, is just as keen to highlight the diversity and the exploratory nature of the performance programme. Tsotras considers this event fundamental to the overall impact of Sound in Space in that the intensity and immediacy of the works embody the potential to "really explore and punish the parameters of sound, to destabilise the ways in which we encounter sound and transform the architecture and instruments through which we produce sound."

It's a programme that includes performances by Melbourne's Loop Orchestra who orchestrate sound by moving loops in and out of tape decks, Simon Crosse, the Art Ar experimental music group, Margaret Trail, Rainer Linz and Caroline Connors, a new work by Yuki Sone, Ashley Scott's musique concrète and Anna Sahbel's random processes. Tsotras hopes this veritable crowd of performers will "anticipate and manufacture the psychological twists in this architecture of sound. There is a gap between what actually constructs sound and what actually performs it and the emphasis on performance sustains a physicality that is quite separate from the aural sensation. I think these people will throw up all sorts of questions about our preoccupation with, and expectations of, how sound is constructed."

Back at the MCA, there will be a series of seminars and talks focusing on the installations, lunchtime talks by artists, and a public forum that deals with more general issues of sound and contemporary art, an AudioTech called the Listening Room that features radio and audio material, and a collection of film and video screenings that examine the relation between sound and image. In producing all these different aural zones, these different levels of engagement with sound, along with a catalogue and audio CD, Coyle anticipates "a visual flow and an aural flow that will allow people to enter and be drawn along amongst the movement of the sounds and images."

She urges us, however, not to "expect works to be isolated, to be boxed in. In a place like the MCA where there are hard surfaces of course you have overlap, sounds bleed and get mixed up. The challenge for me was to create a sense of these different sonic possibilities and at the same time maintain the sonic integrity of each work without simply letting everything merge in an indistinguishable ambiénte. And we've used other ideas, such as headphone sound grabs from the AudioTech, events on ABC Radio's The Listening Room and 2SER's AudioDate, and a special issue of the Sounds Australian journal to really deal with the question of how sound works in an Australian environment and to look at different ways of interacting with time based media in a gallery space without becoming didactic."

Silence at Artspace, Sydney April 27 & 28; Sound in Space opens at MCA May 12.
**Shifting Poetics:**

language and
furniture removal

Bernard Cohen

After the worst move ever - 37 degrees and Sydney-humid, from a second floor flat in one of those complexes with sixty metres along shimmering pavers, up and down stairs and up again to get to the street, a few kilometres in the truck, and then into the cellar with its 2:1 metre ceiling, the being the two professional and myself a longneck each, and sit down in the back of the van with them. “Sorry about all this,” I say, after that first magnificent gulp - it had reached the point where, as we passed each other with the moving boxes, they were too big to look at me. Communication was limited to self-encouraging grunts (‘unshu’ for ‘up’ and ‘FF’ for ‘down’) and the ritual ‘Gavas-a-hand’ with thuddling-cat cab”. With a beer in hand, though, (worth two in the bottle) I don’t retreat. "It wasn’t too fucking bad, the big one says. The wry one had his head tilted back and didn’t return the toast. "What do you do, anyway?" he asks me. "I’m a book editor," I tell him - it’s generally easier than admitting to be a writer (see below). "No wonder you’ve got so many fucking bookshelves!" he says. "The only reading matter at my place is Rugby League Week and I threw it out when I finished it.”

Then it’s the tempo move. 30 years.

(According to my mother, I am an unstable person.) A year later, the eleventh move. In the anthology Australian Poetry in the Twentieth Century (called Bob, and Geoffrey Lehmann, Heineman 1991), John Forbes’ biographical note states: “He has republished the fourteen poems he has written, among other jobs, as a petrol pump attendant and furniture removalist. For the eleventh move, I have packed and stacked those of my books not stored in the back-straining cellar (from the tenth move) in pulp boxes and put them in a Bookcase (a Sydney bookshop). I can’t remember the name of the removal company, but one hour as he was doing it, someone asked me about my connection with the bookshop. Unwise (see above), I admit to writing. 

Anything published...

(Here we go again) “Yes.”

“So, how do you make a living?”

I’ll. (then current) Australia Council Grant.

“Who do you know?” he asks, controlling his tone to just this side of a snore.

I disclaim knowledge of anyone.

Meanwhile, the way one is bringing boxes out of the cellar. The lazy one gets into the truck and, after complaining that there are so many boxes and they will never all fit in one trip, spends the next hour ‘arranging’ things while Wiry and I bring them out to him. From time to time, Lazy makes disparaging comments about the poems he has known, of most of whom he worked for this firm - including John Forbes who, Lazy claims, hadn’t worked there for long. In between, he makes disparaging remarks about me.

After this had gone on for some time, Wiry, who might have become a little irritated at doing all the work, tells me Lazy had once had a grant himself. By this time we are at the new house under the flight path.

“Can you be a bit poet yourself, had a grant too,” I say, about one second later. Lazy almost registers surprise.

“Not really,” he says. I just wrote a few pages of stuff I knew they’d like; not much good really; I got a letter of recommendation from Martin Johnston.

I can tell he’s really pissed off beneath the aw-shucks attitude. His eyes have narrowed just slightly and his bottom lip slightly

**Refined Poetic Panic:**

Bernard Heidsieck at Artspace & Metro Arts

Nicholas Zurbrugg

I first met Bernard Heidsieck in Paris in 1971. I’d hitched a ride from Rouen and phoned to ask if we could meet. “J’ai une petite réception ce soir”, he explained - “I’ve got a little reception this evening I offered to come another time, but was advised to attend, and arrived finding myself at a party surrounded by elegant artworld hippies of all ages and greeted by waiters in white jackets offering endless champagne. This was poetry-heaven! One artist, animatedly talking beside his hair, seemed to want to mention a South American called ‘Castro’ whose work I’d glimpsed in print, so I ventured: ‘Isn’t Castro a Brazilian kinetic artist?’ ‘No!’, she declared, ‘Otis Castro!’ She invited me to her studio, I chatted with Heidsieck, Jimi Hendrix records played, much champagne arrived, I was dancing in Paris, life was very good.

This ‘little reception’ was a prelude to launch Bernard Heidsieck’s LP Trois Biopoesies + Un Passe-Partout; a marvellous selection of works from 1967-1970, including La Pioncesse answer to one of the most poignant and haunting sound poetry narratives, quite simply, ever. Presented by the abrupt metallic crashes of passenger carriers reverberating to and fro, and complemented by the sound of Metro coaches slowly weaving in and out of stations, The Ticket Puncher tells the tale of a commuter suddenly trapped in a ritual of unwanted infiltration with you, like drinking/considered as experience/ would ... abolish tagorography as a genre” and, somewhat more directly:

The blustack can’t hold down the corners of her photos, stuck to the side of my bookcase along with the map of my nephus Louise at 9 months, a publicity shot of Sharon O’Neill I salvaged on a removal job ... ‘Ne Regette Rien’

I’m encouraged by these preliminary confiscations, so continue the search. “On the Beach a Bicentennial poem” begins, ‘Your seat is reserved, the beach is called Tellin’ and Geoffrey Lehmann, Heineman 1991, John Forbes’ biographical note states: “He has republished the fourteen poems he has written, among other jobs, as a petrol pump attendant and furniture removalist. For the eleventh move, I have packed and stacked those of my books not stored in the back-straining cellar (from the tenth move) in pulp boxes and put them in a Bookcase (a Sydney bookshop). I can’t remember the name of the removal company, but one hour as he was doing it, someone asked me about my connection with the bookshop. Unwise (see above), I admit to writing. 

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Anything published...
The third theme is somewhat more lateral, an apparently odd collection of the film sounds of Hollywood. These include the manufacture of the war sounds of Apocalypse Now/post-production "in the hills back of Berkeley", using the latest weapons because of the paucity of war FX available at the time. We hear W. M. March winning the Academy Award for sound design for that film and reflecting, at the end of their work, on theosmosis of the sounds and bad sounds for the weapons of Americans and their enemies in war films. One may be grateful for the invention of Mickey Mouse's voice. There's an exchange between James Mason and Judy Garland in A Star Is Born that resonates with the litany of succumbing stars. We hear radio buzz transformed into the laser swords in Star Wars. Someone claims Disney is cryogenically suspended in the sleeping Beauty Tower in Disneyland. A sound designer argues that the best sound is that which doesn't draw attention to itself; surely an aesthetic that, in the technique conscious age of Speed and Home Cinema, needs some revision. Tony Barrel's cleverly constructed program makes you look at Hollywood with new ears.

KG
The current fashion for cross-dressing appears to have its roots in the camp culture of Priscilla Queen of the Desert, not as the socially revolutionary act of a trans woman but rather as a form of drag performance associated with gay culture. 

Anne Marsh, *Real Time*

Casting can sometimes be a thing of gorgeous irony. In Tootsie, Teri Garr plays Dustin Hoffman’s hard-done by girlfriend. He decides to try his hand at cross-dressing, and with the help of Dorothy Michaels in drag. Teri finds out, and she gets well, she gets angry and she doesn’t go out with him.

In *Prep-a-Porter* Teri Garr plays another girlfriend, the girlfriend who shops for prep-a-porter for her (transfeminine) friend whom she later goes parading with in *Chant*. "I want big sizes," she says to the surprised sales assistant casting an experienced eye over her figure, "16, 18 plus."

Drag has a long history in cinema, with its own codes and references. Long before *Priscilla*, long before *Some Like It Hot*, even a little before Laurel and Hardy, you can find allusions to drag in the music of the 1920s, in songs like "What Colour is My Parachute?" of the 1940s, in short films of the first decades of the century. The leading historian of cross dressing, Martin paper, notes that in modern times, cross-dressing has appeared and disappeared from European and post-Europian cultural contexts. Lily Savage, the English drag, observed, that her own career waxed and waned in the 1980s and 1990s, and the drag preferred (singing or lip synaptic) and the styles of masculinity that prevailed within London gay bar subculture. A week can be a long time in a fock in a bar. In Australia, it’s easy to overlook the impact of drag. It seems to be largely one of seat sales in straight cinemas and in marketing drag to the Sydney gay subculture to lure overseas tourists during Mardi Gras. It allows some to say what we used to call the ‘question of the face’, that *Priscilla* was one of the best drag scenes in the world. *Priscilla’s* effects in mainstream culture are ambiguous and difficult to chronicle. The other day I listened to the 3 young women from Sydney’s eastern suburbs taking the stage to become the American cross-dressing *what a gay film*, said, one accurately I think. "Nah," said the other, "It’s not. But they’re not very campy."

There is an assumption that because it was performed in Sydney, it was released in the US, not in Sweden, not in France - that it somehow has been influential. But there was little in this year’s Mardi Gras parade, the party or street costume which alluded to Priscilla. Felicia, true, has become fashionable as a drag name, but it seems to be the extent of its impact. The drag workshop at this year’s Mardi Gras Festival, the last workshop with leading drag teachers teaching how to walk, talk and dish drag attracted people of many sexes and sexualities. But it seemed to move more to the queer moment in culture than to *Priscilla*. It’s my sense that *Priscilla* itself does, it’s easy to miss the radical possibilities of drag in the broad sense of the word, its expansion of sexual identity and gender, particularly following through Judith Butler and her notions of gender as performance. Drag performances have arguments which put drag in a weak, conservative or oppressive position in gender politics.

The other Australian drag movies in the pipeline, *Leonie Knight’s Let Me Die, Again* and *Richard O’Brien’s The Rocky Horror Picture Show* were planned long before *Priscilla* hit town. *Let Me Die, Again*, due for screening at this year’s Sydney Film Festival, addresses some of those radical possibilities.

So hey Felicia, we’re over *Priscilla*. 

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**Post Priscilla**

Leigh Raymond

**Views and Previews**

With this issue *Real Time* begins its regular reviews of books (on theatre, performance, culture, film, video, television, CD-ROMs, and previews of audio art on radio, and television and radio arts programs.* We’ll build on the regular column off with a few published by Routledge from its impressive range on performance, theatre and dance in recent years, to let you know what’s available. In the next issue we’ll look at their 1995 releases which include the very handy, Worlds of Performance series edited by Richard Schechner. The first to hand in this second issue is Acting (Re)Considered edited by Philip B. Zarrill, a selection of essays on Decroux, Meyerhold, Peter Weir, and more and many more about performance, acting, training and Not Acting. Also in the series is a collection titled Acts and Happenings. We’ll also review An Unnatural History, by Meilhoud, Brecht, Bara, "Ball and Grotesque," Dorothea Fox, Rachel Rosenthal and William Dumm and many more about acting, performance, training, acting and Not Acting. Also in the series is a collection titled Acts and Happenings.

**Books**

The Politics and Poetics of Camp


Capital C Camp does not exactly romp through *th is anthology. Rather it emerges as a deadly serious performance scene.* In *Comme de l’Arte: an Acting (Re)Considered* series the book front we’re kicking off with a few publications devoted to queer culture and performance across the stage - you’ll probably be a little disappointed by this contribution to "current theatrical and pedagogical scholarship on the politics and discourse of the body." *Women’s* "What Cultural History of Taboos and Labeled accepts surrogating drag - including "theatre of the woman". With this issue RealTime begins its regular performances of *Boal’s Theatre of the Exterior* in 1994. *Solnit*’s *Ecology on the Edge,* 1995. *Levine Knight’s* ‘*Glamour Drag and Male Performance* (Michigan) about the relations between performance and text and Gay & Lesbian’s *Theatre of the Exterior* in the Twentieth Century (Westwelt), the year’s collection of a decade of bric, evocative reviews of the American performance scene.

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**Cresting The Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing et al**

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nightingale's call, church bells, the boom of an aeroplane, the BBC's Home Service. In 1966, the young Paul Carter made recordings at his Berkshire family home. "Putting his hand in order, he composed the sounds of a neighbourhood into a congruous grammar and a poem old..." Recently, listening back to these recordings, he muses on how an autobiographical insight these provided, how they born themselves, as a device, to rehearse a formal, to inform, to the rules of communication of a certain culture and even to the state of its recording technique at a particular time, and being to intriguing secrets.

This sound work is punctuated by insistently instructions in conversational French and ancient Greek followed by less than perfect and increasingly dispassionate "I don't care"-like exchanges. The "caries nation"-like exchanges make up Ernie Althoff's found objects, old record players and bamboo of naturalistic exchange. The communication is sometimes a dramatic poem, sometimes an almost naturalistic ex-change. The communication provides by mimicry of mutual obligations occurred essentially within "Who is the 'native' speaker) and historical leaps (an aeroplane, the BBC's Home Service. In 1966, the young Paul Carter made recordings at his Berkshire family home. "Putting his hand in order, he composed the sounds of a neighbourhood into a congruous grammar and a poem old..." Recently, listening back to these recordings, he muses on how an autobiographical insight these provided, how they born themselves, as a device, to rehearse a formal, to inform, to the rules of communication of a certain culture and even to the state of its recording technique at a particular time, and being to intriguing secrets.

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AudioDise is a radio show on 2SER 107.3 FM in Sydney featuring avant garde sound art, new music and experimental documentary. The show is committed to presenting a range of work that explores radio as both a creative and an innovative platform and goes to air on Tuesday nights from 8.30-9.00 pm. If you are interested in submitting tapes/CDs for broadcast call Nicholas Gashenith on (02) 552 1059

CDs

Dave Cobb - Art and Kindness - DOCR9394

More of Cobb's solo work, this time privately released. A mixture of soundscapes, instrumental pieces and pieces with treats vocal. These include harmonies between universities and art education, with "wonders of the word of art." Tracks like "Cultural Studies: How A University Works" are too cliche for anyone outside the arts school, but the soundscapes and more lyrical pieces have a wider appeal. Aural sketches of Guys, Roussieu and even "the little art collection at Jindera Pioneer House!"

Ross Edwards - Ecstatic Dances

Tall Poppies CD TP011 1994

Ecstatic Dances is a collection of the Australian composer Ross Edwards' chamber works from 1972 and 1993 that highlights the general range of Edwards' compositional idiom. "Private and Dragonfly Dance" (1982) "Preside and Dragonfly Dance" (1991). "Ecstatic Dance" and "Flower Songs" (1986-87) are all set to Gregorian chant and are altogether reverting to a closet lyricism and took to the streets in search of the people. They're all dynamic and suddenly set Edwards' music in a brusquely reclusive of claiming music as a ritual event. In a different vein, the solo works "Urbana" (1983) and "Kumari" (1980) glide too closely along amongst the cliches of chromaticism, despite their indigenous pretentions. While a similar disrespect to the works, "The Tower of Remoteness" (1978) is the most interesting of the works on the CD with its disjointed plane and its wavering edge that continually collapses into a void.

Andrew Ford - whispers

Tall Poppies, CD TP014, 1994

Even as they imply the necessity for an ongoing poetic concuss to secure musical meaning, Andrew Ford's four works for various chamber ensembles are so heavily overlaid with tabular imperatives that they risk becoming didactic and more than a little arthritic. "The Art of Puffing" (1989) is a finely explored of multiple connections that poses a bass poetic conceit to secure musical meaning. Andrew Ford's works

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might have you believing in the existence of an elevator baroque. NG

Film

Report: WA Film & Video Festival Winners

Comprising works from local film makers from tertiary, community and amateur levels, the 9th Festival opened on March 7th with a five day program of at the Film and Television Institute of Fremantle. All submissions are screened making this festival unique - the value in allowing inexperienced film makers to screen their work in front of a critical audience can provide the feedback necessary to expand the realm of possibilities for emerging artists. There were 98 entries, the greatest number in the festival's history, placed in the categories of short drama, experimental/documentary and music video. The biggest conflagration came under 'experimental' and, at the end of the day, took away the highest number of awards. Winners were Emily Murray's "The Offer" Nothing to Declare (Most Promising Young Film Maker of the Year, Best Experimental and Best Editing); Brad Kay's The Graduate (Most Promising Young Film Maker of the Year), and Joe Law's four works: Great, Chopsticks, Win Miracles and WhoYou Assimilate (Cinematic Award). Dan Walls was awarded the SBA Award for Excellence and Best Director for school drama Yellow Doves, Down Jackson was the Overall Encouragement award for Industrial Angels. Shane Lewis received the Tertiary Student prize for Defacclative and Not Way Different. Some films that stood out though not winning prizes were Sebastian Craig's 'Ike Fantastics', Loraine Paul's 'Love, James Walker's 'The Lover Watts' with a Rose and Grant Shade and Paul Harold's crowd- pleaser The Heeck. To offer local artists insight into their eastern state colleagues, a selection of last year's VCA award winners were shown (including Guy Richards' 'Trumph, Kate Toll's 'Speak Softly to Mrs Babagila and Kelli Simpson's 'This Big Red Thing', revealing a standard rarely challenged by the WA winners. The FAT broadened film makers' perceptions of the industry and its pitfalls with a series of seminars with Margot Nash, Jill Robb and Troy Innocent. Brendan Worrall is a Perth-based writer

44th Melbourne International Film Festival June 15 -25

Advance notice offerings from this festival look good. Cronk is a doozy about the consistently disturbing American underground comic artist Robert Crumb. In Michael Hanke's '71 Fragments Towards a Chronology of Chaos, "a series of seemingly random events culminate in disaster on the shores of Vienna." Toronto film maker Jeremy Podwosek is mentioned in the same breath as Atom Egoyan with his "serene, erotic mosaic of fractured lives across a city on the eve of a total eclipse." Three films from Iran include the somewhat banned-at-home The Air which won the Gold Leopard for Best Film at the 94 Locarno Festival. The winner of the Golden Lion at Venice in '94, Tsai Ming-Liang's 'The Invention of Love,' tackles "alienated urban life amongst the economic miracle of modern Taiwan." New films are promoted from Marcel Ophuls, Claire Denis, Robert Mugge, Akira Kurokami and Edward Yang plus, in celebration of cinema's hundred years, everything from 'silent-era gems to '50s underground classics.'

TV

SBS's Masterpiece, Imagine, The Movie Show, Eat Carpet and the soon-to-be-return The Book Show keep on selling with films and books and Information. The Book Show promises much with a series of dialogues between Australian writers and other artists. The abundance of sustained dialogues on Australian television outside Lateline and Meet the Press is depressing. Hopefully this Book Show series will open the field. Masterpiece, like Arts on Sunday, relies heavily on overseas documentaries, especially on the Melanie Bragg-Thomas TV series, with quality varying enormously program to program.

Eat Carpet

Eat Carpet is all about Australian food and international surries including some great specials like the February showing of the short films of Roman Polanski. During April there are some intriguing works, at least as outlined. Duet for Maracas, a day in the life of a photo booth in Paris (April 8); Steinamroll, "A woman in her nighting comes out of all her skin when she spies two men sexually engaged on her front lawn" (April 11); Telephone, "a provocative examination of the phone voice" (April 16); Black Spot in the Desert, "two Israeli truck drivers accidentally kill a Bedouin child" (April 22). The South, "Artist. Nicole Gouraud lays out her objects, installations to share her memories of the impact of her exile from Algeria (April 22); White Male, a day in the life of a young man to whom crime is a natural means of supporting his drug habit" (April 29).

Beverley Carter is a Perth-based writer and has worked the FTI broadened film makers' perceptions of the industry and its pitfalls with a series of seminars with Margot Nash, Jill Robb and Troy Innocent. Brendan Worrall is a Perth-based writer

At Short Notice

Art Law Centre presents a monthly program of affordable arts law seminars looking at topical issues for artists. April/May features: Tales from the infotable II, a series of seminars examining the burgeoning communications networks and their implications for the arts; the shift from narrowband to broadband; opportunities for local content creators; hype-detection; copyright and moral rights; cross-media rules and convergence; defamation and censorship in cyberspace; community broadcasting and licensing; developments in electronic publishing and on-line publishing databases; opportunities in distribution and marketing created for artists and pitfalls for the arts. Also includes Music Publishing Contracts: the role of the music publisher and organisations like AMICO and AMPAL; Martin Aringer on deal points in publishing contracts. Non-Profit Business Structures for Arts Organisations and Writing for Film (analyses of the two basic contracts from the writer's and the producer's point of view). $5 for Arts Law Centre subscribers, $15 for non-subscribers. Seminar pamphlets are available. Phone: (02) 356-2556/08-214627/03-256784

Audiences who caught WA's Fieldworks' impressive January tour of zoste will be pleased to hear that Sue Peacock, Bill Handley, Warwick Long and Jim Hughes continue to explore the boundaries between visual art, performance art, dance and theatre in their new work Fragmented Unfinished Opera this time using fragments of clothes, music, discarded identities. Memories lost and found, as their starting point.

Love the lethal: 'Bettie Carter sings songs like Monet painted haystacks. Now yellow. Now purple. It's nonetheless a haystack.' It's that much more a masterpiece. ... And she works the trio (that drumstick in Betty's hand's lost weight at every gig?). She's downright aerobic!' (Downbeat 1994) Betty Carter came out of Detroit, where the modern-jazz scene in the 40's was the most active outside New York. Like Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan she won an amateur singing contest and for years jammed with all the jazz girls. She joined the Lionel Hampton band when she was 18 in 1961 she recorded the classic Ray Charles and Betty Carter. Since the 70's Betty Carter has worked mostly often

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109 Edward St Brisbane 4000
with young musicians, usually newcomers to the field. Once a year the Brooklyn Academy she gathers a whole stageful of young musicians. She'll host her third Jazz Ahead series, with 30 or so newcomers next spring at BAM. SIMA tests Betty Carter's Australian tour in April/May.

Post Arrivals are back with an offer to bid for release - the opportunity to share a striking hot, grungy nightclub where your feet stick to the carpet with fifteen hundred old and new Post Arrivals. "You'll instil a tiny bead of delighted fear in the stomach", Telegraph-Mirror on Liz Sery. Birthdays Wednesday, Thursday and Friday in April (except Good Friday - even anarchists have scruples). You can double your fun at the after show party each night featuring Prk Harness (Camera), DJ Sub Bass Sfar plus Supra (Aftr) live performances and bands like Harry Mary.

"Beautiful island. Lost paradise. Strongroom of Chinese treasure. Sawdust beetleling against Gargantua across the water. Mountain of gold. Dragon economy. Diplomatic orphan. Contemporary art in Taiwan arises from a lime and place intersected of producing noisy dissent about what might constitute art in Taiwan rises from a lime and place intersected of producing noisy dissent about what might constitute art in Taiwan. Features a film screening curated by Jiaxin (contemporary Chinese pop-culturalist) entitled Confusion Confusion and Borrowed Lives, May 14 and 21 from 2-8pm.

Fratelli go on forever but Fratelli Theatre has gone from Chaos to Obivion (with talk of their demise) ending on a beginning with a premiere of Tediez Rozenweig's White Margeaux which also co-directs this surrealistic film event with Fratelli's Brenda McRhoie and film-maker Tony McGrath, Princess Theatre, Brisbane until April 15. (07) 847-3816.

Simon d'Orogois, an honours student in Cinema Studies at La Trobe University has taken time out from his film Recht's Inheritance on the colour sense of insects to adapt, write and direct a play based on the life of an extraordinary 19th century woman Vittoria Liess whose "wendiying fascinating" dream diary he has torn to the stranger of the Nation (1949 Carol Reed, Britain) and Koning. The MCA will stage two Sundays of Taiwanese film screenings curated by Jiaxin (contemporary Chinese pop-culturalist) entitled Confusion Confusion and Borrowed Lives, May 14 and 21 from 2-8pm.

Truths and lies, in the year of its production, the art of contemporary Australian tour in April/May. The Salamanca Arts Centre presents a selection of performances and exhibitions featuring artists and performers from all over the country. The Centre is home to many performance areas within the space. As well as providing a venue for performances and exhibitions, the Centre also includes darkrooms, studios, libraries, conference facilities and a shop.

Elena Russell's paintings are inspired by memories of her family and her life during the 1940's and 50's on a mission at Murin Bridge on the Lachlan River in north western New South Wales. Dazzling and evocative epiphany of her childhood is the material of these works.
a chance to immerse yourself in the classical culture of Imperial Japan, a world in which you can dive with the devil, die a thousand unspeakable deaths in Japanese ha-ha, gather clues from famous scholars or tricky demons and learn more about Japanese culture than you could in a month in Tokyo.

The Sweaty Club by Michael Buckingham took its title from a slick started by the artist's son, a place where you can be as naughty as you want. The piece charts the turbulent terrain of doubt and discovery—those bits of human experience where most of us behave badly.

Meanwhile All New Gees offers an interactive multimedia module heading for a shining future as a Gamegear, Nintendo style. Stratagistic negotiation with leading games manufacturers have led VNI Matrix to believe it's Barrie is zeroed and keyboard cowboys faced with far less splatter and mega mayhem.

**Talk Studio—Open City at The Performance Space** will be transcending and amplifying people's conversations as a prelude to their CD-ROM performance later this year. Nineteen to the Dozen, featuring Australian Englishes of the 21st Century. Open to public: Friday-Saturday April 28-29. Phone 02-319-5091.

Carlit Chats is a set of impromptu performances for bumping into (weather permitting) during the Comedy Festival, Melbourne in April. Absurd but intelligent chat, past-improved, party in the name of performance art, these interconnected works are written by Lloyd Jones in collaboration with the performers Liz Jones, Maureen Hartley, Brenda Irwin and Ramez Tabib. La Mama.

"It struck me that women's conversation while preparing meals was a form of theatre and I wanted to write a play that broke a few of the taboos associated with death". Hence, Julie Day's Come Back for Light Refreshments After the Service in which four women prepare food for a wake while chatting about life and death and at the end of the play the audience gets to eat the work. Winner of the 1992 Adelaide Advertiser Fringe Award and deemed by the audience to be "literally delicious".

The papers trumpeted the half-time score in the Superleague Battle: Packer 1 Moodoo 0. Why not play out the second half on the ring, over 15 rounds. The Australian public would pay big money to see them slug it out, toe to toe, round after gruelling round, until only one mogul was left standing.

Museum of Modern Art at Heide in April-May presents Downtown an exhibition which navigates the urban and suburban territories of Pop and pop Pop art by American artist Ed Ruscha and Australians Howard Arkley and Robert Rooney. Ruscha explores the confluence of American 'cool', juxtaposing text and image to illuminate "the bleak porosity of the everyday". Robert Rooney turns the empty roads, fuel stops and car yards of contemporary post-war boom culture into serial consolation. Howard Arkley looks at consumer dreams through gaudy and lurid reproduction.

Concurrently on exhibition is in Five Words or Less. "Look at any word long enough and you will see it open up into a series of faults, into a terrain of particles, each containing its own void." (Robert Smithson) Artist and guest curator Christopher van de Ven plays with the use of text, content, subtext in the art of Jenny Holzer, Ray Rosen, Robert Indiana, Barbara Kruger, Lawrence Weiner, Klaus Danko, Roslyn O'Dwyer, Elizabeth Newman. "An in-progress performance project at Melbourne's Institute of Modern Art opened with Living Art two solo performances by Geoffrey Schmidt in Demonstrations of Desire a performance that discusses and develops a personal perspective the link between disease and desire and Paradance Fable by Stuart Lynch developed in collaboration with Nicholas Zartrug, investigating the body as a "table, a myth or a non-individual body" that can function as a transmitter of feeling rather than a vehicle of individual creative expression."

**SPORT**

**Tooth and Claw**

With Jack Rufus

Read any item about professional sport in Australia today and who do you see? Either up front making the running or lurking in the shadows, waiting to pounce—are there two names and two names only. The big men of Australian sport, the only two who matter: Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer. They’re fighting over Pay TV, they’re fighting over the football Superleague. They’re fighting over the future of sport—so why not do the sensible thing and turn them INTO AUSLAN sport?

The newspapers trumpeted the half-time score in the Superleague Battle: Packer 1 Moodoo 0. Why not play out the second half on the ring, over 15 rounds. The Australian public would pay big money to see them slug it out, toe to toe, round after gruelling round, until only one mogul was left standing.

Imagine the second lineup up at ringside. In the Packer corner: John Howard, Richo Ray Martin; in the Murdoch corner: Paul Keating, Michael Lee and...well, that’s enough. The referee? Someone of sufficient standing to separate these brutal pugilists. The Governor-General? No, too formal. Perhaps a great mediator. Geraldine Doogue? Or someone tougher, who could step in when necessary. It’s Buttono? No, there can be only one person fearless enough, one person ferocious enough to stand between these two giants. Stuart Littlemore.