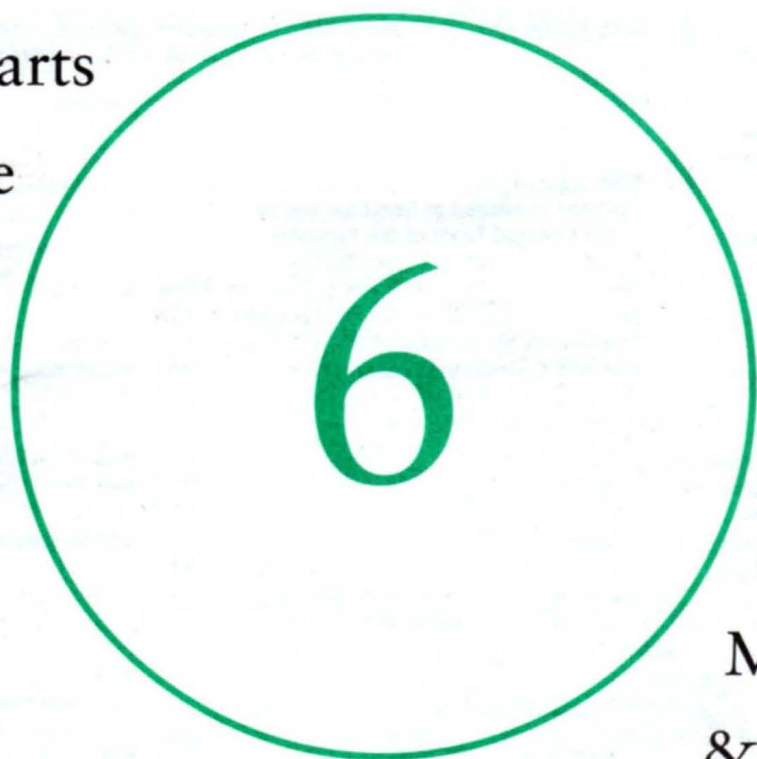


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RealTime



*RealTime* is based in Sydney but its ambitions have always been national as is confirmed in this issue with 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 Australian's* photo-dominated Friday edition and its Saturday puff pieces. Critically, it's the work that these arts reportings mostly ignore - at least seen in snippets 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.

*RealTime* is committed to the spread of arts information and to critical surveys. Reviewing 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 *Views & Previews*: 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 proprieties being fiddled with by foreigners. First it was Kosky's taking over Writers Week, that very popular but tired and bitty tea party, now it's Artists' Week, already assaulted by Christopher Hunt in '94. The autumn issue of Adelaide's *Artlink* goes in boots 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 Australia Council's Peer Assessment Review looms. 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-gravy train lobby. In the meantime the Performing 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 toeing 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 - and for those who operate on funding that declines in real value year by year by year. Hybrid Arts funding results do look impressively diverse though some have already queried the heavy investment in Adelaide Festival projects (a Synergy - Nannette Hassell - Leigh Warren Dancers collaboration, and the Paul Carter River Torrens installation), wondering, while these projects are bound to be good ones, whether festival one-offs for some already well-funded artists should have priority over struggling new work, and will the Drama and Dance Committees likewise fuel Kosky's admirably grand venture? These issues will be tackled with many of the players in RT7.

The techno side of Creative Nation continues to distress with artists definitely on the outer at the first of the MultiMedia Forums. (see p. 24) Particularly alarming was the sight of Australia Council staff sitting with the rest of us 'delegates' (at \$50 a head for something that could have been mailed out for forty-five cents) taking copious notes. As the day dragged on most of us wished we'd booked into the AFC's *Interactivity and Narrativity* Conference. *The Sydney Morning Herald's* *Cyberspace* column noted as early as last November that Creative Nation had "the nod of the software community which had feared an earlier hi-jack by the arts-grant Mafia". It's a worry.

## Cover Photograph: Raft

When distance needs traversing and needing succour, the bricoleur sets to work with any material at hand and prays to God that it floats.

*Raft*, a collaborative work by artist Ruark Lewis and writer Paul Carter represents a larger body of research on the work of the German missionary and anthropologist Carl Strehlow. Strehlow's project was concerned with establishing stable literary texts, transporting cultural meaning, establishing coherence 'between' cultures. Strehlow's anthropological and missionary work established a cultural dialogue of its time limited by the strictures of late 19th and early 20th century religion, linguistics, anthropology: he attempted to construct re-playable "patterns" and secure guidelines which would act as a bridge between indigenous culture and his own. The raft of the exhibition's title becomes a metaphor for secure travel over hostile terrain, establishing 'truths' as it moves from point to point.

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-betweens which are perilous, cavernous.

The Level 2 project space at the Art Gallery New South Wales is the first site for *Raft*. Ruark 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 Horseshoe Bend in Central Australia. The moment of the death of Strehlow is the locus of the sound

component: it retraces the meditative footsteps of Strehlow's son after his father's death, it reflects upon a poignant moment of farewell.

Ruark Lewis's character transcriptions allude to Strehlow's project of "patterning"; a tragic story is told in six languages. 24,948 characters, several thousand words, are inscribed on the surfaces of 16ft lengths of timber or rafters. *Raft* is a readable yet illusive text. The work invites scanning and utterance: it folds over onto itself, partially obscuring narrative continuity. In reading or translating *Raft*, the audience engages in 'sounding', a second aural component to the work—glottis mouthing, 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 mourns the tragedy of Carl Strehlow's last journey and the loss of the possibility of exchange between cultures. *Raft* becomes a gesture of reconciliation, a model of exchange - in this sense (among many), it is a rare and imaginative project. Skillfully and delicately through texture, space and utterance, these two artists have chosen to throw light on a hidden aspect of early Australian history.

*Why couldn't God permit at least a cool breath of air to fan his tortured body?... God had said 'no!', a last line of communication had been severed, finally, exorably.*

T.G.H. Strehlow, *Journey To Horseshoe Bend*.

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

Daniel Cole

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3	Adelaide Festival: Barrie Kosky interview
4-18	Performance, Dance, Theatre & Youth arts
19-23	Music
23-24	Techno-arts
24-28	Visual arts
29-30	Words & Sound
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# Celebrating the Site

Keith Gallasch 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 of the festival but as the subject of installations along a walking route on the River Torrens, inspired by Paul Carter's speculations on Colonel Light, and as a competition for architects and their collaborators to comment on the site and Adelaide.

Kosky's festival promises to be distinctive and committed to Australian artists in a manner not seen since Jim Sharman'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 reinventing 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 reinventing or redefining. I think I'm building on the tradition that's been established over a number of Adelaide festivals in its multi-arts format. It still is the only festival in Australia to deal seriously with most of the art forms. However, I think with tradition one always needs to 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 a much more interesting festival on at 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.

The terms 'debate' or 'forum' in Australia have become these terrible words. People are absolutely fearful. It shouldn't be the case. You must have debate, serious two to three hour debates within a Festival context. There should be at least one event that anyone should be able to go to, 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, Ruins of the Future, employ the words 'the swelling of the intellect and wit'. It's unusual 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. Paul Carter does too. It's nothing to do with obscurity or making people feel less intelligent. It's about providing forums whether they're performing arts events or visual arts exhibitions or musical concerts that can give something to people not just on an emotional level but a cerebral level. That's very important.

*KG You say that Artists Week won't be about suburbia but it will have connections with the suburbs, it will locate artists in different spaces. Are you bringing to the festival an 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 Adelaide 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 given a great deal of analysis. While I'm all in favour of both hybrid art forms and forms that explore technology, let's not kid ourselves. What drives artists to express themselves is their ideas and their passions - not the marble or the computer or the piece of paper. Peking Opera is a hybrid art form. The Russian Constructivists and the Surrealists in their theatre work and the Dadaists were dealing with hybrid art forms. So it's not new. Technology has been with us in various forms for a long time and I despise 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 rather than seeing itself as 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 Europeans, Japanese and some North Americans have done for years - relationships.

*KG So it's not to do with intermingling of forms but overlap of influence?*

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

*KG I grew up in Adelaide and lived there for 40 years. There's a very strong tradition taken up from Colonel Light onwards by the likes of Hugh Stretton, The Adelaide Review and Peter Ward, an ongoing debate about the city and where it's going. It's built into Adelaideans. It even featured in David Allen's play about early Adelaide for Troupe in 1978, Don't Listen to Gouger. Why architecture for you? Obviously Peter Corrigan has been influential, Paul Carter, Nakamura, Peter Greenaway's recent city works ...*

BK Peter Corrigan is one of the only people in the country - and of course, he has an international reputation for doing this - with an analysis of the city and suburban environments that is distinctly Australian. Yes he borrows and begs and steals from all sorts of different cultures but his work is so quintessentially Australian. When I first went to Adelaide years ago I was struck by the city. I've 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 20th century architecture whether it's Schoenberg or Xenakis. A connection between form and sound. Schoenberg was a painter and Xenakis was an architect. The construction of their music has strong parallels with architectural thinking. We're looking at a number of projects that deal with sound, architecture and music. I have a great interest in Australian architecture, why it's often so bad and why it fails to really engage with other art forms and with a community. Paul Carter's writing a new book about Colonel Light. Adelaide was at one stage going to be called Utopia. The way different cities in Australia have evolved and how these environments create the people we are has not really been

addressed.

*KG Carter writes, "The future cannot help but be the memory of a forgotten past". Is this applicable to festivals as it is here to cities: classics, re-worked classics, the new, 'new classics', utopian forms, feeding off each other?*

BK The whole notion of why we put on arts festivals in Australia has not been very seriously examined. The Adelaide Festival was based on the model of Edinburgh but now it's better than Edinburgh which has turned into a big international supermarket, the biggest European festival but it's no longer the leading one. In Australia, with a few notable exceptions, we tend to have festivals that are put together on the whims and tastes of individuals. This is fine to a point. But in an Australian festival I believe that at least fifty percent of your program must be Australian. It's the cultural cringe reinvented just to bring in the stuff. We want to see the stuff but it should only be the most interesting stuff - not the most acclaimed and it should be seen side by side with the Australian stuff. Not in any sense as comparison but as a mirror. That's what a festival is, a mirror. And in a mirror, you see a lot of things.

*KG There is some irony in Carter's speculations about an Adelaide built on someone else's space, an Adelaide without 'attachment to the site' and, in the nineteenth Century, 'grounding itself in the (European) past'. This irony is doubled in Adelaide's twentieth century turn to an international arts festival to give itself a past and a future.*

BK That's true. In Adelaide, more than in any other Australian city, you're constantly aware of that fusion between past present and future which is why doing a project like *Ruins of the Future* is so interesting. You're not only aware of an Aboriginal past which permeates the city. You're aware of a 19th century colonial past and then you're aware of a 20th century past and then the present. Then you weave into that the notion of an international arts festival. It's no wonder that for over thirty years the Adelaide Festival has been so successful. It's not just that you can walk to venues and the weather's nice. It's more than that. There is a feeling in the city which makes it veer between being quite creepy and quite stimulating. It's very strange this mixture of history and *grande guignol* you get in Adelaide.

*KG Why the disclaimer that Adelaide is not a geographic festival when you are focusing here on the very local, albeit with international speculations?*

BK By 'geographic' I suppose I mean, for example, last year's festival where Christopher Hunt suggested the rather dubious notion of 'comparable time zones' which didn't quite come off. The work was from Japan and South-East Asia - some of it was stupendous but most of it we'd seen before. It was a notion that the festival is some kind of expo - that you pluck a country, or pluck a region out and posit it in another region. I mean 'geographic' in the sense that, yes, it must be concerned with the geography of the place, but I'm not interested in saying there's a focus on, say, ... Luxembourg this year.

*KG How important are 'the human scale', walking and a sense of history to this venture?*

BK Very important. You couldn't do this venture in Melbourne or Sydney because they are metropolises, necropolises, whatever. In Adelaide you can. No doubt some people will drive but the notion of having to walk from one event to the other whether it's indoor or outdoor - it's very important. If you're dealing with architecture, the street, the suburb, the river 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 techno-arts, mediation of the body by new technologies and other forms, yours is an impulse 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 but I feel that unless you see them in some sort of relationship to the past and the present then they're irrelevant, meaningless. No doubt some people will say 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 Hoist.

*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 rumoured commissioning of 'many' 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 always has been, but it disappears in the cracks because it's out of the centres and it doesn't get seen. The same thing happens in Perth and Darwin and Brisbane. I work in Melbourne. I do work with Melbournians but I don't believe that I am exporting a Melbourne consciousness or that, as Margot Osborne wrote a few months ago, I am bringing to Adelaide my - what was it? - "gendered, European, Melbournian Jewish consciousness"! You couldn't do this kind of Festival in Melbourne. If I was doing a Festival in Melbourne it would be about other things because of its history, and the place is different.

*KG I suspect there may be many Melbournians 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 arts capital of Australia. It's a hideous concept. To be an arts capital. What the fuck does it mean? Does it mean our Premier booking in *Beauty and the Beast* and *Sunset Boulevard*? Does it mean erecting Edwardian things in Swanson Street or does it mean Melbourne's got lots of theatres. Well, Adelaide has, I think, more theatres per capita than Melbourne. It's also interesting that the Melbournians involved in the Festival are people who have been misused or abandoned in Melbourne. People like Carter, Corrigan and van Schaik live in the town and have some influence but they should be people who are turned to for a lot of very important decision-making and instead what we get is the wrong people making decisions. Part of my joy with this festival is to say to these people - and there are many others from Sydney and Adelaide and wherever - "Come".



# Spin Cycle

Katie Lavers on the inside with the Chrissie Parrott Dance Company

*Spin* has been initiated entirely by the dancers within the company as Chrissie 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 Embling, 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 co-incide 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 etchings and drawings.



Claudia Alessi

Marco Mona

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 his anatomical drawings of the body.

Paul O'Sullivan wanted to develop a solo in which the only light source came from lights strapped to his body. We are using 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 dancer's body and the huge old warehouse.

Lisa Heaven decided to explore a dark emotional stasis. 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 Burt's fragment takes place within a sculptural form composed of eight vertical shafts 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 he moves he triggers short snatches of the song (via sensors) like half recalled memories. As these snatches of song start to layer over each other a reinterpretation develops which explores different understandings of time and memory.

Kylie-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 delineating 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 industrial revolution. He is using a 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 Chrissie Parrott Dance Company will pave the way for many more such inter-disciplinary collaborations.

*Katie Lavers is a Perth visual artist and writer.*

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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 - jump - step to the side  
jump - jump - jump - swing  
jump - 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?



Ponch Hawkes

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!! I'm gonna smoke Peter Stuyvesant. I'm gonna be a big star!! I'm gonna be multilingual. I'm gonna be a big star!! I'm gonna be highly respected. 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

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

drops or perhaps is maintained. It is hard to know what is acceptable behaviour or not in jumping because for one person a simple action may seem like an enormous leap but for others it may be just an everyday step". I think of crying and jumping as bodily outbursts that have often been symbolic cultural and sexual emotions. "Tears are like rivers of moving water. They purify, cleanse, bathe the eyes, so how can they pollute?" writes Mary Douglas and likewise jumps are explosions of energy. They lift the legs, show joy and inspire, so how can they offend? They certainly don't, in what Hadfield prefers to call a post-feminist entertainment even though I have my doubts about this concept.

"What is the worst thing that could happen to you?" is asked of each of the performers. For one, it is the dog that sniffs her cunt through her dress, for another, it is the fear of impending pregnancy - the not-me inside - but for Annie Davey descending upside down in slow motion on a rope suspended from the ceiling it is a fall, the worst fall you could ever imagine. A fall that leaves her lying motionless for months, not feeling fingers or toes. For spectators, like myself, who know of Annie as a Circus Oz performer who fell on her neck in an accident that could have been fatal, the show stopped. "I am happy in this moment, in this moment I am happy" she whispers. Her real jump was to stay alive and for that the audience is grateful.

Singing and jumping, *Crying in Public Places* close with an encore, their only cover song *Calling All Angels* by Jane Siberry and k.d. lang. The audience applauds and nearly, jumps for joy.

Rachel Fensham is a writer and lecturer on Performance, recently re-located from Murdoch WA to Monash VIC.



# Insects Inside

Zsuzsanna Soboslay talks to Nikki Heywood about *Creatures Ourselves*

It's been a long time since I've been followed in the street by the eyes of Greek gentlemen, scamsters in the rag trade who pace and measure the streets of Surry Hills from trade haunt to haunt, sniffing 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 ...*

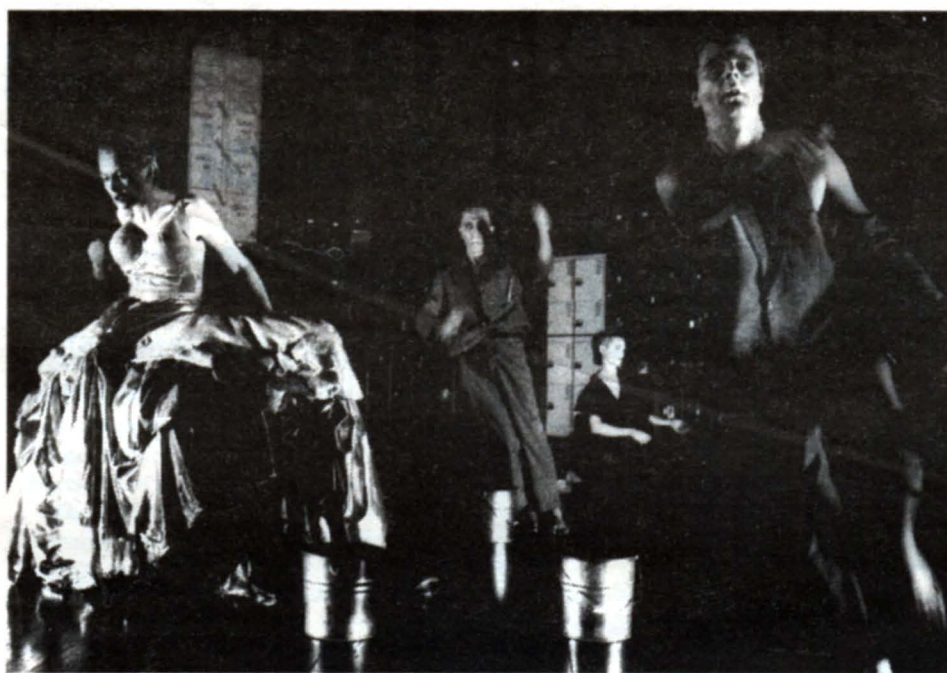
It's been a long time since I've felt the echo of being a slip of a girl, wanting to become a slip out of my body, lifted off the footpath by an angel, transparent if possible, edged to the side out of eyeline. And for godsake, I'm thirty-three.

This is Surry Hills where a group is rehearsing a piece about being minutely human and enormously insect in cracks of the city amongst suits, ties, slinky velours ... the cockroach world of inner Sydney about to be overrun by ...

A buzzing, a studio reorganised by bees, a brown path of chairs turned and rotated like honey being stored. *The Queen! The Queen is coming!* Five voices ejaculating homage, croaking, bleating ... human bodies with wings.

SS *Why the insect body?*

NH It's the notion of armoury. Humans have no exoskeleton, yet penetrating our flesh can be as difficult as if there was one. Butoh training is about penetrating boundaries...



Hiedrun Löhr

SS *Whereas western training might teach/inflict a dissolution of ego for the purpose of enacting another armour/character.*

NH Before the idea of insects came, I thought of little men, strutting their stuff and singing songs while the big mama-in-charge loomed amongst them. Those prehistoric goddess images - magical, mysterious, fulsome ... That scale challenges us... Body image is such a big issue in the dance field. Even doing the Body Weather training at Lake Mungo, Tess de Quincy cut down our food rations. Certain aesthetics are and are not acceptable.

SS *Yet the piece is not explicitly about body image in the way Wendy Harner and Sancia Robinson's play about anorexia, What is the matter with Mary Jane?*

NH She is more the grunginess, the darkness, the bones, like an icon or distillation of qualities ...

SS *Your Queen is feted, and yet so alone; she waits in isolation in the locker room. What is power - being caught in a role? or having power within a role? She is swept away with a broom after her death - shocking, poignant, totally apt: the workers are so much sturdier, less ... apotheosised than she is, and yet they are the ones that keep on going on ...*

NH There is at times a mesmeric power she exerts over the others. There are sexual overtones. I had problems with that: I don't see myself as that kind of performer. And I certainly had resistance initially to being in a place of power. In our culture, to be reasonably powerful is okay, but not to have that much.

SS *But don't you feel that Butoh is in itself powerful?*

NH In training I've found the "I" disappears. It is an incredible surrender: I can feel my body breaking down.

SS *Perhaps surrender itself is powerful. 'Elemental' work, of course, comments on our being human. Hence, your attempts to incorporate voice are important. Can you comment on how you came by the soundscape, particularly that not mediated by electronic score?*

NH We use sounds from the body, from compression through the larynx, squeaks and cracks, partials and fragments. Our traditional notion of voice is less holistic in terms of rounded sounds, aesthetic acceptability.

SS *The different training disciplines within the group - Butoh's introversion versus more personality-driven performances such as Danny's funny, fussy Polonius - must have been difficult to incorporate.*

NH This has been a point of tension. One of the guys couldn't believe I'd told him not to

do, but *be*. In drama school he'd been taught exactly the opposite. Rehearsals were sometimes quite antagonistic.

SS *It created definite rhythmic differences: the hiccups of shifting self-examination, versus the Queen's sexy waltz in the Bucket Dance, turning others to her tune... It was fascinating to watch someone like Steve try to accommodate an internal process with the obvious and sure-footed muscularity he displayed in the rehearsal room. Other times, I felt performers hadn't decided which tack they were taking, such as when they stood croaking at the wall. Does it have a specific history (you called it 'the wailing wall' in rehearsal), or do they ask what it might mean to be there, feeling out a relationship to it? A distinctive experience of Butoh is that rehearsal is performance: the meaning is the 'magic' that in other forms you open to on opening night.*

NH 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. Butoh makes a state available for an observer to enter into. How willing are people to accept that invitation to enter the state you offer?

SS *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 the 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 vibration with her. I know she deliberately broke her "spell" in some sort of concession to a western audience but that breaking reminded me of what I nominally 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 self and circumstance to training is very hard to sustain here.

SS *And yet you are asking questions of definite shapes, relationships, men versus women... Where is your work 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 three weeks then transferred for a two-week season to Sydney's Performance Space, ending on March 12. The performers: Garry Bradbury, Steve Coupe, Ari Ehrlich, Matthew Fargher, Claire Hague, Nikki Heywood, Daniel Mitchell.

Zsuzsanna Soboslay is a writer based on the NSW South Coast.

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Tia Wilson *Nana Obscuras*  
Photos by Heidrun Löhr



Azaria Universe *Total Eclipse of the Heart*



Dean Walsh



Moira Finucane *Drag Sans Boa Mit Chenille*

## Slippery Sex

Kerrie Schaeffer surveys Club Bent

As the Chrissy Amphlett/Divynls' 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 offstage.

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 Sans 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 place 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 Sans Boa Mit Chenille*, a high camp exploration of female desire and sexuality, there was no ambiguity surrounding the persona of the diva/goddess Argentina Gina 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 dogs 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 Sans 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 counterpoint 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.



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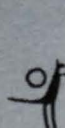
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**PROGRAM** - for a series of projects, a program of activities or infrastructure support.

The first closing date is **15 May** and there is another closing date of **15 November**. Applications are welcome for any category on **one** of these two closing dates.

Full details of the new funding categories and the Council's and Board's policies, are contained in the *Performing Arts Handbook 1995*. As competition for the Board's limited funds is intense, all applicants are urged to read the new *Handbook* and the new application forms, and discuss their proposal with a program officer prior to lodging an application.

To obtain the new *Handbook* and the new application forms contact the Performing Arts Board on (02) 950 9000 or toll free on (008) 22 6912 or write to:

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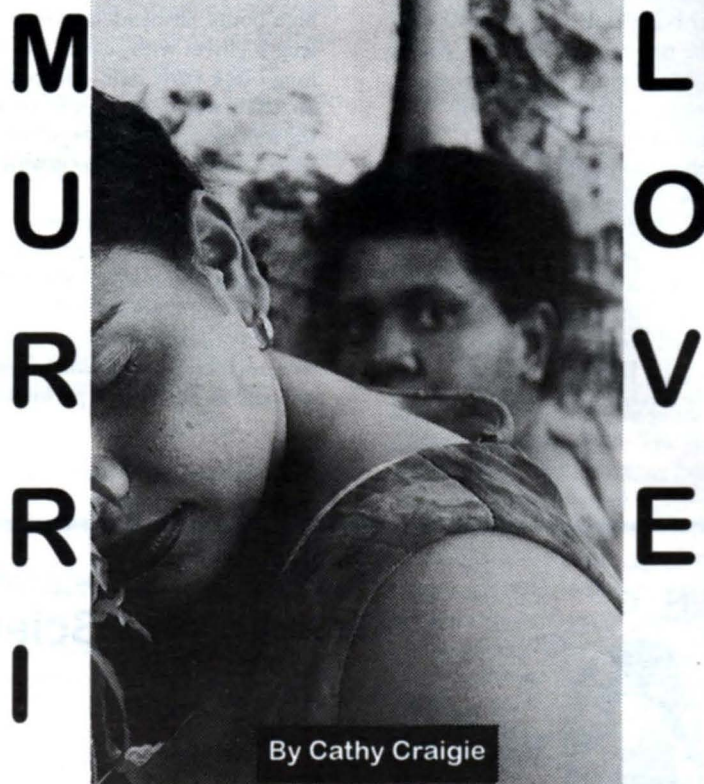
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# Splintered States

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.I.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 likes 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 nor 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 DJ'ing Troy and Splinters' 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 subtlety. And the limitation? As always - time & \$\$.

*Second Scream* was written just before Henderson was diagnosed as schizophrenic, a socially convenient label, a label actor Khalil Jureдини passionately believes needs to be written out of a person's system. 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 Orientalia at The Performance Space, and theatre technician. She travelled to Europe in 1992 to work with two of France's contemporary circuses, 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 tightwire 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 follow-spot operator and assistant electricians 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 the Columbine character in the traditional circus, the innocent and beautiful girl who can be manipulated. 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 rose. She bends over backwards and 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 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. Theirs 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 invasion 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 strange beings enter from opposite sides of the ring and all they do is twirl their very long plaits 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 singing like 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 and I took over as lighting 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 for Circus Arts. Afterwards, he said, if you ever want to set up I'll support you. He took them to his chateau in Burgundy. 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?

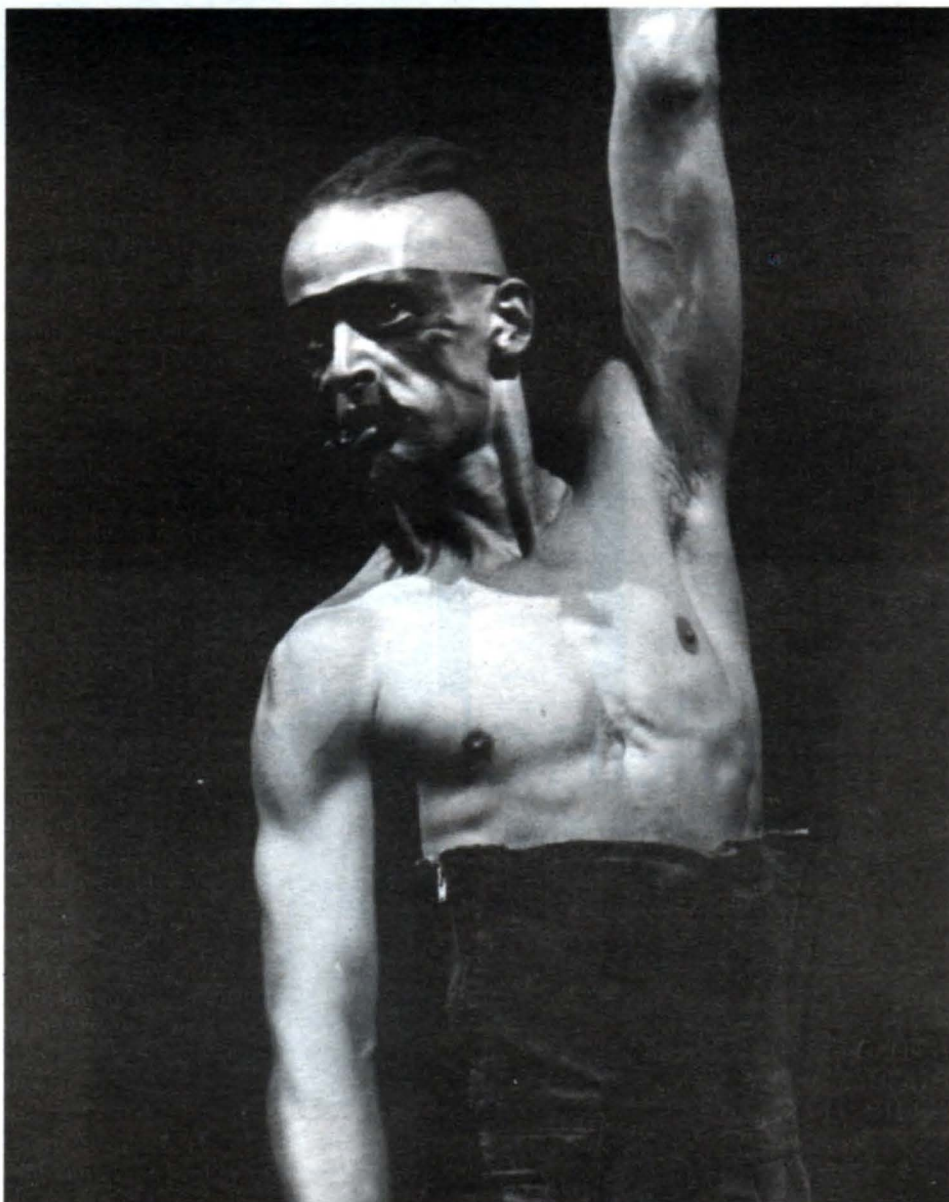
**JP** Volière Dromesko for a short time, where the set up of the tent was my major interest. Dromesko were part of the 70's movement. I met up with Jean-Pierre, one of the clowns from Archaos and he showed me photographs of Cirque Bidon who used to travel in the 70's during the summer in covered wagons. 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 Ozo 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 Minister for Culture under Mitterrand, circus was funded by the Department of Agriculture. After Mitterrand, 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 unbelievably beautiful tent. That was paid for by the City of Lausanne and the National Theatre of Bretagne. The City of Rennes 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 a tent. The birds are already inside the tent.



Johann le Guillerm in Tresses, Cirque O

Photo Cibille





Midday Cirque O meeting - Janine Peacock in sunglasses

Photo Cibille

VB *What sort of birds?*

JP All sorts. Some Australian birds, a malibu. Some of the exotic birds made very interesting calls. In fact I'm sure there was one who used to say in English, "What now? What now?" all through the show. Then an actor talks about how we all came from the sky and now we're stuck on the ground and we're trying to get back up. Another walks the ring talking to the malibu. Lot's of 'up there, down here', vertigo scenarios. In the orchestra, a bird turns the pages of music for the gypsy accordionist. A woman walks in with her arms extended, a blackbird moves along her arms, undoes the bows on her dress, her dress falls and the lights go out. Another woman walks the wire on point, the sound of her steps amplified by a huge dish at the end of the wire. Another performer is bowing the wire. There were also some very interesting flying machines. There was a bar inside the tent and the audience sat at tables, on each table a bottle of wine and a plate of .... you guessed it, eggs.

VB *I could run away to a circus like that.*

JP *Volière Dromesko* is like a little moving city. There are about fourteen performers, seven or eight children with their own teachers, a restaurant, a forklift, all sorts of devices for putting up the tent. It took six days. The first time it took them twelve days.

VB *How many such circuses are there?*

JP Each region seems to have one. The City Council of Ales gave *Archaos* the old Miners Administration building so they could live and work there. That's their region. Their office is in Paris. *Archaos* have scaled down their activities but the Ales operation remains. They've set up huge workshops there where you can get anything made or fixed ... outdoor flying rigs, mobile folding stages for street work, caravans customised, diesel buses and trucks fixed ... You can also ring there for casual truck drivers for convoys etc. The skills continue and provide a resource for the whole circus community just because

they have a base. It makes sense.

*Volière Dromesko* was set up in Rennes. *Zingaro* need their own place because they have horses - lovely stables, just outside the Metro Circle in Paris. *Cirque Gosh!* is German. *Cirque Plume* is at Besancon. They all do well and another thing, these are not children's circus. Some do matinees but mostly they're strictly for adults.

VB *And what about the lifestyle of the circus artist?*

JP In France if you're an artist you're in a different system. You submit to the government your contracts over, say a year. Every day that you don't make money from your work, the government pays you a percentage of what you've earned in the past. When they stopped performing at *Cirque O*, each of the performers would have had two years at quite enough money to live on to make new work without having to worry about bread and butter money. It's been a year and they're all working again now in their own shows.

VB *Very different from being an unemployed artists in Australia.*

JP It's a cruel situation in Australia where new work is expected to be created in five to eight weeks. I don't understand how anything can develop that way. You can't make a product without research and development. You certainly can't make something that's going to support itself. That's a basic law of business, surely. Occasionally, artists are supported with annual funding but more often it's project funding and you're expected to make new work in such a short time and you do it and it's nearly always undercooked. You have a germ of an idea that could be wonderful. You show it to your community and that's it. It never sees the light of day again. Then you have to come up with a new idea. It's totally debilitating for everyone involved.

The whole thing about these European circuses is that they have chosen a lifestyle, and they receive the support for their work

that they need. I remember a journalist asked one of the performers in *Cirque O* how she could call what she did *Circus*. He said, "Surely it's theatre or even dance, isn't it?" She answered, "I call it circus because I work on a trapeze in a tent and I live in a caravan and you can't get more circus than that!"

VB *So what's the male female ratio like in these circuses?*

JP From a technical viewpoint, there aren't many women involved. *Archaos* had a multi-talented female lighting person, Sarah Sankey, but in my time travelling with the circus in France, I only met one other female tech. In Australia the scene is different.

VB *In fact, women have been at the centre of the movement in Australia. Women like Robyn Laurie, Sally Forth, Gail Kelly, Annie Davey, Celia White, Cathryn Niesche...*

JP Rinski Ginsberg, Jane Mullet, Sue Broadway ...

VB *Are there similarities between the European circuses and the new circus movement here? Circus Oz began at the same time but their work is very different. The tricks are held together loosely with social satire.*

JP *Circus Oz* has to be a popular circus, do matinees for kids, shows for the GP.

VB *I notice the Flying Fruitfly Circus are working with Robyn Laurie and choreographer Julie-Anne Long on their next show Totally Wicked.*

JP *Rock 'n Roll Circus* in Brisbane work from a series of images to provoke emotion rather than display skills.

VB *Their new show The Dark is coming up in November.*

JP I remember a finale from one of their works. The men in the circus took on what are more usually the women's acts, the lyrical, graceful rope acts. They came up

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 with narratives about domestic abuse and feral children.

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

VB *But the same tradition. Melbourne's Desoxy'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.



# 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 it's 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 \$35. 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 an almost reasonable salary.

**KG** What are then are 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 CYT when you worked with us in 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 time 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

*Blaxland'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 we 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 skills and something 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, I want them to work 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 to the football matches and operate 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 ... My trouble is I'm so bloody 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'm looking 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 Splinters' productions) on multimedia productions and great grotesque street theatre. We'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 young 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 middle class the limitations are inevitable about who joins. And

youth theatre is also an intellectual environment - young people come into contact with ideas with artists with something to say. However we have moved away from issues a long time ago - 'Not this issue again. We've done this issue'. I'm more thematic-based and there are issues in themes of course. A show we're touring to Broken Hill and country centres in July and August is on employment/unemployment, but it's not about how the unemployed are treated badly, it's 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*. 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 coordinate things in an ad hoc way as I try to make it less ad hoc and say 'Why don't you come in these dates and do this ...' but it stays ad hoc. 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 themselves in terms 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 Robinson is doing that project. 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 bad tempered because I've over-worked myself, it's my fault isn't it.

**KG** And you've invested a lot in it.

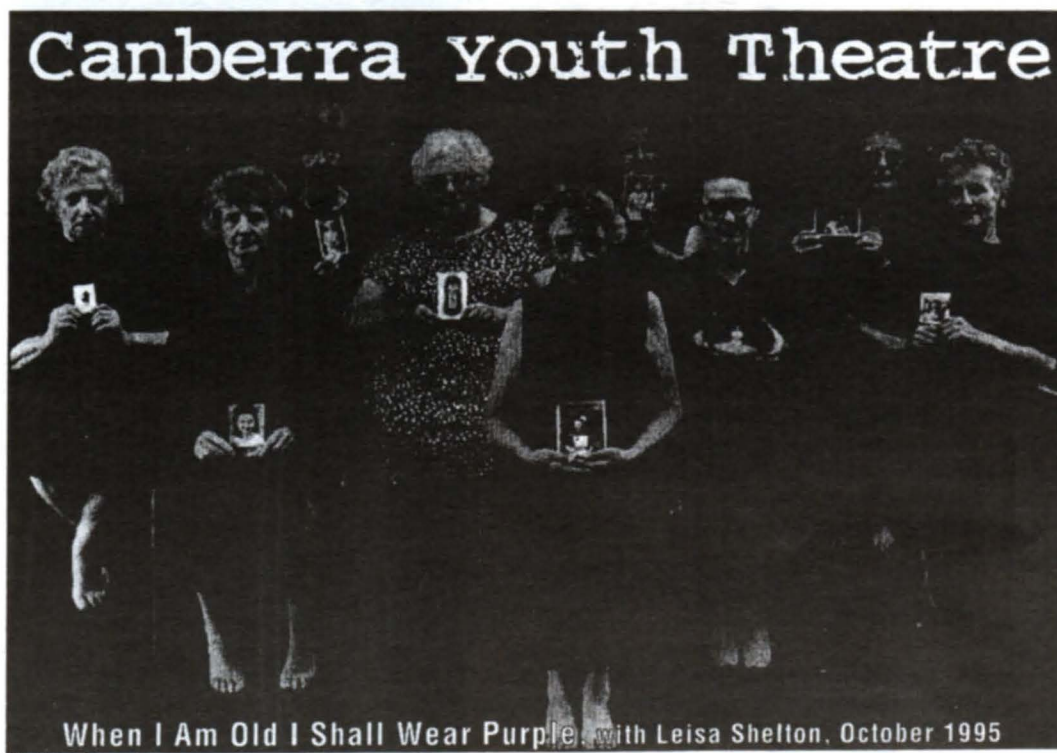
**RM** And it's an area I'm happy to keep working in. I love it. I'd like to have a bit more room to do other work as well.

**KG** What about your own creativity?

**RM** I do comedy stuff on the radio with a friend, political stuff, some stand up, MC-ing and a project that Elizabeth Patterson 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 godsake.





# 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 in the field is 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 that 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 *Drumming the Floor* with composer Natasha Moszenin.

RT *These are one-offs?*

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: first develop the idea as a script or a movement piece ... then we can ask is this 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 these?*

CT With two other staff members. There are between 40 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 Want with a street theatre performance, there's a *Book Gig* performance here, plus workshops, first *Drumming 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 starts up - providing training structures 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 program?*

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 there's 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 arts 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 publicist 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 here. 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

1979-80 and we were disbanded when St Martins started and sent over here. At the time there was talk about it being a youth arts centre but was, I think, overwhelmed by its theatre facilities. When I came here in '88 it was still operating in a theatre structure and the first task was to turn that around, to broaden the program.

RT *Why? Because it would be more representative of youth culture, of the culture in general?*

CT There are lots of youth theatre companies



Ophelia Ehrlich in St Martins' *The Grimms*

Lyn Pool

and there's a danger that you create a terribly over-resourced youth theatre company whereas what we've done is create a relatively under-resourced arts centre.

RT *Expectations are high?*

CT Yes, in the visual arts area we can really only support a few exhibitions. We are considering life-drawing and would like to do photography rather than just exhibit it, but ... We'd like to see our main theatre eventually equipped for multimedia. We'll be working closely with Next Wave -

RT *- which is to be techno-art oriented in '96 -*

CT - and the Youth Theatre Festival we work on will be part of that.

RT *What about your membership? Youth theatre companies are often seen as coteries of well-off city kids. How have you broadened this out?*

CT We're smack in the middle of South Yarra, the easiest access for the influential and well-off in a fifteen minute radius, so that has been a not unfounded criticism in the past, but now what we've chosen to do is target well beyond that radius. There is a certain social stigma in certain suburbs, social and logistical, about coming here as well as difficulties about finishing a rehearsal at ten o'clock at night. So in the last few years we've formed partnerships in Frankston, in Oakleigh, Richmond - physically close, but socially a long, long way away - and Flemington. These usually start as a workshop, as with a gallery just outside of Frankston. They wanted young people involved in their art gallery in a practical way and we wanted to extend our reach. We ran the program - chipped of a bit off ours -, they supplied the venue. It went through creative development and a show was funded out of it.

RT *Have you solved the access issue? Are you still criticised?*

CT We always will be because of where we are. People jump to conclusions. The reality is seen in our statistics. For our launch we have a map with pins which shows a low percentage from the immediate area and with many coming to regular

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 Medlin?*

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

participatory kind for young people even though they do have children's centres. I thought *Black Mantle* the company most capable of delivering this. They're actors and teachers who have formed an almost 'guerrilla tactics' group. They move into an area and do large scale role-play. They're trying to resist American influence and to recapture 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 Mantle* will do workshops for 20 to 30 young people. Then Takashi Kitajima and I will present a paper on drama 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 Arena have their own theatre as do Polyglot. We want to see more young audiences here for work for young people. And away from the 70s model - 4 actors playing 28 characters and none of the actors the ages of the characters they're playing. This has been a theatre practice where there hasn't been an expectation that the actor has to be right for the character! This model has served its purpose, raised its schools' audience expectations but they don't want to see that anymore, issues yes, but not issue-based.

We'd like to take work developed in performance by young people and translate it into professional theatre for young people. In 1993 Pippa 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 adapt for a smaller 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 Program is unique. It's funded by Arts Victoria and the Literature Board of the Australia Council. It really started hitting its straps last year with *Book Gigs* (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, performers, 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.

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 prosecutors 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 impro skills to act as witnesses, to think on their feet. We trialled it, it worked and there's a lot of excitement about the theatricality of the courtroom.

RT *What about Black Mantle 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

**YOUTH:** *yóoth, n. state of being young; early life; a time when you learn to make decisions for yourself; bursting with raw energy and enthusiasm; cannot remember the moon landing; between the ages of 5 and 25; a time to experiment and explore; a generally uninhibited state of being.*

**aARTS:** *áirts, 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 inspiration; not always explainable or understood; expressing opinions, thoughts, experiences, and emotions for others to interpret; experimentation and exploration; celebration of human emotion and spirit.*

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# 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's time 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 *Bran Nue Dae*.

**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 family orientated, 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 up north. The Kimberleys for me is my cocoon. I go back and I 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 people 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 wiser. 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 feel guilty.

I mean it's only now that people are starting to listen to Aboriginal people. Nobody really gave us the time of the day before.



All I'm saying is just listen. I've got something to say, that is part of Australian history. Mine is just one story, just one story in the whole of Australia, and there's a lot of us out there.

**GV** *Would you like to say a bit about how the play came about?*

**NL** Well I've known Angela (Angela Chaplin, Artistic Director of Deckchair

Theatre, Fremantle) for quite a few years now, and I've done a production with her before called *My Spiritual Dreaming*. Every time we had parties and stuff at Angela's place, I did standup comedy and I just tell stories anyway. That's what I do naturally at home, and all my cousins and all my brothers, we just, you know, we're just full of stories and my stories are different because they're Aboriginal stories. Angela found them really interesting. And she thought "this should be a show", so we talked about it, we spoke heaps and we sort of collaborated over the years.

So yeah it was a long time in the talking phase I suppose, until this year when it became a reality. Angela came up and said

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 to just go out now. You look at people's biographies, people are doing biographies of when they're really old, and I've got more information in me now, I'd rather give it out now. When I get older, I can go back and add things of course!

These are not my stories, they are mine through my eyes, what I saw through my eyes, but they are the stories of all 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 where everybody 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. This is really skillful, going from high English to pidgin English to Walmajari and back again. That's a real achievement. I don't know too 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 then and there at such a young age?"

I feel so passionate 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 Becket Theatre, Melbourne; June 17 Berlin; July 7 Bonn; Aug 15- Sept 5 Edinburgh.*

## P I C A

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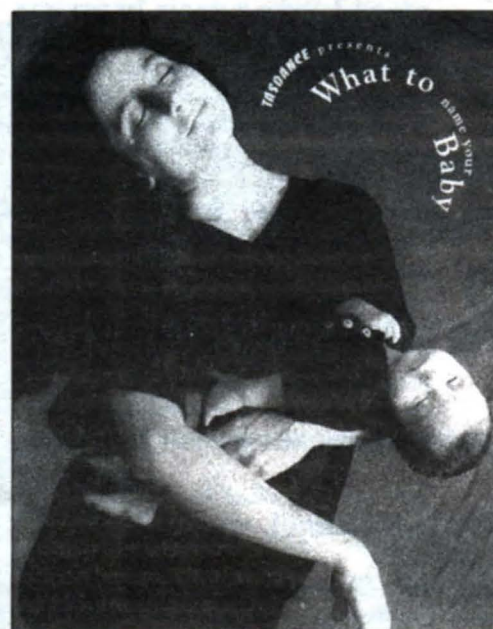
Artists from Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines in *Torque* for **ARX 4**, exhibiting until April 16; *Performance Art by Geoffrey Schmidt* April 12 & 13 at 8pm; Yirra Yaakin **Aboriginal Youth Theatre** perform *The Bird* April 6 - 8, Contemporary OPERA, *Giles is that You?* Fairweather Productions April 27 - May 21; *Border Crossings*; 22 *Austrian Artists*, sees work from contemporary Austrian artists from the Arts Association Maerz, exhibiting, April 27 - May 21; EVOS Music presents, percussionist Gary France May 15 - 21, *Kali Digambari*, Rakini & the Kalika Dance Company May 24 - June 4, *Hatched: National Graduate Show '95*, survey's recent graduates from tertiary degree institutions around Australia, June 1 - 25; proposals for PICA's **festival of new performance**, *Putting on an Act*, close Friday May 12, 1995.

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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.*

AW 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 workshopping 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's 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 he collapses. 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 resisted 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 Stanislavskian?" I thought what the hell

does he mean? What he meant, he said, was that in using the Stanislavsky method, ie. emotional truth etc., you would become the eagle, whereas with Brechtian techniques you would play against the meaning. So, 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.

AW 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.

AW 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 walks', 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 starkness.


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 Thi Minh Ngoc 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 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.

AW 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 mime company was in decline and that this production must "save the pantomime in Vietnam" (with a three and a half week 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-March he returned to Vietnam with Vietnamese/Australian actor Duy Binh Ta (Entr'acte, Jigsaw) 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 this year's first Sydney Fringe Festival, a group of children and artists including Sue Pedley, Virginia Hilyard, Nigel Helyer, Michael Keighery, Nella Justo, John Hughes, Annabel Nowlan, 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, to dig 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

KG How long have you been writing?

MF When I was in second class in primary school, I was writing, performing, producing and doing publicity. 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 that all the time because it takes me a while to accumulate the life experience that I need to work from.

I'm 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?

MF 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 I work well if I write for myself a 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 workshoping in Sydney. We all thought we were a marvellous creative team. We worked very much from where Kerry's at now which is a lot of psychic, developmental work and lots of visualisation and working from the spirit realm.

KG Another way of writing rather than just hoping for inspiration?

MF 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.

KG So did you work from meditation?

MF Relaxation and grounding and energy work with shakras and light and dancing, drawing and basically work on encouraging the mind to stop controlling. I had a whole lot of characters that I already wanted to be in the play. Sometimes we worked with them and sometimes we worked with what was behind them. They were pretty fascinating, for example a tantric sex goddess and the female face of god! It's about being in the desert. It's about a mid-life crisis and betrayal by women and the search for meaning. The big questions. What Kerry got us to do was to find other people who were in this mythical desert of the soul - the existential one.

KG Like Christ in the Wilderness?

MF Rose kept meeting Jesus because she's Catholic but, of course, I never did because I'm 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 written. 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 like Kerry who also works with Sue Ingelton on something that's marvellously huge, poetic and discursive, Passion and its deep connection with lemon delicious pudding for *Playbox*.

MF I've always worked for a popular audience and never thought that a popular audience couldn't handle whatever I wanted them to handle. It has influenced the form of my work because the

Vitalstatistix audience is not the same as an inner city audience at, say, The 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?

MF 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?

MF 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.

MF Yes. That was my entrance into theatre for adults only. I'd had enough of performing for such a broad range of people and 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?

MF In 1984.

KG What made you decide to stay in Adelaide?

MF 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.

MF As happens after mental breakdowns, when I got 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 a lot to do with the toilets I suppose: *Ida Rosenblatt Gets Her Shit Together*. It was about me getting myself together but it was also completely about shit.

KG Did you perform it?

MF I performed it. It was a success. I was being a labourer in the day and a performer at night. I'd 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 ideas. 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?

MF In an old Holden factory in Port Adelaide that eventually burned down. It was a great theatrical fire. We were moving out at the time and it burned down that night. We saved all the grant applications. Then we moved into a place called Waterside that I love passionately. It's a huge space. The old Waterside Workers Hall in Port Adelaide. We moved there because there were cheap warehouses but also because I've never felt more at home anywhere. So I live there and work there. It's got a very working class, gutsy, on the edge, slightly illegal, rebellious history. I fitted in quite well. Vitalstatistix has fitted in well. We've worked a lot with the community and people were very surprised because it is a working class area and with that can come some conservatism.

KG And you are a provocative company?

MF We are but all of us have had a personal interest in working with where we are and people we're around and working class people so we wrote a history of the

building from the perspective of the women's committee involved in the Waterside Workers. That epic was performed in the building: *A Trip to the Light Fantastic*. Roxxy Bent wrote it.

*A Touchy Subject* and *Weighing It Up* were our first two plays. Early on in the company we were asking women what were the issues important to them and at the time they were dieting and body image. People are still writing about that one. So we wrote and toured but also very early on we did in-theatre shows. Roxxy wrote a thriller *Stitch in Time*. So we were developing this ability to do a number of things.

KG What about your own writing?

MF I co-wrote *Weighing it Up* and then I wrote one on sexual harassment to be performed in workplaces. It was a comedy. It's now a video and a book and sexual harassment continues to be a problem. Then I wrote *Home Sweet Home* in 1987 with Teresa Crea from Doppio Teatro. Then Ollie and I pursued our own writing and performance in the company and in 1988 we wrote the zany *Fabulous Apron Fashion Parade*. After that I got into producing.

KG So you pulled back from writing for four or five years?

MF Yes. I found producing incredibly thrilling, also raising money and hustling and bringing creative teams together. We've worked with Christina Totos, Andrea Lemon, Rosalba, Tobsha and produced *Erotix*, *Personals*, *Yellow Roses*, *Miracle*, *Rose Above The Odds* and *The Waters of Pham Thi Lan* between 1991 and 1994. We also produced Winter Play Readings. Like Playworks does, but the South Australian version. I also got into producing Aboriginal festivals annually because we wanted to work with Aboriginal people as a women's company. We won a Tourism Award. It's grown now to include theatre, music, visual arts, youth stuff. Now there's an Aboriginal company, the Indigenous Performing Arts Coalition, formed from the people I worked with and so now we don't need to produce them.

KG What's the future of Vitalstatistix?

MF We're looking at being a production company for other women's work, asking women theatre workers in South Australia and nationally for projects that they feel passionately about and then selecting some and 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 - Catherine Fitzgerald and Eva Johnson are working together and Pat Rix 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?

MF Ollie left four years ago. Roxxy is now exploring film and TV. It's a broader team now. We've got a solid base in producing. Now I'll be able to do my work.

KG You have to give yourself space.

MF 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 ... so I just want to concentrate on my own creativity for a while.

Four of Vitalstatistix' plays have been published - *Weighing It Up*, *A Touchy Subject* in one volume and *Waiting For Annette* and *A Trip To The Light Fantastic* in an anthology of SA women playwrights both published by *Tantrum Press*. Vitalstatistix can be contacted at PO Box 459 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, charges of appropriation and exploitation abound, while the long engagement both ways in music seems, at least on the surface, less troubled. In *Orientalia*, the creation of Sally Sussman at Sydney's The Performance Space, André Greenwall'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 perpetrate it: a kung fu sequence is funny, but nothing else, excerpts from traditional (*The King Farewells 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 - 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 Brecht (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 at all a narrative, about gender and orientalism, has Brecht and Mei Lanfang mirroring with surprise each other's movements as if suiciding. 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 cliché 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 Zhijun 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 critics. Xu Fengshan/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. RT



Katia Molina and Xu Fengshan

Heidrun Löhr



Andrea Aloise and Nigel Kellaway

Heidrun Löhr

## 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 Lantern*, "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 Maoist nostalgia in China, but I am struck by the irony that the "eight model works" of Jiang Qing must seem almost as esoteric 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 murderously 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 dreamed of for *On the Docks* 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* also 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 consume ideology as product and product as ideology". I don't believe this sentence 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 consumerism might suggest. But the great success of Pledger and his company, as far as I am concerned, is based on something simple enough in conception but elusive in portrayal - the link between the linguistic and physical violence; in some ways the very heart of the Cultural Revolution itself, and perhaps all fanaticism. There was a particular moment in this sharp and powerful production when I got the point. As the revolutionaries advanced on the enemy (the audience) they were suddenly transformed from People's Liberation Army fighters into members of the Victoria Police, chanting "Move! Move! Move!" as they did in the Richmond Girls' High demonstration, and one member of our audience was so affected by this as to assume a tight little ball of demonstrator tissue and refuse to move. As David Pledger told me later, this kind of interaction is terrific for making the performers think about what they're doing, but you can only hope it doesn't "backfire".

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 its 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)*.

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# Animal Acts

Keith Gallasch interviews  
Grahame Gavin, artistic director  
of Perth's Barking Gecko

On May 10 Barking Gecko are presenting the keynote performance, *Ivory Circle*, to open the 30th Anniversary of ASSITEJ, 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 on-going body of work?

GG It is for me. I find human relationships with animals engaging and theatrically 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 their 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 us to move in, less of our company creating our own 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 Woolly Jumpers in Geelong was a play called *This 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 deified. 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



Di Jeffries in original production of *Ivory Circle*

Chris Ha

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-dramaturg, and *Visiting Relatives* 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 McCaughey directed *Dolphin Play*. I was a student and fascinated by it. One of its stories is in our play. They used a contemporary dance approach with Nannette Hassell choreographing. We've taken some of that using a mixture of modern dance movement and gymnastics. In *Visiting the Relatives*, knowing that humans and

youngest, where children can think about issues that are complex, though I've never thought of our work as issue-based. But most theatre is - *Bran Nue Dae* is a very issue-based play. It is important to show young people that theatre is an avenue for making observations and statements about the 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 Yes, 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 changed and it's been allowed to and I think that's quite unusual.

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

GG The preoccupation is still with the well-made play. It's quite destructive and limiting. I love being in a situation where process is seen as long term. You might get a production up to performance but it can still 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. Janis O'Hanlon is now artistic director of the Unley 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.

Tour: 10-11 April, Araluen Performing Arts Centre, Alice Springs; 20-21 April, Mt Isa Civic Centre; 27-28 April, Darwin Performing Arts Centre;

8-13 May, Seattle Children's Festival; 17-20 May, Pittsburgh Children's Festival; 24-28 May, Philadelphia Children's Festival; 1-4 June, Vancouver Children's Festival.

# Speaking of Voices

RT speaks to Isobel 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 otolaryngology, singing, speech pathology, voice science and voice teaching. Themes include the physiology and acoustics of voice, voice problems of professional voice users, performance enhancement, emotions and voice. The symposium should be of interest to actors, otolaryngologists, singers, speech pathologists, teachers of singing and voice and voice scientists. Isobel Kirk who set up the first fully accredited Voice Training Course at NIDA is one of the organisers.

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 Linklater (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 Linklater will speak at the plenary session on Friday May 19 on Emotion and Voice.

RT So have you successfully broken through the science/art division?

IK Our aim is 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 Aerobic Instructor's Hoarseness*, *The Neglected Voice of the Classroom Teacher*, *Performance Effects: Ten Choral Tenors*. There are papers on the voice characteristics of Australians of Anglo, Greek and Italian origin, the changing voices of girls, asthmatics, and the erotics of the female voice as experienced through opera and contemporary performance practice, spectral difference in boy and women soprano 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 otolaryngologist 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 Ingo Titze 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 amateurs or out-of-work actors. Years ago, 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 Kristen Linklater and Jo Estill. As I needed to know more about the physiology of the voice, I sought out courses in Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, Neurolinguistics, Anatomy, 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 Linklater will give a number of masterclasses as part of the NIDA Open Program. Call Amanda Morris (02) 697 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** A drummer.

Drummers and their instruments have always been at the intersection of the exotic, of noise and the 'non-musical' as it 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 marched across the Balkans and into 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 praised as exotic and surprising; Dionysian. Even today cymbals bare the trademark of the Turkish family Zildjian and orchestral tympani are variants on those carried on horseback by the Sultan's armies.

In African-American tradition, percussion was domesticated to become 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 Fordist 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 film; like stand-up comics these people had timing.

Like dancers, drummers use their whole body as a technology, long before naive notions of the extended body or the cyberbody. Witness the long line of drummers at R.S.I. clinics. Drummer Tony Buck has collaborated with dancer Melissa Lovric, a member of the Butoh group Dairakudakan. In their performances Lovric could fire off Buck's equipment, circumventing the musician's interference, intervening and subverting his playing, whether kicking the shit out of a giant red heart suspended and spotlight centre-stage, triggering 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 Yoshihide Otomo and Hideko Kato. These three musicians plus guitarist Michael Sheridan became the core of the band Peril, touring Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, China and Europe with Einstuerzende 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, paralleling his obsession with popular Hong Kong 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 Kinselas 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 erased by a delicate percussion solo, à la free jazz, then by jerking 2/4 speed metal tempos, heavy funk grooves, musique concrète collages and fractured swing, generated by sequences, samples, drum machines, digital delays and live drums. Like Ikue Mori, 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 push 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 dizzily 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 STIEM 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 Pearce

1995 is a busy year for composer Ion Pearce. 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 Pearce'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 Pearce's self-made music-machines, movement artists, sound installation and sculpture. All these elements, both human and mechanical, are parts of an assemblage devoted to the overall production of sound.

In several ways, these works represent a culmination of Pearce's practice 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. Pearce has been building his own sound machines for six years, with a distinction between 'instrument-machines' and 'sound objects'.

"An 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?

"In 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 speakers."

Why did he start making machines?

"I'd been involved in composition and classical music, but the classical music I was brought up on made no sense to me, so I had to find my own language. I got to a point where I needed to start again, from scratch. It's as simple as that. I went into a studio and started building sound objects out of wood and found objects. In some ways it's an attempt to construct my own palette of sounds and shapes, instruments to work with."

Pearce describes his relation to music and composition as "perverse". His machines have perverse echoes of his classical education, often reflecting the clash between conventional instruments and his own compositional demands. His composition *The Strange Machine*, released on ABC-FM's The Listening Room CD, *Beta*, uses all the machines he had built to that point, and is a good introduction to his composition style.

The Performance Space residency, which culminates in a public showing of the work in progress on April 30, is a return to Pearce's group performances of the past. "When I started using my instruments, I worked with small groups of people in Sydney at small venues and events. It's where I came from originally, playing in small groups or orchestras. Now I have a desire to return to that sort of dynamic".

The participants in the April residency are movement artist Helen Clark-Lapin, and sound artists Rose Ertler, Sophea Lerner and Stefan Markworth. Pearce hopes to develop performance technique within an ensemble, including the use of his machines. All this will in turn culminate in *Practice*, a performance/installation scheduled for August at The Performance Space. Again involving choreography and movement by Clark-Lapin, as well as sculpture, film and digital technologies, this promises to be a complex exploration of body/machine/ sound production.

This should be enough for one year - but Pearce has another ambition: to take

the whole thing on the road. "My principal aim has been to establish a loose network of sound artists who can work together, and hopefully take the work on tour." He admits that it's more

a dream than an ambition at the moment: but if it were realised, it would be a remarkable tour. A country town may never be the same again after *The Strange Machine* tour passes through.

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# 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 Sculthorpe'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 - go'fer, 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 Bakopoulos.

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 Cran. 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 orchestral 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. There 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 *Hebrides Overture*, the *Four Sea Interludes* from Peter Grimes and, with the choirs, the Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, conducted by Graham Abbott. It was terrific, but again the audience was small because Charles Mackerras and the SSO had preceded them with *Carmina Burana* and a big audience.

RT *The SYO program features the four Sun Music pieces and Anne Boyd's Symphony No 1.*

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 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've been screaming for Mahler for a long time. The only one we've done before was No 5 conducted by Stuart Challendar 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, soon Smetana's *Mavlast*.

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.

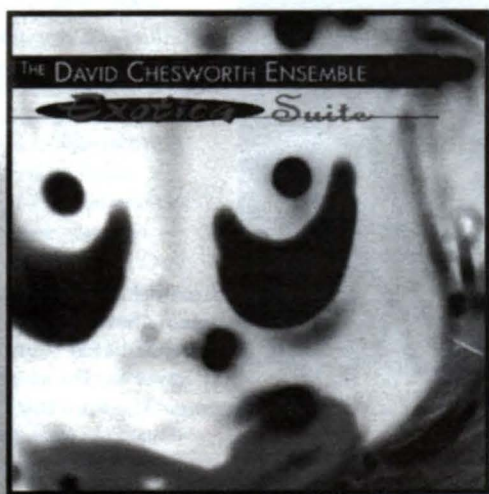
Not all our players want to pursue a professional career in music but we do serve as a training ground for players performing with all the major Australian orchestras as well as overseas ensembles.

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, Sculthorpe's Sun Music II and Holst's The Planets.*

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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 mildly schizophrenic about it." These words of assurance came from amongst the cosy chaos of Belinda Webster's office near Rozelle Bay, headquarters of the Tall Poppies recording company, and distribution site for some of the most challenging and sinewy contemporary music being produced locally. A recent recording with Riley Lee in the (temporarily empty!) Centennial Park water reservoir highlights the spectrum of a catalogue 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 musical experience will be a good one."

After all, sound projects like Rik Rue's *Ocean Flows*, Ross Bolleter's *The Country of Here Below* or AustralYSIS 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 radiophonic work for a long time. I think in the future there will be a much bigger audience for this kind of work 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."

"For me, 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 record 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 five 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 by 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 doesn't seem to be that great challenge to extend 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. There 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 different."

Governments and funding bodies are fond of urging a sense of national or cultural crisis to restrict rather than open up cultural economies. 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 develop that vision and take it somewhere. And those are the things that are going to change our culture and take it in new directions. Whether you think it's good or bad, that doesn't really matter, because at least the culture is changing and moving and not staying static and I think at the moment it's pretty static."

# Working the Instruments

Composer David Chesworth discusses his new ensemble with M. Billsson

David Chesworth's *Exotica Suite*, released by Warner Classics in March, has elements in the music that suggest Michael Nyman, as well as Steve Reich, Bill Frisell and Philip Glass. But *Exotica Suite* bears all the hallmarks of Chesworth's previous work, which he probably best defined a dozen years ago when he was still performing in the experimental, Melbourne-based "pop-funk" group, Essendon Airport, explaining the title of their 1982 album, *Palimpsest* (Innocent Records): "The word has been used recently for a certain perception of cultural production within history and culture. It is also a metaphor for the way any sort of music or artistic form can't disown its history, so that using a form at a particular point in its history, its prior uses will always be under scrutiny."

Not that Chesworth hasn't tried very hard to "disown" those "histories" imposed upon music, just as he has tried to bring new ideas and sounds to what he has perceived as very rigid approaches to music within performance and music theatre.

Chesworth completed his first chamber opera, *Insatiable*, in 1986, subsequently recorded by the ABC and filmed for television. In 1989, he collaborated with Helen Noonan and Douglas Horton on *Recital*, for Chamber Made Opera, going on to write two further pieces for them - *Lacuna* and *The Two Executioners*.

Both the Ensemble and the *Exotica Suite* were born, in a way, out of the second work Chesworth wrote for Chamber Made, *Lacuna*.

In this piece, he utilised a five-piece ensemble and it was the players in that ensemble who prompted him to pursue writing for that format. "When I write, I don't normally write for the concert hall. I do a lot of things that 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 Ceutoros 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 McAll on piano and keyboards; trombone player Simon Myers; vibes and marimba player Xenia Hanusiak; 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 gesture attached to them. I've got cello, violin, trombone and two percussionists and they've all got to make big, sweeping motions with the arms in order to make music. That was the thing that most struck me about Michael Nyman'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 pushing a few buttons on a keyboard. I've worked in a number of electronic groups and I feel the connection between the musician and the instrument has been lost in much of it. With all the instruments I've chosen, you really have to

put your back into playing them.

"One of the things I'm interested in is what more a musical performance can give you, what more an audience can get from seeing something physically played on stage. That whole interaction between performer and audience is something I want to explore. So it was the performative aspects of the instruments in which I was interested, as much as in the sounds."

"*Exotica Suite*", he says, "actually owes much of its genesis to the first record I ever put out, *50 Synthesiser Greats*, back in 1979. I thought I'd go back to where I started - these were pretty innocent pieces of music really, simple melodies - and strip them back to the melodies and build them up from there, reworking them. I may have been influenced by the minimalists but I do have this quirky melodic style of my own which I must admit I'd tended to suppress quite a bit recently. Writing the *Exotica Suite* removed all that."

*Exotica Suite* CD launch with performance at 9pm on April 20 at 9pm, at the Continental, Greville Street, Prahran.

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# 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 synthesisers. 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 horn and hautboy, to mix with the strings and the synthesiser."

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.

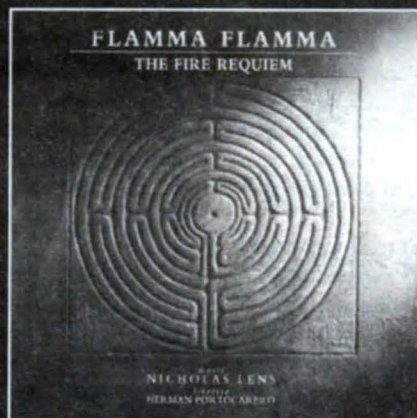
"I think people are becoming a little tired of listening all the time to the music of the pop charts, so I think they are interested in listening to all the new kinds of things that appear. I have already five new songs and I think they came in the line of *Ave Mundi Luminar* so I think what I will do 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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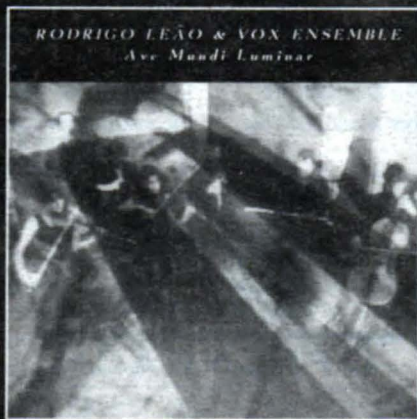
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# Enchanted

James Compton on devotional music at WOMADelaide

For those who can understand the poetry and lyricism of devotional music, listening is undoubtedly a religious experience. Songs which invoke that feeling of eternity rendered in an alien tongue, however, can also have an effect which approaches what is best described as spiritually uplifting. At WOMADelaide this year, two such examples were on offer: the ethereal Tibetan song of Yungchen Lhamo, and the more widely known music of the Sufis, as purveyed by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

The Tibetan holy man who named Yungchen Lhamo had an eye for the future. Translated into English, her name means goddess of melody and song, and at 29 years of age, she is realising that prophecy. Not that it took her move to settle in Australia to begin singing, but it is here she is beginning to reach a wide ranging audience. When she stepped onto the stage to close three days of music at WOMADelaide, Lhamo was entrusted with giving the audience their 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 help. Her voice, piercing to the core of the human soul, carried with it a million souls, crying for salvation, compassion and understanding.

"Buddha must have been helping me tonight, I prayed for help," she said afterwards. The audience was left either smiling or crying, not out of happiness or sadness, but more as a universal release. The purity of Yungchen Lhamo's voice did not fail to produce a reaction.

Tibetan singers try to cultivate three main vocal qualities through interaction with their environment: strength, length and smoothness. To practice generating strength, Yungchen Lhamo rehearsed beside a raging river, developing a power that could compete with the sheer volume of the rushing waters. To lengthen her voice, she would go to the mountains or the great plateaus of Tibet, and run her voice around the landforms and through the valleys. And to get the texture of smoothness, she rehearsed beside the salt lakes, to flatten 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 stabilising 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 reworked some of the Tibetan melodies, and believes this has helped to convey her 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 mantra Om Mane Padme Hung just once, your soul will go up and not down," she says.

Unlike Yungchen Lhamo, who says she is quite composed within herself when she performs, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan gets into such a euphoric state he doesn't know who or where he is. Leading his "party" of backing singers in qawwali songs of indefinite length, Nusrat's objective is to praise Allah and the prophet Mohammed. "I don't have a set target before I go on stage," he says. "Sometimes we know what we are going to sing, but we don't know for how long we are going to sing it. I just get ecstatic, 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."

Nusrat's audience ranges from the hordes of fellow Muslims who attend his concerts at Sufi

shrines in Pakistan to private concerts for royalty - but somehow the hypnotic power of the music has enabled him to attract a world wide following. As the party sings in rhythmic cadence, accompanied only by harmonium and tabla, it is easy for the listener to drift off in contemplation heading ideally, towards a higher plane.

As to how he has been able to cross barriers of language and culture, Nusrat defers to the gifts of Allah. If the audience could understand his poetry, 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 not anyone can become a qawwali master. It took Nusrat 27 years of practice to attain his level of vocal control, often practising 18 hours a day. And then there is the understanding of the mystical sect of Islam, the Sufis. "To be a qawwali singer, you have to make yourself a Sufi, to turn yourself into Sufism to become where Nusrat is, the way a Sufi lives, and to put that message across - that's the only way." Although held in high regard for his ability to convey the word of Allah, Nusrat is not a member of the Sufi clergy. "I'm just an ordinary man, don't compare myself with a priest - I have Sufism inside me, and I put that view in front 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 Interactivity Conference, Melbourne 9-11 March 1995

*Task:* Immersion in Conference. *Game Play:* //pick a name-tag identity//descend via labyrinth//brave suit-infested refreshment queues//muse & write amongst highflying ideas//check interactive exhibits//repeat tests of skill throughout. *Skill Count:* Construct a mnemonic for impressions and conclusions.

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*House Rules:* Coat-check technological bias - Interactive Multi Media (IMM) cross storage/delivery formats (eg CD-ROM, multi-user netbased, laser disc). Leave at the door the truism that all books, cinema, TV are passive and linear. *Foyer:* Whilst all media are interactive, "Interactivity" is given as the potential for the user to activate pre-programmed choices and pathways as the work is received. Across the spectrum of IMM are extensions of previous genres, through to work that would not have been produced before computing.

*Library:* Enter this vault of many reference titles, and see publishing evolution. Design conventions and techniques - index, cross-reference, combination text/graphics/photos - are extended into an electronic realm allowing additional media (sound, "movies") and more mobile cross referencing (hypertext links). Interaction is more with content than interface.

On a micro level, narrative as oral history (movies and sound bites) is utilised in the edutainment CD-ROMs by the University of Melbourne/Jewish Museum of Australia (speaker Ricci Swart), and "Angledool Stories" (Karen Flick and Dr Heather Goodall). Beyond these anecdotes are meta-narratives arising from combination with factual information - this use of IMM challenges ideas of history as dominant myth, concretised with a sense of resolution.

At the Museum of Sydney, ethereal characters deliver enticing, bardic "tall tales" (originating in fact) connected by symbolic objects. A field of knowledge is evolved across visits - meta-narrative at the point of exhibition achieves multiplicity of experience (Ross Gibson).

*Rumpus room:* Computer games extend the physiological and sub-cultural aspects of toy soldiers, train sets and adventure role playing games. The context (home, arcade, the net) is a popular commercial one, encompassing swap cards, comics etc. Identification at a psychological level is with the cursor - an iconic function as character (eg soldier) within an appropriate mise-en-scène (mediaeval battlefield) (Jon Collette).

Salient elements of game play and play control - repetition; cause and effect; randomness; gestalt; skill vs time - suggest that narrative is not an appropriate technique nor description. Despite an imperative for end result, games' involvement lies in process rather than storytelling (David Cox).

*Kitchen:* Cook up a Graphical User Interface (GUI)! Chuck out stodgy imported metaphors and mundane iconography and evolve a responsive language between people and computers (Paul Brown). Lots of recipe tips from Fiona Ingram.

*Bedroom:* Styled from movies and novels, multi-strand stories employ characterisation and narrative drive. Screen technique applies - create a compelling virtual geography and employ mise-en-scène to draw the user in and increase the desire to explore, eg., spot-lit telephone has a message from an off-screen character (Mark Morrison).

Currently considered the most acceptable are stories where the user shares the point of view of the main character. Changing points of view via editing and camera coverage are deemed overly distracting and "jumpy", and digitised live action disconcerting. Animation rules! (Ian McFadyen, Rachel Dixon).

However, multiplicity of plot paths and choice will not necessarily result in structural dexterity, profundity, multiple viewpoints and openness or intricacy of meaning (as achieved in certain literature and cinema). That is still dependent on conception and realisation, as in the critically successful and highminded CD-ROM *Cosmology of Kyoto*, (Koichi Mori and Stephen Suloway). The mindset of a shadowy 10th century city is explored through a minimal interface, multiple narratives (the user's "identity" and those of characters and spirits) and factual reference material accessed as footnotes.

*Bats in the Belfry:* In this repository of madness and treasure, we have fine art practice and computer science - extensions of modernist exploration. In the work of artist Linda Dement IMM frames are bodies of information through which the user constructs pathways without being directed. Each frame is a discrete unit, viewable in any order, so that meaning is built up in the navigational process. There is no beginning and no end: logic created between fragments is one of free association and the irrationality of dream, really making the user "work" (Linda Dement).

Links - conscious and/or unconscious - are drawn between elements in a multi-media work and can open up possibilities of interpretation and meaning. Moving freely between segments of IMM is akin to aspects of the unconscious. Brainstorming, rapid linking, lateral jumps, *thinking electronically* - a model for the unconscious manifest in hypermedia, replicated and explored by the hyperlogic of surrealism, dadaism and text/sound cut-ups. While "Communication" suggests an end point to the exchange, hypermedia can be intransitive, all consuming and distracting by its purposelessness (Darren Tofts).

Narrativity, that which is being told by the unconscious to the conscious, exists in a state of contiguity - touching, joining, inextricably bound and merging in the interaction between user and work (Darren Tofts). In this sense the "story" is being told by the artist and the user. The activity is one of meandering - creating whilst following one's own connections, accepting offers, and cheating the repressive subconscious.

While much IMM depends on browsing, the conference raised notions of immersion (cinematic, physiological) - a transporting otherness, abandonment, desire for and giving up of control. (Rachel Dixon, Grahame Weinbren, Linda Dement, Mark Morrison et al). For digital fine art that might mean "the attraction of interactivity: it is intransitive ... all-consuming and self-absorbing." (Darren Tofts)

Worlds of artificial life created by the simulation of natural forms and processes also offer immersion, and exist in "the abstract pluriverse of computational space" (Jon McCormack), a frontier beckoning self-discovery as suggested by molecular and deep space. Utilising darkened theatrical space and touch screen in its exhibition, McCormack's work *Turbulence* shows many unimaginable things. A menagerie of chimeras hiding in the attic - computer animations growing onto surfaces, evolving into life forms recognisable due to a molecular affinity, aiming for an infinity of metamorphosis (McCormack).

*All Around the Garden:* IMM and cyberspace are playing a role in the survival and revival of Indigenous culture and prove that you can have roots and aials. Stories previously existent in oral form can be incorporated into larger, multi-strand works emblematic of the processes of memory/creation/affirmation/dissension (Angledool Stories). Jeff Doring's *The Pathway* is

a work whose branch-like structures are more culturally appropriate than a single, linear narrative, yet will be accessible to those whose education lies outside traditional frameworks.

Remote Aboriginal communities are using cyberspace to confer nationally and internationally, and attend to demands like bail hearings. These sorts of applications, especially in unlettered communities, will contribute to distinct IMM forms and techniques of producing meaning (Djon Mundine).

Discussions of networked evolving environments were interspersed throughout the conference. Many predict that "hard" storage media will soon be replaced by works circulated in cyberspace (Paul Brown). Multi-user interactive realms are well patronised already (MUDs & MOOs), and interacting with many people and a totally open-ended work will further push definitions of narrative and interactivity. The net demonstrates its architectural and mnemonic inheritance, models of consciousness rather than the unconscious. The mapping of cyberspace also reminds us of the usefulness to IMM of architectural and spatial reasoning (Josephine Grieve).

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This second Filmmaker and Multimedia conference has focused on ideas rather than technology. We are reminded that despite the "sexiness" of hard and soft ware, the real slog is conception, realisation, analysis and critique. Intelligence, creativity and application must lie with the maker (Jon McCormack, Rachel Dixon, Paul Brown).

Kate Richards is a videomaker and lecturer. Speakers cited are: Ricci Swart - IMM Producer, Uni of Melbourne & the Jewish Museum of Australia; Karen Flick - Community Historian; Dr Heather Goodall - Senior Lecturer, Uni of Technology Sydney; Ross Gibson - Writer, filmmaker, lecturer Uni of Technology Sydney; David Cox - IMM/game producer and consultant; Mark Morrison - Interactive scriptwriter; Ian McFadyen - Writer, director, producer; Rachel Dixon - Director of New Media, Film Australia; Koichi Mori - Production Director, Soft Edge Inc; Stephen Suloway - CD-ROM Development Staff, Soft Edge Inc; Linda Dement - IMM Artist, lecturer in Digital Imaging CoFA UNSW; Darren Tofts - Critic, lecturer Swinburne Uni of Technology; Grahame Weinbren - Interactive cinema pioneer; Jon McCormack - Computer animation artist; Jeff Doring - Artist and director; Djon Mundine - Art Advisor, Ramminging NT; Paul Brown - Editor Fine Art Forum Griffith University; Fiona Ingram - Senior Consultant, The Hiser Consulting Group.



# Multimediocrity?

RT suffers the first Creative Nation Multimedia Forum in Sydney

Multimedia Forum One—"Government Support for a Creative Nation"—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 arcana of corporate doublespeak). Heale advocated "harnessing the opportunities created by the new technologies to grow our own industry" based on the production of domestically and internationally saleable content. We must steer clear, he helpfully cautioned, of "multimediocrity" and "multimundanity". His glowing reference 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. Tellingly, Heale warned of the "susceptibility" of the industry to "market intervention" by big government, which he believes can "distort the IMM marketplace and retard its development". Paradoxically, he simultaneously applauded the proposed 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 need to focus on 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 might be effected.

Gwen Andrews from the Department of Communications and the Arts reported that the Australian Multimedia Enterprise—a Commonwealth owned organisation allocated \$45 million under *Creative Nation*—will fund, through one off grants of between \$200,000 and \$700,000, "state of the art", "world class" interactive titles

which demonstrate significant "innovation" and "creativity". Title development kicks off with the Australia on CD program designed to showcase Australian cultural endeavour by developing 10 CD-ROMs that focus on national cultural institutions. The Department of Communications and the Arts is currently calling for applications for funding under this scheme.

The AFC and the AFTRS are also winners in the world of *Creative Nation*. Jason Wheatley outlined the AFTRS' plans for its \$950,000 over 4 years allocated to fund the establishment of a multimedia laboratory and to extend the AFTRS' advanced professional training in multimedia related areas. Michael Ward reported on the AFC's \$5.25 million over four years for developmental multimedia projects. The overall objective of the new AFC funding is to encourage initiatives which explore the creative potential of multimedia. The Commission will be targeting arts and entertainment in the form of interactive movie projects, computer game development and artists' projects.

Ian Creagh from Department of Employment, Education and Training outlined the Cooperative Multimedia Centres (CMCs) program which has been allocated \$56.5 (\$20.3 million over the first four years) for the establishment of up to six CMCs around the country. The primary aim of the Centres—which will be operational by mid 1995—is to "facilitate the formation of the skills required to meet the needs of the emerging interactive multimedia industry". Trouble is, it seems little thought has gone into developing a cogent picture of exactly what skills are required and who should have access to the training. How, moreover, are existing cultural producers—visual and electronic artists, designers, filmmakers, performers, scriptwriters—going to access the

prospective cornucopia of training and industry development opportunities? How will their involvement, and their access to the brave new technologies of the information revolution, be ensured? Will the energies of the new techno-bohemians whose creation the CMCs will 'facilitate' be directed totally to, in the words of one conference delegate, "turning a buck", or will there also be space for research, experimentation and a critical engagement with the formal and aesthetic properties of the medium?

Interestingly, the sole presentation by an artist—Tom Ellard of Severed Heads—elicited the most enthusiastic crowd response. Ellard demonstrated the CD-ROM *Metapus* which documents the band's recording and performance history. His advocacy for the key role of musicians, i.e., artists, in the development of interactive multimedia in this country set in sharp relief the almost total absence of any engagement, on the part of the apparatchiks of the state and business, with the question of the involvement of individual creators. The only other moment in the day which drew a comparable response was Michael Lee's collective *mea culpa* about the disgraceful treatment of the artist-architect Jorn Utzon by the myopic and philistine bureaucracy of the 1960s. Perhaps there's a message there for the incumbent engineers of the 'multimedia platform' of the putatively creative nation. Stay tuned for further forums—the next series, on cultural creators, may hopefully address the key factor largely omitted from the first series. RT

*Information on future forums is available from the Department of Communications and the Arts, tel: 1800 065 754 fax: (06) 279 1079. The forum series will travel to Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra.*

## 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 Arx4 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 walk on them. 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-lined pools full of water. The light is muted and has 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 Barrass, from Melbourne, has used a series of bungees 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 periphery of vision. It has a light and gentle presence that plays with the notion of networks and transforms the feel of the

space scaling it down to more human proportions. Perth artist Carmelo Corvaia has used natural materials she gathered from 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 behind as they



Carmelo Corvaia

Robert Frith

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 which she has 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.

Moelyono, 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

damned to provide water for the industrial district 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 wire netting.

The paintings of H J Wedge, Wiradjuri Australia, 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.

The Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts presents

# Hatched

The National Graduate Show '95  
 exhibiting: June 1 - 25  
 a survey of recent graduates from tertiary degree institutions around Australia

Forum program: June 24 & 25

for more information or registration form contact PICA on 09 227 6144

PICA's ongoing programs are primarily supported by an investment from the State WA through the Department for the Arts, assistance from the Australian Council, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body and sponsorship by Healthway to promote Family Planning's Play It Safe message.



# adelaide festival 96 competition

## "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 RAI  
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 are to be camera ready for reproduction in journals.

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 1995 until the closing date on Friday September 22 1995

ADELAIDE 96 FESTIVAL





## 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 three smaller exhibition spaces, 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-profit, 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 it?*  
 AR We're going into three full-time and two part-time plus occasional project coordinators. Subi Mead is the general manager. I'm projects 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, visited by the Sydney and 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 directors Karen Pearlman and Richard Allen. A couple of amateur companies also work here. We're developing an interstate profile and have a good relationship with Performing Lines who have been bringing shows here for the last four or five years. This year they're bringing William Yang's *Sadness*, last year we had Handspan's *Viva La Vida*, before that Sarah Cathcart's *Walking on Sticks*, and the Melbourne Workers Theatre's *Daily Grind*. In the instance of *Sadness* the centre is presenting that in association with Performing Lines - they're landing it here, but 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 subsidy 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 from Geelong have a grant to come here. We're not involved financially but we provide some infrastructure through our general promotions ... and, of course, theatre is just one area we try to cover. The theatre is well-used each year and is heavily booked May to February. Similarly the Long Gallery is solidly booked.

RT *Is the emphasis on Tasmanian artists with occasional interstate showings?*

AR Again we don't program the space. We have an arrangement with CAST for 12-14 weeks of the year and they present contemporary art ... that's our way of supporting that area of the visual arts. There are a variety of groups like the women's art group who have a booking each year, the art school and the university union use it quite a lot. It's a high profile area with 100 to 120 a day, sometimes as many as a thousand passing through ...

RT *Accentuated by tourism?*

AR And Salamanca Place is busy, a centre for the community ... and prime real estate. We're in a very fortunate position.

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 blacked out, installations can be built - we're not precious about the space. The art school produces good young artists and this is one of the few places accessible to them. 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 time the centre's been involved, and the University of Tasmania - so it was jointly presented by three organisations. It has a strong reputation as one of the leading literary festivals in the country but the broadening out of the organising body expanded the program and its appeal with a lot of other events - a fringe, a readers' and writers' fair in the Long Gallery, a young readers' and writers' day (hopefully two days next year), and workshops in the Side Space. So the festival has come back into the Centre where it had grown from. We've collected statistics: the core audience of the past was around 200, this year a 1000 people were attracted to it.

RT *Any multimedia developments?*

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

RT *What about the future?*

AR We aim to maintain our independence, given the commercialisation of Salamanca Place, keeping it as a space for artists and a community resource.

## The Sculpted City

Martyn Jolly previews the Canberra National Sculpture Forum

Virtually all of the ACT is involved, in one way or another, with the Canberra National Sculpture Forum 1995. Canberra's four artist run spaces, its seven commercial galleries, and its eight publicly funded galleries, as well as nearly all of its national institutions and ceremonial public places, are either exhibiting work or hosting performances, talks, panels, films, and related events.

Initiated by a group of Canberra artists who still nurture fond memories of the old Mildura Sculpturescapes and Canberra performance ACTs, the Sculpture Forum is ecumenical, 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, about half of its 30 or so projects are by artists outside the region. Many of the 200 or so interstate and local artists who submitted proposals responded to the symbolically charged environment of Canberra, as a result most of the more interesting projects are politically pointed, site specific installations which have ended up taking the Forum beyond its initial conception.

After Adelaide Installations, the last Melbourne Sculpture Triennial, and numerous other recent public art festivals, the jaded amongst us might regard site specific installation events as a flavour of the month which has long since lost its flavour. But in Canberra there are the symbolic, civic, topographical and architectural specifics of our nation's capital to give a unifying edge to all of the site specific works. Everything in Canberra is already framed and elevated: the green swards visible for kilometres from approaching avenues, the modernist buildings and monuments spotlighted against the crystalline night sky of the bush, the surrounding hills that form the axis points of Burley Griffin's sublime geometry, and the centripetal inertia of the circular sweeps of its deciduous tree-lined streets, are all just waiting for sculptural intervention.

Is it any wonder that few artists could resist a larrikin intervention into what they clearly perceive to be our national hubris? Most of the site specific work is located within the symbolically hot parliamentary triangle. Ingo Kleinert has set a pack of 400 cattle dogs, cut out of tin, roaming across the perfect lawn which covers Parliament House. Fiona Hooton has constructed gigantic simulacra of the Parthenon's columns out of hay bales beside the Lake. Constantine Nicholas has carved a huge crown into the lawn behind old Parliament House, Brad Buckley has placed a text about a slaughterhouse on the floor of the High Court, and Paul Quinn and Alison Weaver have dragged a scruffy caravan, called the *Museum of Modern Filth*, all the way up from Melbourne to be parked at various locations around Canberra's pretty streets.

Other artists have more subtly intervened in Canberra's already overdetermined sites and over inscribed vistas. Gail McDermott, Jennifer Turpin and Peter Tonkin (who has previously collaborated with artists on the design of the Vietnam War Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier) have drawn attention to the largely forgotten and ignored 'water axis' in Canberra's original plan with the help of large wooden markers, visible from the lookouts which surround the lake. Anne Graham has placed one of her elegant tent installations slap-dab in the middle of the most prominent and aggressive of Canberra's

axes — the line from Mount Ainslie, through the War Memorial, down Anzac Parade, to Parliament House. *Politique*, a group of six women artists, have gone even subtler: Anne Brennan has drawn with an mnemonic line of text on a school room wall, Kate Brennan has installed a text piece in a grungey, same sex, Canberra School of Art toilet, Tess Horwitz has produced posters about the invisibility of women with prams and the countless micro-obstacles they face in Canberra's 'Civic', and Tanya Eccleston has used a white line marker to draw on a sports field.

The Forum is more than just site specific installation, however. The National Gallery of Australia has curated a major exhibition of works related to performance from its collection. *Performed* will include Mike Kelly, Mike Parr, Dale Frank, Cheryl Donegan, and others. At the Canberra Contemporary Art Space the local Ngannawal people and others worked with the Sydney artist Gordon Hookey to create an installation which discusses the significance of the Molonglo River (dammed to form the lake) for the Ngannawal, and through them and their hosting of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, for all Aboriginal people.

One of the highlights of the Forum is the new Lyndal Jones performance/installation *Sexual Play in the Galapagos Islands*. As the second part of *From the Darwin Translations*, and following on from *Room with Finches* which was exhibited in Adelaide and Melbourne, the work continues to wittily contrast the sexual imperative in the animal and human worlds. As an artist in residence at the Canberra School of Art Jones was able to utilise the perpetual sexual current that runs through every art school. It is the erotics of place which informs this work.

In the middle of the cavernous Canberra School of Art Gallery two adjoining domestically scaled rooms have been built. In one room videos which Jones shot on the Galapagos Islands are shown. Tortoises, sea lions and iguanas are videoed with a hand-held camera going about their business, no slick Attenborough-style narrativisation 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.

As we look at these videos the sound from the adjoining room leaks into the space. Different human voices in different languages are telling stories of erotic liaisons and sexual acts. In that room there is only a tape recorder and a couch covered with an animal skin. Students and staff have been enlisted to tell the stories into the tape recorder. Amongst animals sex is blind but leads to random change and gradual adaptation. Amongst humans it is bound up with neurosis, trauma, story and love. Around the exterior walls of both rooms Jones has written "...and over and over and over and over and over...". At the opening of the installation a performance took place amongst the guests as couples drawn from the art school community embraced and kissed each other, completing the circuit back to Darwin's Galapagos Islands.

Canberra National Sculpture Forum 1995  
 1-30 April.  
 Martyn Jolly is a Canberra-based writer and visual arts lecturer.

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# Textual Manoeuvres

Rex Butler on art criticism

After some passionate responses to Shaun Davies' article on 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 visibility 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 Artspace. It led to an interesting exchange between that show and a show curated by Ian Burn at Ivan Dougherty Gallery entitled *Looking at Seeing and Reading* in which Ian Burn argued that there was still something at stake in looking at a work of art, that the primary argument of a work of art is visual not textual, that the object in a sense theorises itself. I would not deny the possibility 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 the way it perhaps was in the 1960's, but about visibility. A piece like A.D.S. Donaldson's *Banal Painting*, which Burn discussed in a paper presented at the forum for the *Banal Art* show is not simply to be read in the way Burn does, 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 and Australia*, Vol. 32, No. 2 Summer 1994). *Banal Art* was not about a new "banal" style in art, nor even really about the issues Burn raises. 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 *Popism* show) and the iconic *resemblance* between the copy and the original (Edward Colless' *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 not a matter of trying to halt its passage into this quotationality or second degree, 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 internal logic (to an art which is no longer made with an eye to critical judgement, quality etc., one 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 Ricochets* (*Eyeline 19*, 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 Ricochets* is that, against Tillers' appropriation of Aboriginal art, Bennett responds with a counter-appropriation of Tillers' own Latvian (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 Aboriginality in his attack on Tillers (the question of whether Bennetts is full-blooded Aboriginal or not)?

Instead of seeing *The Nine Ricochets* as simply opposed to appropriation we must see it as generalising its very law. Taking up from Tillers' own *Locality Fails*, we can see it arguing that for every appropriation there must be an equal and opposite counter-appropriation which makes this appropriation possible in the first place. Aboriginality in this sense would not lie outside of appropriation but be the very medium of appropriation, what everybody (Tillers, Bennett, the critic commenting on all this) tries to appropriate but never finally can. In other words, one cannot appropriate from Aboriginality without being appropriated oneself, caught in an endless cycle of guilt and accusation. And Bennett and Tillers themselves keep on appropriating from each other, bound together in a relationship neither can now escape (Tillers can be seen to be appropriating from Bennett, even when he does not intend to, just as Bennett can always be seen to be appropriating from Tillers). The work is doubled by this idea of appropriation, the fact that a relationship can be seen between black and white art, even when neither party is aware of it. It is to suggest not that Aboriginal art should not be appropriated, but that it is in its very appropriation that its true power lies.

All this is a strange account of Gordon Bennett's work, seemingly merely ingenious

and without consequence. And yet, as subsequent events have shown, the predictions there of a continued exchange between Tillers and Bennett have largely come to pass. There was an actual collaboration between them in the 1994 IMA show, and Bennett has recently remade a version of Tillers' *The Decentred Self* as *The Recentred Self*. It is in something like this that we see the real possibility of criticism, the way it makes a difference. It is not merely the description of strategies already in the work of art, but the driving of those strategies to their limit, the very invention of those strategies. It tries to create a logic, a destiny, a fate for the work which the work cannot escape. It tries to double the work, produce an explanation of it which, while seemingly remaining faithful to it, in fact it forces us to look at it in an absolutely original way.

This is what art should try to do also: introduce a strange new hypothesis into the world which does not merely follow it or tamper with it slightly but re-interprets it entirely. The painter Fred Williams when chided that his paintings looked nothing like the Australian landscape, replied: "Well, this is how the landscape should look, even if it doesn't!" The question is how is art able to change our lives like this, how does it allow what always was to be seen differently? It is this uncanny logic that is the task both of art and art criticism to develop. (For an attempt to deal with these concerns in greater detail, see 'Imants Tillers' *Virtual Reality*', *Virtual Reality*, 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 canon, 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 precisely 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 it, his own. (See on this Thierry de Duve, "The Blank Canvas and the Monochrome", *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris and 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 it not by criticising it, offering empirical evidence of trying to persuade. Rather, it operates by proposing a strange, non-empirical hypothesis, undemonstrable but irrefutable, which the world can only follow. Its

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.



"X" suggests the inexcusable  
Crime prevention - masked man damaging painting  
United Nations: Vienna 1990

Stamps are 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 accessibly 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 1991 commemoration of the liberation of Kuwait." Third world stamps, once expressions of European empires, become miniature tourist posters. Fox comments further on these transformations, "the man and woman of Kaspar David Friedrich's *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (reproduced 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 vandalised, is a sign of the times."

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# But I can't, it's too late ...

Linda Marie Walker experiences new sculpture works in Adelaide

The work of Joanne Harris and Phillipa McMahon satisfies, visually, intellectually, instantly, as you walk around, and then suddenly, unexpectedly, it undoes this relief, as if at the very moment you arrange meaning, meaning slides away. Looking becomes a stop/start process here, precarious. It's almost like overhearing talk, understood at the level of language, yet baffling at the level of topic. The bantering of voices, the spaces between, makes something that refuses unity. A great space opens instead, and it dawns on thinking that it, as participant, must attend.



Joanne Harris

Alan Cruickshank

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 parquet, but providing a continuity, a sort of known value. The gallery, even though a 'nice' space, and very often sympathetic, affects work perhaps more than some other local spaces. This is sometimes an advantage.



Phillipa McMahon

Alan Cruickshank

The two bodies of work are not cool and not hot. Each piece displays within itself a point of spoiling, like a stain or tear, and this tension/release denotes balance. [For example: the two felt ellipses in *oleander*, the positioning of the sewn script in *bad sounds* (Harris); the awkward size of the blue shapes in *Constellation*, the harshness of the black lines in *Little Curl* (McMahon)]. An unevenly weighted balance, touching materials differently, and producing unstable, ambiguous meanings. Balance and imbalance set up motion, the terrible quiet discussion (overheard), so near and yet so far. One extra noise: disaster. The work gives/plays right to its edge, is brimming. So, pleasure is one of several possible inscriptions (along with: memory, strategy, humour).

Pleasure is announced without doubt in Harris' large *Mentalité*, just around the first corner. The bright red fabric lying on and over the side (to the floor) of the black baby grand piano begs to be ripped off. Except it has assumed the right place, the sure role. It wreaks havoc on the future of question, because what could a question be, except confession? The red stuff is daring, or a dare, a fresh bloody wound echoed above in the small square floral fabric which fills the space of a barely discernible swastika. On that gaudy gathered wrong cloth is the German word 'über' (meaning over, and over & above, and excessive) in blue neon. Here rightness has become wrongness. What's more, and more alarming, is that 'nothing' keeps you metres away from the piano/cloth. 'Nothing' is a grid of masking tape on the floor, in a circle. The piano/cloth is on it. The only people who freely ignored the grid at the opening were kids. They

didn't seem to notice. The rest of us (mostly) stayed 'out'. Beside the piano/cloth and in the grid are three glass jars of ghee (left over, rendered down) from Harris' previous work (*Kölnwerk*, 1994). They are golden yellow. They look somewhat abject, like phlegm (a word used in *bad sounds*, a nearby wall piece). Also laying on the grid is a blackboard with several words (fug, [fu:k], vroolijk), written over erasures. What arises then is the political play of the three colours red, black, yellow.

The eight independent works are deadpan – not mute, but wry, and knowing – and function as nodes or intensities (of a large engine, say) which compose and re-compose themselves as thing/machine to be read. And unpredictably, hinging on order, manner, desire, intent. Hélène Cixous in *Reading with Clarice Lispector* says of reading, "We have to try all possible relations with a text. At some point, we have to disengage ourselves from the text as a living ensemble, in order to study its construction, its techniques, and its texture."

This is not an exhibition which makes reading(s) roll over the body, which even requests reading. As self-conscious act, as state in consort with state. Rather it reserves the right to be unread, to be alone within written-ness. Like a foreign sentence. Or a whole book. It awaits. And is patient. Probably more patient than me/you, it won't groan beneath 'your' look.

McMahon's two large flat floor works, *Constellation* and *Little Curl*, are contrary, prickly, and complex. They face one another like two sides of an everlasting argument, through which the viewer can pass. *Constellation* is precisely aglow, and could easily rip you apart. There are twelve thin golden arms to it, coming out to form a tiara, a head-dress. The spokes are golden flex leading to small globes, having first been threaded through Holden-blue heavy shapes like Bizarro quoits. These hook over pegs resting on square black bases, from which protrude large saw-like metal teeth. The whole thing might whirl, one thinks. It's a halo of sorts,

mapped out on the floor. This Virgin Mary (crowned) definitely has un-romantic views on childbearing.

*Little Curl* is also halo-shaped, but rests like a band on the floor, and maps a fragmented but linked set of words. It's a lettered piece then, half words and thick black lines appear on fragile cones of tracing paper. It's these that make the 'curl' or band. Whereas *Constellation* might end your life, you could crush *Little Curl* 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. Slivers of past. *Little Curl* is that innocent thing: smashness. It's a breath away from 'smash', all the words smashed, words which have smashed self. The differing relationship of body to sense, to hearing and speaking, to culture, moment to moment, is the generative subject of these two works.

I've hardly scratched the surfaces. The exhibition is (like 'frolic', serious frolic: joyous, nimble) one of details, where each detail is a 'history' of strange glimpses, and of untimely and impolite ways: "She says it: Now I begin; now I close; I leave and I come back. The text follows movements of the body and enunciation, but it also follows a theme. Rather than a narrative order, there is an organic order". (Cixous again)

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.

Linda Marie Walker is an Adelaide writer & artist.

New Work, Joanne Harris & Phillipa McMahon, North Adelaide School of Art Gallery, 1-24 March 1995.

# Wet and humid

24HR Art Director Steve Fox writes from Darwin

It's called WET up here right now. Everywhere, everything is green; green, damp and wet. Some of us have paintings hanging under our verandas charged with colour in the dry at least, now they are green too - not to worry, it will brush off in the sun soon. So they say. Must remember to spray next time with Glen 20, kills the mould spores I'm told.

The WET does something else as well. It brings the Long Grassers inside, not right inside usually, but under cover. The small entrance to 24HR ART becomes a sleeping place for Lionel and Daphne. They moved in after Lihou (Jack), an old Canadian, drove off in his \$200 station-wagon, 50 kms down the road to Larrimah. Jack's always saying he's heading off to Cairns, he's been working on it for a while now. Meanwhile he's parked over by the toilet block in the middle of the square just opposite the Mexican restaurant. On the other side is Green With Envy specialising 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 the members' annual show. The opening night should be a hoot - Graeme Gow from the reptile park out at Humpty Doo is opening the show, reckons he'll be able to pull out a few live snakes on the night. Told 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 Maningrida and Yirrkala to the East also works on paper from Ramingining. There will be work from around Darwin as well, all kinds of snakes made from found objects. Colwyn can't figure out which one of her snake images to include and Meng is hoping to put in a glass snake she made in Singapore. Can't wait to see what Geoff Sharples has put together, hear he got a good deal on a batch of rubber snakes. Jack asks what I think of his telly, sure enough here we are just opposite Andrea Lea's, that's the shop with the groovy glassware, folk-like art made from cut out tin and weathered picture frames - yeah the telly looks great, so does the plastic drum and the parcels covered in blue tarp on the roof. Everything this man owns is in or on this car and the telly works, wonder what it's plugged into?

Anyway I'm getting wet and there's another class of kids due in to view the Year 12 show - *Exit Art*. There is this great sculpture in the show by Kari Speers, this white plaster figure bent over, seemingly

melting into the floor, it's covered with some pretty emotional writing. She said it was a way of working out her grief when her friend was murdered in the suburbs last year. These kids do some strong stuff.

It's funny isn't it, just before *Exit Art* we had *100% Tracy*, six artists from the Territory and six from across the borders, Rosalie Gascoigne, Frank Gohier, Kim Mahood, Sally Mumford, Chris Mulhearn, Christine Turner, Ted Johnson, Judith Christian Miller, Ingo Kleinert, Peter Quinn and Dan Murphy. I wonder what Lionel and Daphne thought as they checked out the art through the window. Kim Mahood's clothesline of corrugated clothes must have tickled their fancy. Ted Johnson's *Santa Never Made It Into Darwin* would have had them guessing, was it a sleigh or a raft? Its green corrugated sail and Dante olive oil tin flag, a small tin palm blowing in the breeze. I was told when we assembled it to make sure the palm blew in the right direction with the sail. One night I called in late to catch up on some work. Lionel and Daphne had paid the same attention to detail laying out their blanket in the entrance way next to a small plastic bag of belongings. I told them not to worry I wouldn't be long, but they went off for a walk. Guess it's a bit hard to cuddle up while the director's prowling around the gallery with all the spots on.

They were gone again in the morning, so was *100% Tracy*. Soon *Exit Art* will be out, then *Snakes and Serpents*. Next *Tok Bokis*, work by Ken Burridge. He spent a lot of time in New Guinea watching the church swallow up the indigenous peoples' ceremony replacing it with blue veiled virgins.

After Ken comes Neil Emmerson's show, a three metre high gown made of printed lithographs on cotton, portraits of Lei Feng, a Chinese soldier. After your short soup at Tai Hung Toi next door you'll be able to check out this amazing piece of art, as Neil says - perhaps a socialist monument in drag, the cotton handkerchiefs stitched together with the red ribbons of AIDS. I was thinking about that the other morning as I threw cold water onto the blood stains on the entrance way, trying to scrub the red stains away and sweep the Tally Ho papers into the rubbish. Must have been a big weekend, haven't seen Lionel and Daphne lately, guess they'll be back - it's still wet.

I wonder if you can count their visits, surely they appreciate all the hard work that goes into presenting the best of contemporary art up here in the North. They are part of our audience after all. Through their window they are able to view some of the most stimulating shows held in Darwin, 24 hour art. Vimy Lane, Parap, a grand address. Fuckin' funny isn't it.

Steve Fox is the Director of 24 Hour Art.

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# 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 time 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 *Earwitness* 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 and analyse 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 performance on the 27th and 28th April at Artspace in Woolloomooloo. Nick Tsoutas, the director of Art Space, is just as keen to highlight the diversity and the exploratory nature of the performance programme. Tsoutas 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 Crosbie, the Arf Arf experimental music group, Margaret Trail, Rainer Linz and Caroline Connors, a new work by Yuji Sone, Ashley Scott's musique concrète and Anna Sabiel's random processes. Tsoutas 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 ambience. 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 *AudioDaze*, 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.*

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# 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 paving stones up and down stairs and up again to get to the street, a few kilometres in the truck, and then into the cellar with a 1.2 metre ceiling - I bring the two professionals and myself a longneck each, and sit down in the back of the van with them. "Sorry it's been such a shit of a move," I say, after that first magnificent gulp - it had reached the point where, as we passed each other with the umpteenth box, they were too angry to look at me. Communication was limited to self-encouraging grunts ('uuhhhp' for 'up' and 'fff' for 'down') and the rarer 'Givus-a-hand-with-thuhfiling-cab'net.

With a beer in hand, though, (worth two in the fridge) things are transformed.

"It wasn't too fucking bad," the big one says. The wiry one had his head tilted back and didn't interrupt the flow to comment.

"What do you do, anyway?" he asks me.

"I'm a book editor," I tell him - it's generally wiser than admitting to be a writer (see below).

"No wonder you've got so many fucking books," he says. "The only reading matter at my place is *Rugby League Week*, and I throw it out when I've finished it."

That is the tenth move in ten 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* (eds. Robert Gray and Geoffrey Lehmann, Heinemann 1991), John Forbes' biographical note states: "He has rejected the 'bourgeois' way of life and has worked, amongst 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 publishing company boxes addressed to Gleebooks (a Sydney bookshop). I can't remember the name of the removal company, but as soon as he sees the boxes, the lazy one asks about my connection with the bookshop. Unwisely (see above), I admit to writing.

"Anything published?"

(Here we go again:) "Yes."

"So, how do you make a living?"

I smugly boast about my (then current) Australia Council grant.

"Who do you know?" he asks, controlling his tone to just this side of a sneer.

I disclaim knowledge of anyone.

Meanwhile, the wiry 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 poets he has known, most of whom have 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.

"I hear you're a bit of a poet yourself, had a grant too," I say, about one second later. Lazy almost registers surprise.

"Just a small grant; 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

protrudes: sulking. Wiry has successfully spoiled the next hour's fun.

Still, he's not one to take such disappointment for long. He asks me,

"You know *Cosmo Cosmolino* (by Helen Garner)?"

"Mm," I say (I haven't read it).

"He's in it," (pointing at Wiry).

"Only for a couple of pages," grumbles Wiry.

The rest of the move is quieter.

Later, I flick through Forbes' *The Stunned Mullet* looking for evidence. I want to discover an extremely furniture conscious sensibility; there are references to 'windows full of Italian furniture' ("Serenade") and 'an airline bag full of bottles' ("Egyptian Reggae").

A few mentions of removal, too: 'removed completely from that inertia' ("Serenade"), 'each moment spent at one remove' ("The Age of plastic") and, somewhat more directly:

*The blutack can't hold down  
the corners of her photo, stuck  
to the side of my bookcase  
along with the snap of my nephew Louis  
at 9 months,  
a publicity shot of Sharon O'Neill  
I salvaged on a removal job ...*

"Je Ne Regrette Rien"

I'm encouraged by these preliminary conformations, so continue the search. "On the Beach: a Bicentennial poem" begins, 'Your vocation calls/& you answer it' and in an interview in *Otis Rush 9* (a literary magazine), Forbes told Cath Keneally, "I thought of the other two, the other three (sections), one morning while I was waiting for a guy to come and pick me up to go and move furniture, in 1987."

Eventually in a late 80s *Meanjin*, I come across the poem "Ode to Doubt", which includes, 'to just step outside with you, like drinking/considered as experience/would ... abolish hagiography as a genre' and so I abandon a rare close reading of the poet-as-lugger ...

Just in time for the twelfth move - to Katoomba in a Budget three-tonne truck, assisted by friends Ironwoman and the Soccer Hooligan, and if uneducational (not meaning to sound ungrateful to them), at least rhythmic, me bouncing up the ramp with N's exercise tramp under one arm as Ironwoman jogs past in the opposite direction. With the larger items we say "fuck!" in unison. I find myself swearing more than usual in the next fortnight.

The thirteenth move is across Katoomba to a house number 13 (which should have been numbered 15 but the people in 15 were there first and didn't want 13. The denotation in the chess column is b-K13.)

When moving, it's good to get a sense of the landscape but also of the cultural landscape. The removalists were called Dad and Dave's Removals, and go to number 13 via collecting a new second hand fridge from a guy who'd spent the day in the Family Court and did not look happy. I imagine he looked still less happy the following morning - his neighbours had brought around their new brew: penicillin-tasting plum wine. (When he'd sold me the fridge earlier, and I'd said Dad and Dave would pick it up, he groaned and warned me that they were real talkers. They were okay. Dad told me he was glad I wasn't a slacker like some, I told him about my broken ankle, and he mentioned he'd had a quintuple by-pass the previous week.)

*Bernard Cohen is the author of Tourism (Picador, 1992). He has recently completed his second book, set in a mythical Sydney which*

# 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 to find 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 amidst her kaftan, seemed to mention a South American called 'Castro' whose work I sensed I'd glimpsed in print, so I ventured: "Isn't Castro a Brazilian kinetic artist?" "No!", she replied, "I'm Castro!" She invited me to her studio, I chatted with Heidsieck, Jimi Hendrix records played, more champagne arrived, I was dancing in Paris, life was very good.

This 'little reception' was a party to launch Bernard Heidsieck's LP *Trois Biopsies + Un Passe-Partout*; a marvellous selection of works from 1967-1970, including *La Poinçonneuse*: to my mind one of the most poignant and haunting sound poetry narratives, quite simply, ever. Punctuated by the abrupt metallic crashes of passenger barriers 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 infatuation, as his local ticket-puncher tells him, "Monsieur, you've dropped this paper", and offers him a love-letter explaining that she'll simply request transfer to another station if he gives her no reply. "*Panique! Cauchemar!*" ("Panic! Nightmare!") - Heidsieck's reply to the wonderfully plaintive voice of Christine Tsingos (an actress, he related, who had fallen on hard times and had briefly lived in Beckett's cellar) stabs through the air with terrible urgency, with all the sharp momentum and surprise of *musique concrète*.

When I went back to Rouen University, to the student residences, I kept hearing Heidsieck poems, somewhat as one critic complained of finding New York's streets full of Rauschenbergs after seeing an exhibition of RR's work. What this indicates, I think, is the way in which Heidsieck's sound poems uncannily capture the quality of French voices heard in distant conversation through half-open doors, along echoing corridor walls; a quintessential splintering and compression of the 'grain' of urgent Parisian chatter - or, more intensely still, of the atoms of million-miles-an-hour tumbling consciousness, as everything - once again - spins out of focus.

As Heidsieck explains, he began what he calls 'action-poetry' in the mid-50s, inspired by a number of influences ranging from minimal music to Fluxus performances. An associate of the Lettriste François Dufrêne (the subsequent inventor of explosively improvised '*cri-rhythms*'), of the Paris-based American poet and artist Brion Gysin (who preferred to call his recorded and



Bernard Heidsieck

Francoise Janicot

superimposed permutations 'Machine Poetry'), and of the more abstract 'audio-poet' Henri Chopin (who first published LP records of Heidsieck, Dufrêne, Gysin and others in his review *OU*), Heidsieck is one of the most accomplished representatives of those transatlantic avant-garde poets, such as Chopin, Gysin and John Giorno, who for the last 40 years have - in Heidsieck's terms - propelled the poem off the page, into highly dramatic sonic and gestural space.

Invited to Australia with the generous support of the French Embassy, Canberra, and performing on tour with John Giorno at Sydney's Artspace after a series of *Eye-Phonics* workshops and 2 evenings of performances at Brisbane's Metro Arts, Heidsieck treated audiences to a magnificent sequence of more or less abstract compositions, moving from an early meditation upon heartbeats, to a rendition of the myth of Sisyphus, dramatising the strain of gradually climbing and sliding down from 'The first floor, the second floor' and so on, as breath and body sway in uneasy anguish.

Heidsieck's *Vaduz* - an exhaustive and exhausting exhortation listing all the different races living around this Lichtensteinian city - offered a fitting *pièce de résistance*; a thrilling performance revealing Heidsieck's mastery of the art of whipping up - and then riding - a storm of immaculately synchronised live and pre-recorded narrative. Visually counterparted by strikingly vivid shadows echoing the nervous intensity of his delivery, *Vaduz* offered an entirely enthralling and mesmerising spectacle. The master of refined poetic panic, Heidsieck undoubtedly suggested new standards of performance to many of his audience. As John Giorno observes, "Bernard Heidsieck is one of the great innovators of 20th century poetry".

*Nicholas Zurbrugg is Associate Professor of Literary Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Griffith University, Brisbane.*



# Nervous system asphalt beauty

Gabrielle Finnane on the films of Michael Snow

One of cinema's most resilient artists, the Canadian painter, musician and sculptor Michael Snow, recently visited Sydney with a retrospective of his films. These works have a reputation: the antihuman camera, a conceptual rather than psychological space and time, and what C.S.Lewis once called 'the fatal serialism of the modern imagination.' The hearsay doesn't at all capture the lucid beauty and musical sense of the films, nor their focus on puns, paradox and revisioning of the everyday.

The aesthetic inquiry into the ordinary world, a source of endless invention in the art of North America, stems in part from Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, Dickinson. In film Maya Deren searched for the mystery in the everyday, Stan Brakhage held its romantic ritual up to the light, Frampton liked an ordinary that was talkily casual, Warhol revelled in its subterranean human posturing. Among these artists, Snow's films represent the mundane glimpsed with a sumptuous formalism. His works include a film of small human events in a New York loft seen from the perspective of eternity (*Wavelength*, 1966-67), an encyclopaedic comedy of speech and the senses (*Rameau's Nephew by Diderot Thanx to Dennis Young*, 1974) and possibly the greatest landscape film ever made (*La Region Centrale*, 1971).

First we see the sweep of the camera movements - grand, majestic homages to the tools which do not replicate human vision but transform and extend it. Then we notice the small, localised tremors and responses - human error or a graceful nod to serendipity. The films are not addressed polemically against or to an audience but

flicker through the history of cinema like the nervous system so important to Snow himself. 'I wanted to make a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings and aesthetic ideas' he commented at the time of the making of *Wavelength*. The sound that enslaves the movement of the camera in *La Region Centrale* (turning the camera into ever greater rotations) he calls a 'nervous impulse'. The thundering elongated bass of the typewriter in *See you Later/Au Revoir* provides another neurological soundtrack: the backbone of the office. *Rameau's Nephew* turns fixed situations into nervous predicaments of mind and sociability: conversations are spoken in reverse, the actors struggle to locate a table which appears and disappears in the frame.

*Wavelength* is often poorly described as a zoom down a New York loft without people or incidents. The ramshackle moments which mark the stages of the zoom are in fact precisely human, involving some work (two men moving a bookcase), two women listening to *Strawberry Fields Forever* on radio, a death, a phone call to an ambulance and the trace of human life marked by a yellow chair.

When Hollis Frampton's dead body rolls from the bottom of frame in *Wavelength* and the machine zoom advances, scored with the artist's whimsical errors (colour tinting, flashes, scratches, a jolt here or there), domestic, private space is recreated as landscape. The office landscape of *See You Later/Au Revoir* (1990) mutates into a melancholy universe when the 30 second action 'a man leaves the office' extends to a 20 minute slow motion video sculpture. There's a taste for the flimsy anonymity of

modern bric a brac in the spaces of these films and in one of Snow's best films, *Presents* (1980-81).

Recasting the late 19th century origins of cinema, erotic vaudeville and the actuality documentary, *Presents* opens with a stretched, squeezed and letterboxed image of a naked woman on a bed in a boarding house room. In this first part of the film the camera doesn't move but the set shakily revolves when the woman starts to walk around. Enter an odd man in working clothes, smaller in stature than the tottering blonde. He's a character from a hokey erotic scenario of a kind we've almost forgotten about (the last time seen is perhaps John Cassavetes struggling with too many women-for-hire in his leery bestseller writer role in the 1983 *Love Streams*). When both woman and man struggle to find a missing object the camera ploughs through the tacky decor of this shallow habitat, destroying the set as it moves through it. 'Life in the world' follows the destruction of the set: poignant, ephemeral moments caught under brilliant skies, each epiphany cut against the grain of the previous image, each cut marked by a drumbeat. And yes, there's a contrast here between a certain kind of artifice and a phenomenal real, and yes, Snow was kind of thinking of the two as feminine and masculine.

The stony muteness of *La Region Centrale* recalls modern European traditions of inexpressivity, of opacity. "The frame emphasises the cosmic continuity which is beautiful but tragic: it just goes on without us," Snow once commented. A formidable combination of imagination and engineering, the revolving

mounted camera created for this work now sits in a permanent video installation. Instead of deriving static views from landscape painting, the film reconceives landscape as a matter of time and movement and infinitely varied perspectives. There is no fixed view in the three hours and the resulting work lies between moving painting and symphony.

The films are luminously coloured. That homage to Cezanne, *La Region Centrale*, travels through pebbly browns, pallid blues, silvery water, taupe lakes, cold sandy yellows and nights of darkening greys and blues. There are the neurotic tints of red and green in *Wavelength*; the dusty pinks, sky blues and aquas of *Presents*. *Rameau's Nephew* sports yellow motifs, said to be the colour of intellectuals and of suicides, reminiscent of Godard's 60s films and of Minelli musicals. In one of the cheap hotel room sequences a woman sits on a bed in her buttercup blouse silently mouthing the colours that correspond to those coloured filtered squares held over her face while Ellington's *Daydream* plays on the piano.

And the man himself? Humorous, baggy-eyed, he sits with the audience and views his films again, talks with candour afterwards. He has made a film about the decay and death of cinema, its scratched topoi an elegy (*To Lavoisier, Who Died in the Reign of Terror*, 1991). Other works include the marvellous study of velocity within the space of a classroom (*Back and Forth*, 1968-69), the inscrutable filmed handwritten texts of *So Is This* (1982). The accelerated abstract *Seated Figures* (1988) explores 'trucking' shots, (camera mounted on a truck and looking downwards), a vision of the ground beneath us, of surfaces gravelly, tar gray, sandy and floral, over which an audience talks. The conceptual wit of this work holds for all his films: "I wasn't sure whether I would start at paradise and end up at civilisation or the reverse and finally ended up starting at the asphalt."

## Ear to Eye

Radio Eye Celebrates a Hundred Years of Cinema with two programs

Radio Eye is presenting an edited version of Matthew Leonard's *Trains on Film*, originally created for the lamented Screen program. Prompted by Noel Purdon and John McConchie of Flinders University and featuring their theory of the train film as a genre, *Trains on Film* is packed with sounds, ideas and history ranging from audiences gasping and fleeing at the sight of a train on a Lumiere film to *The Great Train Robbery*, Keaton's *The General*, the expanding roles of sound and tracking in train films, Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* (it's the English who are trapped in the uncoupled dining car because they insist on their afternoon tea), *Strangers on a Train*, and *North by North West*.

John Flauss uses Richard Fleischer's marvellous *The Narrow Margin* from the 50s as his pivot for discussing how Zeno's Paradox drive train films - the mobile and the immobile, the desire to get there but the fear of the destination. Rosie Gold draws a line connecting silent film heroines tied to railway tracks, Vivien Leigh's 1940 *Anna Karenina* and her suicide by train, the temporary liberation afforded by the train in *Brief Encounter*, the heroine's demise in Powell's *The Red Shoes*, and the love-making on a miniature train set in *Zentropa's* parable of wounded masculinity.

In a program textured by beautiful train sounds, a touch of Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, and film sound-track excerpts there are some nice anecdotes - Purdon recalls

having to look after an unhappy Pasolini in Oxford; as soon as he got on a train, he was fine - "This is the cinema once again."

Bob Ellis has little to say on the virtual absence of the genre in Australian film-making and adds nothing to the discussion of sex and trains while reflecting on his film *Warm Nights on a Slow Moving Train*. Perhaps he'll be edited down in the new version, though he does tell us to look out for Australian Chris McGill's 1971 doco *The Line*.

This program is a must for Train-Film watchers. It gets to the point where you want to interject, "What about that great Polish film *The Train*? What about that documentary on O. Winston Link, the American train photographer, especially his shot of the train screaming past a drive-in cinema?"

Tony Barrell's *Sounds Like Hollywood* is curiously disturbing, juxtaposing film sounds and effects with the ideological sounds of Hollywood. It presents the dark side of Hollywood through playing with a recording of right-winger Cecil B. De Mille delivering a righteous celebration of the great good done the world by Hollywood including the observation, "Hollywood is a woman, an actress. Underneath she is a good woman, though not always a good actress." De Mille's speech is transformed into a litany of oppressively repeated phrases, especially "the beauty of America". Juxtaposed against de Mille is a sombre listing of starlet suicides.

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 Walter Murch winning the Academy Award for sound design for that film and reflecting, at another time, on the creation of good sounds and bad sounds for the weapons of Americans and their enemies in war films.

We hear an account of 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 suiciding starlets. 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 Barrell's cleverly constructed program makes you look at Hollywood with new ears.

KG

*Trains on Film and Sounds Like Hollywood will be broadcast on Radio Eye in May. The program is heard Sunday nights, 8.30pm and Saturday 3.30pm. On Saturday April 22 you can hear Teigan Kollosche and Abbey Duntz's Theatre for Utopia, which traces the Australian transition from silent to sound films.*

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# Post Priscilla

Leigh Raymond

"The current fashion for cross-dressing among men, spurred by the success of Priscilla Queen of the Desert, is not as socially challenging as a woman mocking the phallic symbol."

Anne Marsh, *Real Time 5*.

Casting can sometimes be a thing of gorgeous irony. In *Tootsie*, Teri Garr plays Dustin Hoffman's hard done by girlfriend. He puts on the frock, he gets to play Dorothy Michaels in drag. Teri finds out, and she gets, well, she gets angry and she doesn't get even.

In *Pret-a-Porter* Teri Garr plays another girlfriend, the girlfriend who shops for pret-a-porter for her tv (transvestite) friend whom she later goes partying with in Chanel.

"I want big sizes," she says to the

surprised sales assistants 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 go back to American cross dressing shorts in the first years of this century.

The leading historian of cross dressing, Marjorie Garber, notes that since early modern times, cross dressing has appeared and disappeared from European and post European cultures in waves.

Lily Savage, the English drag, observed that her own career waxed and waned in the 1980s depending on the style of drag preferred (singing or lip synching) and the styles of masculinity that prevailed within London gay bar subculture. A week can be

a long time in a frock in a bar.

In Australia, it's easy to overdo the *Priscilla* effect.

Its impact seems to be largely one of seat sales in straight cinemas and in marketing drag in the Sydney gay subculture to lure overseas tourists during Mardi Gras. It allows some to say with what used to be called a straight face, that Sydney has 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 in to two young women from Sydney's eastern suburbs talking about the film on a bus. "It's not a gay film," said one, accurately I think. "Nah," said the other, "it's not." But they couldn't quite find the words to say what it was.

There is an assumption that because it was successful - here one might add, not in the US, not in Sweden, not in France - that it has somehow been influential.

But there was little in this year's Mardi Gras parade, the party or street costuming which alluded to *Priscilla*. Felicia, true, has become fashionable as a drag name, but

that seems to be the extent of its impact.

The drag workshop at this year's Mardi Gras Festival which ran over 5 days with leading drags teaching how to walk, talk and dish drag attracted people of many sexes and sexualities. But it seemed to owe more to the queer moment in culture than to *Priscilla*.

Because *Priscilla* itself does, it's easy to miss the radical possibilities of drag in the broadest sense of the word, its deconstruction of fashion, sexuality and gender, particularly following through Judith Butler and her notions of gender as performance. These possibilities undercut arguments which put drag in a weak, conservative or oppressive position in gender and sexual politics.

The other Australian drag movies in the pipeline, Leone Knight's *Let me Die, Again* and Richard Wherrett's *Billies Holiday* 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.

# Views and Previews

With this issue RealTime begins its regular reviews of books (on theatre, performance, culture, film, video, techno-arts, sound, new writing) CDs, CD-ROMs, and previews of audio art on radio, and television and radio arts programs.

On the book front we're kicking off with a few published by Routledge from their impressive range on performance, theatre and sexual identity over 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 series is *Acting (Re)Considered* edited by Phillip B. Zarilli, a selection of essays on Decroux, Meyerhold, Brecht, Barba, "Bali and Grotowski", Dario Fo, Rachel Rosenthal and Willem Dafoe and many more about performance, acting, training and 'Not-Acting'. Also in the series is a collection titled *Acts and Happenings*. We'll also take a look at a new book on UK gay theatre (Cassell) and some of the growing number of books on performance coming out of the U.S. - Jon Whitmore's bland but accessible and valuably anecdotal *Directing Postmodern Theatre* (Michigan), Vanden Heuvel's *Performing Drama/Dramatizing Performance* (Michigan) about the relations between performance and text, and C. Carr's *On Edge, Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Wesleyan), the writer's collection of over a decade of brisk, evocative reviews of the American performance scene.

## Books

### The Politics and Poetics of Camp

Edited by Moe Meyer - Routledge London 1994

Capital C Camp does not exactly romp through this anthology. Rather it emerges as a deadly serious weapon in the fight against heterosexist and patriarchal power structures. Editor Moe Meyer's aim is clearly to salvage the term from the misuse and corruption it suffered at the hands of Susan Sontag in her notorious "Notes on Camp" of 1964. Sontag, according to Meyer, effectively severed Camp from its homosexual referent, leaving it open to (mis)appropriation by "Pop culture". As a result, Camp has thereafter been fully aestheticised, considered a matter of style, not content, and hence irrelevant as a political strategy. In putting these essays together, Meyer wants to put Camp's political efficacy back on the map, prompted by what he sees as the success of Camp strategists Queer Nation and ACT UP.

As a contribution to the ever-fascinating debate on the relationship between art and politics, activism and aesthetics, this collection is of interest, particularly the essay on Oscar Wilde, if not so much the treatment of Liberace's "vampire value". However, the debate is often painted far too starkly, so that what emerges is not the complex set of power relationships evoked by Michel Foucault and invoked in Meyer's introduction, but a none too convincing Us and Them scenario, where true Camp is that deployed by the genuinely "queer" with its other manifestations nothing but pale let alone corrupt imitations. Certainly the implication that "Pop culture's" uses of Camp fall short of

criticality is highly contentious, one likely to have the Cultural Studies establishment up in arms. Moreover, the arguments here rest on a fairly conventional centre/periphery social paradigm and a somewhat underdeveloped theory of the connection between representation and lived reality, as Meyer implies when he summarises his project: "to produce intermittent queer visibility in our exile at the margins long enough to reveal a terminus at the end of a pathway of dominant power". Nothing more radical than the production of visibility? Perhaps a more critical engagement with the notion of visibility itself might have rendered this a more satisfying volume.

JM

### Paul Auster - City Of Glass

A Neon Lit Graphic Mystery, Avon N.Y.

This is a graphic novel (that is, serious comic book) version of Paul Auster's first novel, *City Of Glass*, which became part of his *New York Trilogy*. It opens a series called Neon Lit: Noir Illustrated, designed by Art Spiegelman, whose graphic novel *Maus* won him a Pulitzer Prize. There is no doubt that this series represents the comic book as serious literature, or rather, as a hybrid of several cultural forms. The language is distilled from 1920s hard-boiled novels, the stark visual style is derived from Film Noir of the 1940s. And in choosing *City Of Glass* as the opening title, series editor Bob Callahan stretches the form still further.

Auster's novel swirls around themes of language, solitude and madness. There are traces of Kafka, of Milton, of Poe. There is confusion of identity, there are meditations on the power of language. There are detours into history and philosophy. All this in a comic book? Yes - and it works.

The graphic adaptation is remarkably faithful to Auster's novel. Some of the detours are edited out, but the complexity of the prose form is intact. The script adaptation team of Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli don't balk at including obscure musings on the philosophy of language which appear, at first, as bizarrely tangential. The strength of this graphic novel is that it incorporates these ambiguities into a narrative drive which is stronger, because more streamlined, than Auster's work. Once you start, you don't want to leave this brooding, shadowy world until you reach the last frame.

*City Of Glass* is ideal for this series because it borrows from the detective form. Auster's bewildered hero, Daniel Quinn, is a mystery writer who falls into the role of a private eye named Paul Auster. (Yes, this is postmodern fiction, and hence a postmodern comic.) The graphic version accentuates the detective motif with moody illustrations. Quinn's face is drawn in a deliberately basic way, highlighting his pliable character. He is engulfed in frames full of shadow and menace. We see him from strange angles, or juxtaposed expressionistically with maps of New York as he trudges the city streets. This is Kafka meets film noir, with an audacity that matches Auster's original work. Read it and be surprised.

JP

### John Rudlin - Commedia dell'Arte: an Actor's Handbook, London, Routledge 1994

This book looks useful, but while Rudlin covers the components of *commedia*, and provides a wealth

of material for actors to work on, he discusses neither the processes which enable actors to integrate in performance the bits and pieces (mask, gestures, dialogue, gags), nor the processual distinctiveness of *commedia dell'arte* as a means of producing flexible performance with limited rehearsal.

Rudlin's discussion of mask exemplifies the problems involved in assimilating experience-based insights into discourse by turning them into sweeping statements and essentialist 'truths': the mask is not suited to tragedy, since it does not permit of catharsis (The Greeks got it wrong, then?); the *commedia* mask is terrible, mysterious, enchanting etc. (how does this fit modern theories of empowerment, and why have so few of these 'precious' objects survived?); the actor's facial expression is replaced by the 'gaze' of the mask (are Javanese and Balinese *Topeng* performers wrong, then, when in workshops they remove their masks to show just how hard the face is working underneath to actively employ it?).

Rudlin's question, whether we should be attempting restoration or renovation of the *commedia*, would be easily answered if he were to focus on the underlying processes rather than on the *commedia* as product: these processes can in fact easily be detached from the historical product and liberate actors into independent non script-based performance - but actors using Rudlin's handbook run the risk of merely reproducing a quaint historical style.

Tim Fitzpatrick, Professor of Italian, member of Performance Studies Department, University of Sydney.

### Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz eds.

Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism London, Routledge, 1994

While Augusto Boal plays with theatricalising politics (he is currently a Councillor for the city of Rio), who is playing Boal? What's happening to the cultural action techniques of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed? - now so eagerly transmitted, added to and modified by theatre workers and activists across Europe, North America (and Australia). Or, as Mady Schutzman puts it, what happens when we transpose 'a third world' aesthetic of resistance to a 'first world' aesthetic of 'self-help'?

This is an excellent volume of interviews, case studies and essays. You feel like there really is a coherent - but hotly contested - debate of the major issues. Berenice Fisher, for example, raises the difficulty of reconciling a feminist critique of family structure and the 'individualistic, sexist or heterosexist' assumptions often built into Forum Theatre scenes on domestic violence. Julie Salverson tells a cautionary tale about middle-class solidarity junkies hanging around in workshops with indigenous Canadians. English TIE directors confess that Boal's techniques are a cheaper and often more effective way of engaging young people. Boal's main contribution is through two interviews in which Michael Taussig, Richard Schechner and the editors tease out some essential history and ongoing struggles.

Another strength is Philip Auslander's paper on Boal's implied theorising of the body with reference to Brecht's theories of gestus and Herbert Blau's work. Less convincing was Daniel Feldhendler's article on Boal and Jacob Moreno's psychodramatic techniques

- reading the excerpt from Moreno's classic "The Case of Barbara" conjured images of the power-tripping guru healer. Perhaps some will argue that Boal's encounter with the self-help demands of 'first world' Theatre of the Oppressed consumers has steered him down a similar path. Readers will soon be able to make their own assessment - Routledge has also just brought out Boal's 'method of theatre and therapy', *The Rainbow of Desire*.

Paul Dwyer is director of Public Works and has explored the Boal methodology in his theatre work and, as a postgraduate at the Department of Performance Studies, Sydney University.

### Crossing The Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing ed. Lesley Ferris - London: Routledge, 1993.

If you've already done the rounds of recent publications devoted to queer culture and performative cross-dressing, then you'll probably be a little disappointed by this contribution to "current theoretical and pedagogical scholarship on the politics and discourse of the body." Writers like Camille Paglia and Marjorie Garber have fueled a popularised academic debate around sexual personae as symbols of a crisis of sexual identity. For those unfamiliar with the scholar's predilection for antiquarian escapades and revisionist history, the anthology is rich in details regarding the female-to-male 'gender bender' and the cultural history of taboos and localised acceptance surrounding drag - including Goethe's "Women's parts played by men in the roman theatre," with a commentary by Lesley Ferris.

Laurence Senelick's "Glamour Drag and Male Impersonation" explores the double-standards of 19th century views towards transvestite theatricality, noting that "deviant behaviour which invited prosecution in the street received considerable acclaim on the stage." In "It's never too late too switch: crossing toward power", Alisa Solomon examines the achievements of female to male drag performance from Eve Merriman's *The Club*, to Holly Hughes' WOW production of *The Lady Dick*. Beginning with the argument that "femininity is always drag" and so "easy to caricature," Solomon goes on to seek "relief" from ever-threatening gender binaries in Split Britches' butch-femme version of *A Street-Car Named Desire*.

Peggy Phelan's "Crisscrossing Cultures," makes a tentative detour around an assertion - dominant among feminist critics - that the masquerade of the feminine is still a use of institutional power and masculinity. For Phelan, the performance of gender in a cross-cultural context - in this case the drag balls documented in Jenny Livingstone's *Paris is Burning* - requires a more complex examination of the economy of exchange between spectators and audiences. Beyond the outdated dichotomy of male gaze and alluring masquerades of the feminine, Phelan examines the implications of ethnographic documentation of Latino and Afro-American desire as it is both performed - in its own sub-cultural context - and packaged for popular consumption. CH

### Peggy Phelan - Unmarked: the politics of performance London Routledge - 1993

Phelan's collection of essays, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (which includes her other



essay on the Livingstone documentary) could be worth a second outing with the current retrospective of the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe at the MCA. If - as Phelan claims - the fetishisation of the image marks out photography as another realm of performance and an object of feminist "visibility politics," then the ongoing controversy over Mapplethorpe's erotic images of the Afro-American male has opened up a new front between public and academic debate on pornography. Phelan noted in a recent lecture at the MCA that the admission of private desire into politically correct discourse may go some way to raising the level of public debate on censorship and pornography. CH

#### Smart Tactics

In keeping with all the hoopla about the economic significance and commercial potential of the arts and cultural 'industries'—exemplified by the market rhetoric liberally deployed in *Creative Nation*—the Department of Communications and the Arts has issued a guide to industry and business support programs suitable for cultural producers in small business.

*Smart Tactics* is a handy roadmap to navigating the myriad services which government offers to assist small enterprises to get up and to stay afloat. It covers setting up a business, developing marketing and strategic plans, exporting, staying in business, marketing and promotion, research and development and programs for regional areas.

Under each of these aspects, the publication sets out the various programs of assistance available at state level, and nationally. Schemes cover everything from the new Enterprise Incentive Scheme which aims to help those who are dependent on Social Security and who have an idea they wish to turn into a small business, to the AusIndustry Concessional Loans for Commercialisation of Technological Innovation. This program offers loans at no interest for three years to small high tech firms wanting to finance early commercialisation activities associated with new technologies. Other programs the guide covers include, at state level, Victoria's Women's Enterprise Connection and New Enterprise Incentive Scheme for Artists, and Tasmania's Arts Based Industries Program. Additionally *Smart Tactics* provides handy synopses and contact details for national arts industry specific programs, services and support organisations such as the Film Finance Corporation, the Book Bounty and the Arts Law Centre of Australia.

Despite being tricked up in a spectacularly overdesigned package which militates against its readability, the beauty of *Smart Tactics* is that it cuts all the onerous and time intensive runaround usually required to access information from labyrinthine state and federal bureaucracies. It provides a good one-stop shop for the information needs of the aspiring arts businessperson.

*Smart Tactics* is available from the Department of Communications and the Arts.  
Call toll free 008 819 461. RT

## Radio

#### The Listening Room ABCfm Previews

Audio works were selected for preview from those already completed for the April-May program. The Listening Room is broadcast Mondays at 9pm. The May programs are a companion to *Sound in Space* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and feature the artists involved.

#### The Native Informant - April 24

A cacophony of voices, male and female, reciting florid poetry or French grammar exercises, a

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 past in order, he composed the sounds of a neighbourhood into a congruous grammar and a pious ode..." Recently, listening back to these recordings, he mused on the lack of autobiographical insight these provided, how they bore witness, as does an anthropologist's native informant, to the rules of communication of a certain culture and even to the state of its recording technology at a particular time, but not to its intriguing secrets.

This sound work is punctuated by insistent instructions in conversational French and ancient Greek followed by less than perfect and increasingly disaffected responses. The conjugations' evocative names together with the foreignness of the languages work to foreground the problems of transposing a historical moment: imperative, imperfect, present, future. Similarly, as the student Carter attempts to utilise the individual conjugations, his grammatical exercises take on a somewhat metaphysical turn: "If I should let you go, you would rejoice..." As such, the piece is a rich layering of the sound fragments which accompanied a particular time in Carter's youth, but at the same time most cognisant of the heavy intervention that goes to structure recollection and historical events, even self-avowed autobiography. The native informant remains an outsider to his historical moment, both at the time of recording and at the time of remembering. As Carter says, "The native informant is in exile at home". JM

#### The Rehearsal by Rainer Linz - May 1

It's a good idea to read the copy in *24 Hours* before listening to the rehearsal so that you get your listening experience right: "an examination of a rehearsal process in which three cellists 'meet' - in a different space and time - to rehearse a piece of music for which each has a part, but no full score. As the rehearsal progresses, the performers enter into a dialogue with the music, with the composer, with themselves. The result is a fictive landscape, a mediation of time and space, of intention and outcome, of history and current circumstances, of the ear and the mind." These claims and what you hear in the twenty minutes don't always match. What you do hear are the sounds of rehearsal, the fragments, interruptions, false starts and so on, nicely recorded but the informality feels forced and the metaphysics not to be heard. KG

#### The Bamboo Orchestra by Ernie Althoff - May 1

Nine self-playing machines, constructed from found objects, old record players and bamboo of various size and variety make up Ernie Althoff's Bamboo Orchestra. Althoff has been experimenting with music machines for some time, fascinated by the immense variety of timbre and pitch which the humble bamboo can produce.

In this interview, interspersed with tracts from "the orchestra's" performance, the self-confessed "bower-bird" enthuses about the discerning and dedicated listening he has found has greeted the exhibition of his work. And indeed, the concentration required to tease out the subtle variations between the nine different machines, each designed to sound distinct enough to represent a treble, bass and rhythm section, does pay off. As Althoff describes the main audience reaction to the orchestra's sound, the first evocation is of running water, which, like the orchestra's, is a sound composed of thousands of tiny sounds put together to create a rich and complex texture. However, the gentle scraping and tapping of bamboo also has a kalimba-like quality, which highlights the ambivalence between structured rhythm

and random noise in the orchestra's sound.

When explaining his interest in these self-playing machines, Althoff talks about our atavistic need to create music by hitting at something - it is a child's first attempt at musical expression. The music created by his orchestra is redolent of those child-like attempts, playful, unaffected and celebratory of simple ingenuity. JM

#### Chromophony by Stephen Adam - May 8

"Translating loosely from the Greek as 'coloured voice', this twelve minute piece focuses on the gestures, texture and transformations based entirely on human vocal sources." Setting out with high, sweet voices a la 60s Stockhausen, these human sounds are distorted into bird-like coo-ings and carollings and subsequently into a dark, spacey chorus, a rush of mad chattering and finally a sustained, frightening whine - voices are no longer recognisable as such. *Chromophony* is carefully and purely crafted and shaped, and is engaging if obvious. KG

#### New Frontier by Sophia Lerner - May 8

This five minute work, part of Lerner's A-Z of *Genetics* series begins wittily with "Felix the Cat confronting the Central Dogma", replete with a cartoon tune, sound effects and lines like, "Cat got your tongue?" "It's a dogma!" However, the piece soon degenerates into dogma versus dogma, as the rationalism of (real) scientists (all intoning "a new frontier") is dogmatically mocked. Adroit editing and rhythmic shaping don't console for the loss of the amusing framework. KG

#### Poem of Change by Pauline Oliveros - May 8

This is a bland meditation on change. The construction is simple. The writer intones through the ten minute work a string of sentences in which the possibilities of change are questioned: "Is sexism real?" "Can we give up war?" "Do we respect nature?" The word 'change' itself is entered and played with. Accompanying the solo voice is an accordion sounding like a small pipe organ, pure and transcendent. Between these utterances the sounds of jets, bombs and machine guns recur. There is one moment of wit in this ten and a half minute work - the sound of birds is followed with, "Is this your wake-up call?" KG

#### Calling to Come by Paul Carter - May 22

Carter draws on the notebooks of First Fleet Surgeon William Dawes to "offer evidence of a phase of cross cultural exchange, in which a tentative reciprocity between invaders and invaded seemed to occur... between Dawes and his chief informant (and friend) Patygarang, this opening towards a definition of mutual obligations occurred essentially within language". This communication proceeds by mimicry and by echo. The program's construction is in the form of a duet, sometimes like a language lesson, sometimes a dramatic poem, sometimes an almost naturalistic exchange. The communication is predominantly tied to the lexicon of English and Aboriginal words rather than to sentences, though when these do occur ("O delirium for desire," or "Put your hand in mine") they amplify a sudden interior moment or one of potential intimacy. In a mere twelve minutes and with only two voices (and a glorious absence of 'ambience' and FX on the rough mix I listened to), Carter, producer Andrew McLennan and sound engineer Phillip Ulman create a 'dialogue' that proceeds in dramatically frustrating fits and starts, lyrical moments of near contact, sudden reversals (who is the 'native' speaker) and historical leaps (an exchange on Aboriginal English). *The Calling to Come* is not easy listening, its poetic is demanding, the

voices (Arthur Dignam and Kristina Nehm) inclined to be stiff, especially Dignam's Geilgudisms, the tone is somewhat sternly modernist, but the clarity of the production, the suggestiveness of the writing, the swings between emotional and intellectual pull, make you want to listen to it again. KG

#### Radio Eye

See page 31 for previews of Radio Eye's celebration of a hundred years of cinema. Radio Eye is broadcast on Radio National on Sundays at 8.30pm and Saturdays at 3.30pm.

#### A Day at the Races by Nick Franklin & Sharon Davis - April 16

If only you could hear this in stereo - the snorting of horse nostrils, thundering hooves on the turf, the betting circle, the committed punter briskly phone-betting for trifectas and quinellas, socialite anxieties about fashion - as it escalates to the racing of the Melbourne Cup and its boozy and sexy aftermath. The punter takes home over \$5000 after a cautious start - "I'm obviously nervous because I'm not eating my crusts" - listening to trainers interviewed on radio for 'giveaway' slips and coughs and "translating that into the odds". The socialite grapples with food, transport, and the weather. Eccentric friends swarm in and out of the radio picture. Davis follows a strapper and his charge through the day, discussing his tie (Cardin) and suit (Roger David) as the horse is groomed (it doesn't like it) and cutting away acidly to the socialite's fear of being in the Worst Dressed again this year. After the race the socialite reflects on a friend who "found her g-string on a tap at the end of Derby Day - a definite barometer of a good time", but bemoans the "gorgeous Englishmen who only want you for a one night stand. We're still a penal colony". The strappers declare that "a man who can't get a root tonight ought to cut it off and throw it away." This is an engaging piece of radio documentary full of characters, atmosphere, insider information, no intrusive narration and fine technical production by Russell Stapleton. KG

#### Gibtown by Joe Richmond - April 23

Gibtown comes from Soundprint for U.S National Public Radio. It's in a conventional radio documentary format but the content is absorbing as the lives of elderly circus freaks and their descendants are explored in some depth in the Florida town (Gibson Town near Tampa) they turned into their winter escape in the thirties and which now serves as a retirement village. The children of the Lobster Family with their webbed 'claw' hands and, in one case, no legs and one toe growing from each hip, have no desire to be stared at, not out of embarrassment, but out of sheer boredom. They'd rather be out swimming, driving, having a good time. Their forebears tell of watching their carnival customers: "You'd be surprised how many weird people there'd be in an audience who think they're normal." The old-timers regret the damage done by 60s 'do-gooders' who drove many freaks into unemployment. This is a program rich in lore as you meet Melvin the Human Blockhead who although retired will still drive spikes and nostrils up his nose for you (the benefit of a nose accident in a baseball game) and who used to swallow swords. At the end of the day he and his son throw knives at the outline of a body for an hour in their backyard, as the father once used to do to his son, but their aim is no longer sharp enough. The names - the Alligator Man, the Seal Boy, Priscilla the Monkey Girl, Ester-Lester the Woman-Man - the energy of and perceptions of the survivors, and their inclination to live together and reproduce, some still passing on their distinctive features, make Gibtown a worthwhile introduction to some very big questions. KG

continued

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Nick Broughton



# Views and Previews

**AudioDaze** is a radio show on 2SER 107.3 FM in Sydney featuring 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 information medium. It goes to air on Tuesday nights from 8.30-9pm. If you are interested in submitting tapes/CDs for broadcast call Nicholas Gebhardt on (02) 552 1559

## CDs

### Dave Cubby - Art and Kindness - DCRC9394

16 tracks written and produced by Dave Cubby, privately released. A mixture of soundscapes, instrumentals and pieces with treated vocals. These include harangues against universities and art education, with "warnings from the world of art". Tracks like "Cultural Studies: How A University Works" are too cliquy for anyone outside the art schools, but the soundscapes and more lyrical pieces have a wider appeal. Aural sketches of Goya, Rousseau and even "the little art collection at Jindera Pioneer Museum" hold more interest than diatribes against artschool "cockroaches". JP

### Ross Edwards - Ecstatic Dances Tall Poppies CD TP051 1994

*Ecstatic Dances* is a collection of the Australian composer Ross Edwards' chamber music between 1978 and 1993 that highlights the general range of Edwards' musical concerns. "Marimba Dances" (1982) "Prelude and DragonFly Dance" (1991), "Ecstatic Dance" and "Flower Songs" (1986-87) are all reminiscent of that point when minimalism began reverting to a closet lyricism and took to the streets in search of the people. They're all dynamic and seductive pieces but Edwards seems overly conscious of reclaiming music as a ritual event. In a different vein, the solo works "Ulpirra" (1993) and "Kumari" (1980) glide too closely along amongst the cliches of chromaticism, despite their indigenous pretensions. While of a similar structure to the solo works, "The Tower of Remoteness" (1978) is the most interesting of the works on the CD with its divergent plane and its wavering edge that continually collapses into a void. NG

### Andrew Ford - whispers Tall Poppies, 1994, CD TP053

Even as they imply the necessity for an ongoing poetic conceit to secure musical meaning, Andrew Ford's four works for various chamber ensembles are so heavily overlaid with textural imperatives that they risk becoming didactic and more than a little archaic. "The Art of Puffing" (1991) is a lively exploration of multiple connections that poses a bass clarinet or alto saxophone across various percussive elements, making the gaps in the sound drift into indistinct moments of exhalation and incidental breath. "Sacred Places" (1985) and "Whispers" (1990) are complex meditations on the relation between sound, texts, and the act of performance, that never quite translate into anything beyond an obvious concern with the tension between the musical surface and the structure of the language. "Pastoral" (1991) almost succeeds through sheer force but trips on its strangely romantic core that seeks to depict the qualities of a pastoral setting "as it really is." NG

### Nicholas Lens - Flamma Flamma: The Fire Requiem Sony Masterworks 1994 CD SK 66293

This is "world music" at its most confused. Lens, along with librettist Herman Portocarero, has managed to create a great morass of ideas that revolve around the rather vague categories of death and transfiguration. Through the form of the Requiem Mass, which one could safely say has been done to death, Lens attempts a transformation in the nature of the Mass, incorporating "primitive" death rites to create a more "secular and magical" work. The trouble is, that to simply disrupt the traditional Mass by inserting what apparently sound and look like pagan rites, amounts to nothing more than a theatrical, and musical, farce. And while it's certainly full of high drama and high camp, by the end you wish Lens was less the collector of cultural cliches and more a progenitor of new ideas. NG

### Rodrigo Leão & Vox Ensemble - Ave Mundi Luminar Sony Masterworks 1994 CD SK66744

Quaint and always salubrious, this collection straddles the ground between ambience, easy listening, sound track and instrumental pop, although the differences here are often negligible. Sweet melodies, regular tempi, lots of smiling faces and the momentum of *Ave mundi Luminar* is definitely all about cruising, or better still, taking a hot steam bath. There are odd liturgical strains along with lots of grand arpeggios and generous lashings of synth that

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 education to industry 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 contingent came under 'experimental' and, at the end of the day, took away the highest number of awards. Winners were Emily Murray's *Bedfrog* and *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 *Grain*, *Chospticks*, *Wok Miracles* and *We/You Assimilate* (Cinematrix Award). Dan Wallis was awarded the SBAA Award for Excellence and Best Direction for his short drama *Unky Doom*. Dawn Jackson won the Overall Encouragement award for *Industrial Angels*. Shane Lewis received the Tertiary Student prize for *Decaffeinated* and *Not way Different*.

Some films that stood out though not winning prizes were Sebastian Craig's *Idle Fantasies*, Lorraine Paul's *Lose*, James Walker's *The Lover Waits with a Rose* and Grant Shade and Paul Harland's crowd-pleaser *The Heckler*.

To offer local artists insight into their eastern state rivals, a selection of last year's VCA award winners were shown (including Guy Richards' *Trumpet*, Kate Toll's *Speak Softly to Mrs Babajaga* and Kelli Simpson's *This Marching Girl Thing*), revealing a standard rarely challenged by the WA winners. The

FTI broadened film makers' perceptions of the industry and its pitfalls with a series of seminars with Margo Nash, Jill Robb and Troy Innocent. *Brendan Worrell is a Perth-based writer*

### 44th Melbourne International Film Festival June 8-25

Advance notice offerings from this festival look good. *Crumb* is a doco about the consistently disturbing American underground comic artist Robert Crumb. In Michael Haneke's *71 Fragments Towards a Chronology of Chance*, "a series of seemingly random events culminate in disaster on the streets of Vienna." Toronto film maker Jeremy Podwesa is mentioned in the same breath as Atom Egoyan with his "eerie, erotic mosaic of fractured lives across a city on the eve of a total eclipse". Three films from Iran include the sometime banned-at-home *The Jar* 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 *Vive L'Amour*, tackles "alienated urban life amongst the economic miracle of modern Taiwan". New films are promised from Marcel Ophuls, Claire Denis, Robert Mugge, Aki Kaurismaki and Edward Yang plus, in celebration of cinema's hundred years, everything from 'silent-era gems' to '60s underground classics'.

## TV

### SBS

SBS's *Masterpiece*, *Imagine*, *The Movie Show*, *Eat Carpet* and the soon-to-return *The Book Show* keep us well fuelled with arts news and information. *The Book Show* promises much with a series of dialogues between Australian writers and other artists. The absence of sustained dialogues on Australian television outside *Lateline* and *Meet the Press* is depressing. Hopefully this *Book Show* series will open out the field. *Masterpiece*, like *Arts on Sunday*, relies heavily on overseas documentaries, especially on the Melvyn Bragg-Thames TV series, with quality varying enormously program to program.

### Eat Carpet

*Eat Carpet* is always full of Australian and international surprises 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: *Deus ex Machina*, 'a day in the life of a photo booth in Paris' (April 8); *Steamroll*, "A woman in her nightie comes over all sexy when she spies two men sexually engaged on her front lawn" (April 8); *Telewhore*, a 'provocative examination of the sexy voice on the 'phone' (April 15); *Black Spot in the Desert*, "two Israeli truck drivers accidentally kill a Bedouin child" (April 22); *The Suitcase*, "Artist Nicole Guiraud lays out her objects, installations to share her memories of the impact of her exile from algeria (April 22); *ICI 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).

Showing on April 22 is Sydney artist Tony Twigg's *Parade*, "an imaginative re-enactment of the Mt Rennie Rape Case of 1886, raising issues pertinent today". Twigg's films have been selected for festivals at Cannes and in Ireland.

# At Short Notice

**Arts Law Centre** presents a monthly program of affordable arts law seminars looking at topical issues for artists: April/May features: *Tales from the Infobahn I-III*, 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 issues; cross-media rules and convergence; defamation and censorship in cyberspace; community broadcasting and licencing; developments in electronic publishing and on-line publishing databases; opportunities in distribution and marketing created for authors and pitfalls for the unwary. Series also includes *Music Publishing Contracts*: the role of the music publisher and organisations like AMCOS and AMPAL; Martin Armiger on deal points in publishing contracts. *Non-Profit Business Structures for Arts Organisations and Writing for Film* (analysis 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 papers are available. Phone: (02) 356-2566/008-221457/Fax:02-3586475

Audiences who caught WA's **Fieldworks'** impressive January tour of *solos* 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 *Fragments of an Unfinished Opera* this time using fragments of clothes, music, discarded identities, memories lost and found, as their starting point.



Betty Carter

Jane March

Love the lingo: "Betty 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 (What drummer in Betty's band hasn't 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 greats. 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 most often



## THE SIR HERMANN BLACK GALLERY

Level 5, Wentworth Building  
City Road  
The University of Sydney, NSW 2006

### EXHIBITION PROGRAM

#### MINIMA/MAXIMA

11 April - 5 May 1995

Works by:

Liz Coats Jim Croke & Jon Plapp

#### CELESTIAL LIGHT

16 May - 9 June 1995

Jennifer Little

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with young musicians, usually newcomers to the field. Once a year at the Brooklyn Academy she gathers a whole stageful of young musicians. She'll host her third *Jazz Ahead* series, with 20 or so newcomers next spring at BAM. **SIMA** hosts Betty Carter's Australian tour in April/May.

**Post Arrivals** are back with an offer to bad to refuse - the opportunity to share a stinking hot, grungy night club where your feet stick to the carpet with fifteen barely clad posties. Post Arrivals ("they instil a tiny bead of delighted fear in the stomach", *Telegraph-Mirror*) at **Les Girls**, Sydney every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday in April (except Good Friday - even anarchists have scruples). You can double your fun at the after show party act each night featuring **Prik Harness** (Canberra), DJ Sub Bass Snarl plus surprise (Aah!) live performances and bands like Hairy Mary.

"Beautiful island. Lost paradise. Strongroom of Chinese treasure. Swashbuckling sentinel against Gargantua across the water. Mountain of gold. Dragon economy. Diplomatic orphan. Contemporary art in Taiwan arises from a time and place intersected by contending historical narratives, geo-political mappings and cultural affiliations, where nation-building strategies have succeeded chiefly in producing noisy dissent about what might constitute culture or nation. The society's storytellers - artists, writers and critics - project cacophonous, assertive, uncertain tales about themselves to a double audience of insiders and outsiders. While no individual artist's work can be categorised solely according to the place and time of its production, the art of contemporary Taiwan can nevertheless be grouped under the banner of a twisting, fantastic and polemical set of stories, mutually dependent, mutually antagonistic, in which creative making is tied inextricably to specific, yet always disputed circumstances." Nicholas Jose in the catalogue for **Art Taiwan** at the **Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney**.

Co-curated by Deborah Hart, Yang Wen-i, Nicholas Jose and Janet Parfenovics, the exhibition features 60 works by 29 Taiwanese artists in the first major survey of contemporary art to travel from Taiwan, a sister exhibition to *Identities: Art from Australia*

exhibited at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in 1993-94. Two of the artists, Yu Peng and Cheng Tsai Tung in Australia with this exhibition visited the master Australian potter Errol Barnes in his studio in the rainforest of the Gold Coast hinterland to decorate a series of ceramic pots for exhibition at the **Ray Hughes Gallery** and later in Hong Kong. The MCA will stage two Sundays of Taiwanese film screenings curated by Linda Jaivin (contemporary Chinese pop culturalist) entitled **Confucian Confusion and Borrowed Lives**, May 14 and 21 from 2-8pm.

Fractals go on forever but **Fractal Theatre** has gone from Chaos to Oblivion (with talk of their demise) ending on a beginning with a premiere of Tadeuz Rozewicz's *White Marriage* translated by Lech Mackiewicz who also co-directs this surrealistic film theatre event with Fractal's Brenda McRobie and filmmaker Tony McGrath. **Princess Theatre, Brisbane** until April 15. (07) 847-3616.

Simon d'Orsogna, an honours student in Cinema Studies at La Trobe University has taken time out from his film *Reich'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 "weirdly fascinating" dream diary he found on the shelves of the National Library. **Vittoria Liess**, April 5-23, 8 pm **La Mama Theatre, Carlton**.

**Theatre of Spheres** do get around. They'll be presenting *Amphitryon: A Study of Interpretation* three versions of the same scene from the myth of Amphitryon as interpreted by Plautus, Moliere and von Kleist, directed by Kirsten von Bibra for the **Lacan Symposium** for the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis in the Freudian Field. **Public Lecture Theatre, Old Arts Bldg, University of Melbourne**, April 20 and 21. Phone (03) 824-1130.

**The Performance Space, Sydney is calling for proposals for:**

1. **Performance works**, on and off site, video and film-makers and visual artists wishing to exhibit in the studio space in a series of daily events throughout **OPEN SEASON** an annual festival of performance and visual arts from independent artists June 14-24. Limited technical resources, production support and publicity provided. No venue charge and no fees paid. **Deadline May 1.**

2. **On site works** by artists in all areas of contemporary practice in the gallery for the 1996 **EXHIBITION PROGRAM**. Proposals should operate within the wide parameters of the Performance Space's artistic policy. **Deadline July 1.** Proposals to Angharad Wynn-Jones, PO Box 419 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 or call 02-698-7235 for details.

In acknowledgement of the contribution of plays and the writers who create our dramatic history, the **Australian National Playwrights Conference** in association with **Currency Press** launched the **Fertile Ground** series (readings and discussion of Australian plays) with Peter Kenna's *The Slaughter of St Teresa's Day* directed by Peter Kingston followed by discussion of the play by Katharine Brisbane, Stephen Sewell and Neil Armfield, **Belvoir Street, Sydney**.

**Goethe Institut** present *Zero Hour* May 25-June 22 every Thursday at the **National Library, Canberra**, a selection of films from Germany, USA, Britain, Japan and Australia made in the difficult years of post-war adjustment. *The Murderers Are Among Us* (1946 Wolfgang Staudte, Germany); *Germany Year Zero* (1947 Roberto Rossellini, Italy); *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946 William Wyler, USA); *The Third Man* (1949 Carol Reed, Britain); *Mike and Stefani* (1951 R. Maslyn Williams, Australia); *Children of Hiroshima* (1952, Kaneto Shindo, Japan). Enquiries: (06) 247-4472 (06) 262-2475

A highlight of the 1994 performance year in Sydney was STEPS, a season of short works produced by Leisa Shelton of **Theatre is Moving** which gave a real sense of some new directions in contemporary Australian dance performance. This year, in *Next Steps* another seven performance makers (Andrea Aloise, Mathew Bergan, Kate Champion, Nikki Heywood, Anna Sabiel, Alan Schacher, Leisa Shelton) will contribute short works for the season at **The Performance Space**. All the works will address the idea of performance as event and will make use of the many performance areas within the space. As well as the live performances, the program will include a photographic exhibition by **Heidrun Lohr**, one of the country's most exciting performance photographers (See RT 1-6) and a video installation in the Studio featuring a selection of dance video work.

**Griffin's** first show for 1995 *Mr Melancholy* plays from April 7 - May 7 at **The Stables Theatre, Sydney**. Featuring hermits and a clown in conflict in a lighthouse setting, it's a work of amusingly calculated pathos that could only come from the Melbourne of Leunig and Dickens. It's written by **Matt Cameron**, touted to be a new force in Australian playwriting (Playbox featured his *Footprints on Water* in the Playwrights Raw season in March), directed by Griffin artistic director Ros Horin and features performers Lech Mackiewicz (fresh from directing Fractal Theatre's *White Marriage* in Brisbane), Odile Le Clezio, Jenny Vuletic and Andrew S. Gilbert, with design by Michael Wilkinson, lighting by Mark Shelton and music by Elena Kats-Chernin. Next up for Griffin will be *Moonwalkers* a horribly funny descent into madness generated by everyday fears, the eagerly awaited new play from Timothy Daly (*Kafka Dances*).

**Four Winds Easter Concert** (April 15-16) is held each year in a natural amphitheatre outside **Bermagui** on the south coast of NSW where you can enjoy the purity and immediacy of sound unencumbered by amplification in a clear open air acoustic. And in the evening mix it with The Whitlams (the real ones) at a twilight barbecue. Performers this year include **Michael Keiran Harvey** (playing Messiaen, Liszt and Vine); the **Melbourne Brass Ensemble** with soloist **Geoffrey Payne** (Gabrieli and Frescobaldi, Andre Previn); Beethoven from **Michael Brimer** (piano) and **Susan Blake** (violin); **Riley Lee** and **Matthew Doyle** (original compositions for didgeridoo and shakuhachi) and **Helen Noonan** and **Martin Croft** (in a program of Broadway songs and settings of Shakespeare by Australian women composers, including Alison Bauld's *Banquo's Buried*, a highly dramatic setting of the sleepwalking scene of Lady Macbeth). PO Box 73, Bermagui NSW 2546.

**Sixth Spring International Festival of New Music** 1-29 September. Artistic Director **Roger Woodward** has announced this year's program well ahead of time. Program includes Debussy played by Woodward with an exhibition of works by James Darling; Recent Harp Music (Solbiati, Finnis, Kerry, Alvarez, Steenhuisen, Isang Yun, Carter, Katz-Chernin) played by **Marshall McGuire**; **Sydney Percussion Ensemble** playing Xenakis, Gehlhaar, Boyd, Shanahan and Radulescu; **Blazin' Brass** playing Xenakis, Ricketson, Shlomowitz; Symposium by Radulescu: The Spectral Technique of Composition during which Roger Woodward performs Radulescu's Fourth Piano Sonata; **The Goldner String Quartet** play Webern, Butterley, Radulescu, Beethoven; **North Sydney Girls' High School Wind Orchestra** with Roger Woodward as soloist playing Grainger; plus **Perihelion** (resident ensemble - University of Queensland) and a concert entitled *...rather...around...Radulescu* featuring soloists **Laura Chislett**, **Stephanie MacCallum**, Roger Woodward. Information/brochure: 30 Saddington Street, Turramurra, NSW 2074

Midnight Minimalism: For **Melbourne's International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord** (16-22 April) church organist **Merrwyn Deacon** plays *Metamorphosis* and *Mad Rush* by Philip Glass, Satie's *Messe des Pauvres* and an abridged performance of *Vexations* probably the first piece of minimalist music. Thursday April 20 at 10.45 pm at **St Mary's Anglican Church**, Cnr. Queensberry & Howard Streets, **North Melbourne**. (03)328-2592

New artist run space - **The Basement Gallery** 178 Collins Street **Melbourne** presents work which is

'diverse, unexpected and never dull'. See for yourself April/May in *Compost Heap* (Adam Geczy) *Gone but not forgotten* (Rowan Storey and Helen Stuckey) and new works by Phillip Watkins, Evonne Werner, Paul Quinn and Sadie Chandler. Open Thursday-Saturday 12-6 and Sundays 1-5.



Lyndal Jones *Sexual Play in the Galapagos Islands*

**Lyndal Jones**, detail from video component of *Sexual Play in the Galapagos Islands*, **Canberra National Sculpture Forum**. See page 26.

**Elaine Russell's** paintings are inspired by memories of her family and her life during the 1940's and 50's on a mission at Murrin Bridge on the Lachlan River in north western New South Wales. Daily routines and evocative episodes from her childhood are the material of her paintings. "These are the things I can never forget". **Aboriginal and South Pacific Gallery**, 44 Reservoir Street, Surry Hills, **Sydney NSW** until April 22.

More autobiography from **Liam Heary** - *Things You See When You Don't Have A Gun* - "In painting there's a freedom of thought that could be positively dangerous if practiced elsewhere" If you dare, **Cafe Gallery, Fremantle Arts Centre** in April.

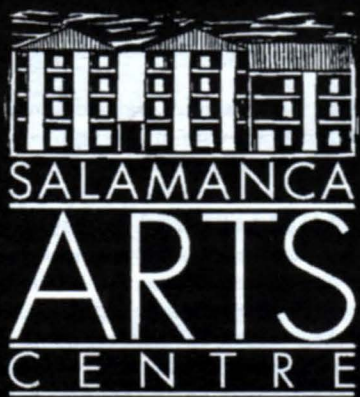
Two Australian poets reading at **Ariel Booksellers** (42 Oxford Street, Paddington NSW) - Melbourne's **Peter Bakowski** will launch his new book *In the human night*. Also reading, **Phillip Hammial** with a guest jazz trio. Thursday May 18 at 7 pm

**Melbourne Jazz Co-operative** this year celebrates 12 years of innovation. Their April program includes *A-Live Jazz* every Sunday night in April 9pm till midnight: Justine Jones Quintet (featuring Cathy Harley), the Niko Schauble Quartet, Ren Walters' "Tip" and Morgana, and Wednesday nights April 19 & 26 Lee McIver's Jurrasic Bark. Trumpeter/composer Lee McIver premiered his Melbourne septet late last year, featuring the outstanding saxophone section of Lachlan Davidson, Peter Harper and Gaven Dunn with Ren Walters (guitar), Jonathon Zion (bass) and Scott Lambie (drums). All gigs at **25 Bennetts Lane, Melbourne City** Enquiries/Program: Martin Jackson Ph: 03-882.3835 Fax: 03-882.0505

**Optical Bleach:** acting by means of light to make white or pale: an exhibition of multiple images + text based photographic works by **Tobin Lush** at **Artzone Gallery**, 80 Hindley Street **Adelaide** April/May.

Melbourne's **New Media Network** have featured two new CD-ROM works worth watching out for during their recent multi-media exhibition, *Atlas: Cosmology of Kyoto* by Koichi Mori and Stephen Suloway offering

continued



There's always something happening at the Salamanca Arts Centre...

The Salamanca Arts Centre is home to many artists, designers, craftspeople, training, community, visual and performing arts organisations. It also houses some of Tasmania's premiere cultural venues and galleries, and hosts an ever-changing program of exhibitions, performances and special attractions.

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a chance to immerse yourself in the classical culture of Imperial Japan, a world in which you can dice with the devil, die a thousand unspeakable deaths in Japanese hell, gather clues from famous scholars or tricky demons and learn more about Japanese culture than you could in a month in Tokyo. *The Swear Club* by Michael Buckley took its title from a club 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 aging - those bits of human experience where most of us behave badly.

Meanwhile **All New Gen** offers an interactive multimedia module heading for a shining future as a *Gamegirl*, Nintendo style. Stratospheric negotiation with leading games manufacturers have led VNS Matrix to believe it's time Barbie is zeroed and keyboard cowboys faced with far less splatter and mega slime. **Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne.**

Talk Studio- **Open City** at **The Performance Space** will be transcribing, analyzing and performing other 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.

**Carlton Chats** is a set of impromptu performances for bumping into (weather permitting) during the **Comedy Festival, Melbourne** in April. Absurd but intelligent chats, part-improvised, partly in the realm of performance art, these inter-connected works are written by Lloyd Jones in collaboration with the performers Liz Jones, Maureen Hartley, Brenda Irwin and Ramez Tabit. 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 a critic at the '93 Edinburgh Festival to be "literally delicious". Throughout April at the **Beckett Theatre, the Malthouse, Melbourne Comedy Festival.**

## LONGITUDINAL PROJECT

28 April - 23 July  
1995

**EXCESSIVE PRACTICE**  
Barbara Bolt & Tony Lusk  
**SERIOUS INK MEN**  
Paul Trinidad, Bevan Honey & Ross Turner  
**MINYMA KUTJARA**  
Mary McLean & Nalda Searles

**LONGITUDINAL PROJECT** is a series of three gallery based events that will unfold, each having a distinct mood and intention. The artists will be present, working in the gallery space, while simultaneously represented on screen through video realtime recordings. Taken from a bird's eye view, this footage will establish flatness as a common formal attribute.

On completion of the project a catalogue which includes artist profiles, images and essays on the relationship with audiences will be produced.

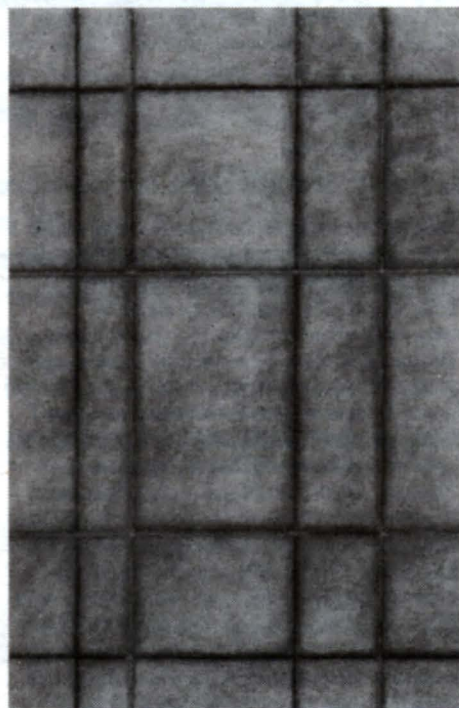


For further information and your copy of the catalogue, contact  
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1 Finnerty Street Fremantle WA 6160  
ph (09) 335 8244 fax (09) 430 6613

**Museum of Modern Art at Heide** in April-May presents *Downtown*, an exhibition which navigates the urban and suburban territories of Pop and post Pop art by American artist **Ed Ruscha** and Australians **Howard Arkley** and **Robert Rooney**. Ruscha explores the contrivance of American 'cool', juxtaposing text and image to illuminate "the bleak profanity of the everyday." Robert Rooney turns the empty roads, fuel stops and car yards of contemporary post-war boom culture into serial conceptualism. 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 der Craats plays with the use of text, context, subtext in the art of **Jenny Holzer**, **Kay Rosen**, **Robert Indiana**, **Barbara Kruger**, **Lawrence Weiner**, **Aleks Danko**, **Roisin O'Dwyer**, **Elizabeth Newman**.

1995 performance program at **Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art** opened with *Living Art* two solo performances by **Geoffrey Schmidt** in *Demonstrations of Desire*: a performance that discussed from a personal perspective the link between disease and desire and *Paradance Fable* by **Stuart Lynch** developed in collaboration with **Nicholas Zurbrugg**, investigating the body as "a fable, a myth or a non-individual body" that can function as a transmitter of feeling rather than a vehicle of individual creative expression".



Jon Plapp *In a Parenthesis* 1987-88

**MINIMA/MAXIMA** is a survey exhibition tracing the intellectual processes explored by three Sydney artists, **Liz Coats**, **Jim Croke** & **Jon Plapp**, to expand definitions of the terms of minimalism, hence the title's suggestion of the maximum resolution in a minimalist field. The exhibition shows key works from a ten year period offering the public a fresh insight into the evolving visual language that each artist has developed. **Sir Hermann Black Gallery, University of Sydney Union**, level 5, Wentworth Building, 11-5 Mon-Fri, April 11 - May 5.

*A Small History of Photography* is a seminar series to be held at the **Centre for Contemporary Photography** in **Melbourne** on six Wednesday evenings beginning 26 April and running until 4 October. The series aims to undermine the idea of a single canonical history of photography. The title for the series is taken from Walter Benjamin's essay of 1931 in which he elaborates his response to the history of photographic images. Each of the speakers will select ten key images which they will address speculatively from a personal perspective. The lineup includes a broad range of people thinking around and working in the photographic. Writer **Paul Carter** presents *Double Take: 2 sets of Images 10 Years Apart*. **Gael Newton**, Curator of Australian Photography at the National Gallery of Australia, looks at feminist photography in her talk *The Movement of Women: Interpreting the Current Work of Survivors of the Seventies*. Other speakers include film critic **Adrian Martin**, artists **Destiny Deacon**, **Martyn Jolly** and **Peter Tyndall** and curator **Juliana Engberg**. Information is available from the CCP on (03) 417 1549.

**Watermarked 1**: After a series of performances in Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart, dancers **Robyn Richardson** and **Deanne Butterworth** (from Adelaide and Perth respectively) have developed a new duet exploring reflection, refraction and transparency, expected and unexpected dance. At the **Women's Gallery**, 375 Brunswick Street, **Fitzroy** April 28-29.

As a mass image the stamp is very powerful. Its combination of word and image and its role as

# Colonial Alphabet

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Facilitator of European culture created signs by which the world was read and represented.

## 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 - there are 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 Australian sport?

The papers trumpeted the half-time score in the Superleague Battle: Packer 1 Murdoch 0. Why not play out the second half on the field, or better yet, in the squared circle? The two gladiators clearly despise each other: let them take that aggression out in 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 seconds lining 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. Ita Buttrose? No, there can be only one person fearless enough, one person ferocious enough to stand between these two giants. Stuart Littlemore.

### Tee Off

With Vivienne Inch

"Too many players just think about hitting the ball. What you ought to be thinking about is where you want the ball, how high you want it, whether you want it to turn left or right, and what distance you want it. That's the major difference between amateurs and professionals. Amateurs think about the ball. Professionals think about the shot" (*How to Play Par Threes*, Peter Smith)

With this in mind, I scanned this week's tv arts coverage with disappointment. 1995 versions of *Imagine* and *Review* have some new outfits but the game plan hasn't changed. It's still a quick trot around the green, 9 holes in 30 minutes, videoclippping from opera to taxidermy, no carefully considered shots, no follow through. Hosts with their eyes on the ball, prodding artists for quick answers and not listening because they're already thinking about the next ball, putting the viewer off the game altogether.

On another tee, Aunt Mary has replaced Uncle Peter over at Arts on Sunday and I wonder if there will be a tee off at all. How long do we have to endure the slow and prodding tutor approach to arts so popular at the ABC "Lesson 1: The Ball" and the sort of commentary that assumes that no-one out there knows the game.

There was one little flash on this week's Movie Show. Margaret Pomeranz, David Stratton and Shane Danielson as unguarded as they can manage, looking as comfortable as those armchairs permit, hush puppies toe to toe, holding as close as I've seen all week to a "relaxed conversation"! For all of five minutes, three commentators speaking together about the Oscars in a sustained match between professionals. Nice shot!