

RealTime

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telstra adelaide festival

3-19 march 2000

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Telstra



De Keersmaecker, *Fase*

This is the final Telstra Adelaide Festival 2000 edition of *RealTime*, catching the final surge with a late edition liftout, save for a handful of shows including the eagerly awaited *Shock Headed Peter*, *Desdemona*, *I Said I*, *Odyssey* and David Moss' *Improvising the Future* which we'll respond to in *RealTime* 36—available on the streets and online in early April. Visit the Adelaide Festival website (www.adelaidefestival.telstra.com.au) and see a selection of RTV interviews with festival artists—Saskia Boddeke (director, *Writing to Vermeer*), Howard Barker (writer-director, *The Ecstatic Bible*), Richard Murphet and Stevie Wishart (writer and composer, *Slow Love*, and Elena Kats-Chernin (composer, *Barbara/O*, *Soviet & Beyond*). We hope to stream the complete set from the *RealTime* site in April.

There has been much to enjoy and much to challenge in the festival, and a handful of works have created truly passionate responses. The Greenaway-Andriessen-Boddeke *Letters to Vermeer* created great excitement, consternation and sell-out houses. Les Ballets C de la B's *Iets Op*

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Bach was rapturously received by artists and big audiences as a performance model that points to the future, aesthetically and politically. For an ecstatic few Societas Raffaello Sanzio's *Giulio Cesare* was the most extraordinary festival event, closely followed by another darkly transcendent experience, Howard Barker's *The Ecstatic Bible*, in a highly successful Australian-British collaboration benefiting from Mary Moore's superb design. The impact of choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker on the festival is just being felt. Ishinha's *Mizumachi* was a popular success with its astonishing floating low-tech sets and its large young cast evoking the history of Osaka.

The Sydney-based Goldner String Quartet's 20th century series has been a staggering achievement and a major festival highlight. For a string quartet to play works of such variety and intensity from across the century without ever indicating unfamiliarity or lack of purpose or feeling, 5 nights a week for 2 weeks with at least 2 or often 3 works per performance is remarkable. This program has generated excitement from the opening's persuasively autumnal Ravel paired with a brilliantly executed and intensely dramatic Schoenberg with Merlyn Quaife the ideal soprano (shades of *Ewartung*), to outstanding responses to Stravinsky, Webern, Berg, Janacek, Ligetti, and lesser known works from Goossens, Ginastera and Rautavaara, underlining the sheer idiosyncrasy and excellence of these voices. These twilight Elder Hall concerts have offered a curiously meditative release from the pressures of larger festival events. As a bonus, the concerts have been broadcast on ABC Classic FM. Our music writer Chris Reid has said that if the ABC were to put the series out on CD he'd be in the queue to purchase them. The Jan Garbarek concert, the *Soviet and Beyond* concert from the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Chiara Banchini and Ensemble 415, and the Taiwan's Han Tang Yuefu have all contributed to a unique musical experience.

La Ribot's *Mas Distinguidas* and Lucy Guerin's *Robbery Waitress on Bail* were small works that were enthusiastically embraced. The word about t'Barre Land's *Langs De Grote Weg* (Holland) and *Big hArt Works* (Australia) has spread quickly in the festival's final days as must-see performances. *Big hArt Works* is being spoken of as offering a significant Australian parallel to the social themes and preoccupations of Belgium's Les Ballets C de La B. The filmed appearance of NSW Premier Bob Carr and others, and the live cameo from Robyn Archer, add entertaining dimensions to a seriously demanding work involving the performances of young homeless people on stage and screen. The Jonathan Mills-Dorothy Porter opera *The Ghost Wife* is a powerful ensemble work, innovatively designed, part of the music theatre movement strongly represented in this festival. The Belgium-Australian co-production *Slow Love* offers inventive deployment of multimedia in a dream-like reverie on desire. Other Australian works, *The Theft of Sita* and *Yuè Ling Jié*, keenly awaited, open as we go to press.

Robyn Archer has invested significantly in Australian works, building on Barrie Kosky's and her own previous festivals, creating a benchmark for commissioning new works and encouraging audiences to see them without hesitation. She has also developed a regional program which must be repeated and expanded. With *Verve: the new writing* and *Biomachines*, Archer has created an Australian festival first with these important prototypes that engage with contemporary technology. Her focus on Indigenous arts as a major component of an Australian arts festival must also have long-term ramifications.

The RealTime editorial team and writers have been swept along by this festival, moved and challenged by it. We thank Robyn for inviting us to be part of her program—it's been an honour to contribute to a festival with such range and depth.

To end at the beginning Shaaron Boughen

Fase

Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker
Festival Theatre, March 14

piano phase. two figures real. three shadows projected. pale grey bell-shaped shifts swell under a horizontal plane of swinging arms and pivoting feet. white light. white sneakers. short white socks. very neat. incessant piano music shifts silently—a slippery move. De Keersmaecker and De Mey respond or preempt with subtle shifts of energy. it's mesmerising, concentrated, unadulterated. a corridor now lit with the swing of arms. still horizontal. just further downstage. identical bodies find fluid suspensions in pedestrian moves catching live space between the notes. cerebral process

it may be but flying bobs mirror floating skirts. you can't deny the visual. add a leg gesture. the territory shifts again. a head goes with the arm then against the arm. the horizontal rotates shockingly to a vertical, a diagonal but back to the cover of the horizontal. downstage further again. stillness swings with movement. quiet prompts between the dancers remain personal. they retrace their journey to end where they began.

blackness. sighs of relief from suspended breath. Reich can be very insistent stuff.

come out. they came, sitting on close stools under honey lamplight. neat leather boots. angled arms in shirts. hand flicking hair into next gesture. arms race a circular path, trace a memory in the space. seats pivot on seats. symmetry becomes mirrored. momentary personalised contact caught inside square floor

light. recognition, awareness, knowingness. new notion of formalised duet through mechanistic actions. fists clenched in defiant ending.

blessed blackness. *violin phase*. De Keersmaecker slowly emerges into our consciousness in a pool of light defined by steppings with arms rotating about her torso. it's sensual, dignified, just simple virtuosity. she playfully carves the encompassed space. hips twist—was that a tango moment. the skirt whips up, is lifted up. she likes that. delightful repetitions humour our pleasure. snatched finish on the music again

more black—it's silence is lively and connected to the past and the future. *clapping music*. horizontal window of light on screen. costume and lighting fuse elements of the last 3 sections. was there a lighting state missed—what was

that look for. was it for me, the audience, or was something amiss. mystery. two travel diagonally downstage to end in mellow lamplight. one vigorously chasing the other backwards—a spatial challenge!

No matter how minimalist this work might be the development throughout the 4 sections is sophisticated and clever, remaining closely aligned to Steve Reich's musical structures and constrained variations which edge each other out of the foreground continually. Postmodernist choreographer Lucinda Child's collaborations with Phillip Glass in the late 70s explored the geometric construction of the body both spatially and temporally but had none of the finesse and sense of humanity of this work. So there are shades and shades of a colour and *Fase* remains significant both in its historical context as well as its contemporary interest.

There may be no emphasis of gender, no characterisation, no context, only the self-referential content of the movement vocabulary and our own urges to read meaning into the writing of the bodies in the space. The visual settings are simple, spare, architecturally alive, the colour a palette of husky monotoned grey and yellows. So this is what a talented 22 year old produces at the start of her career. Bring on *I said I*. say I.

Heaven reopens

Chris Reid

Soviet and Beyond

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
Adelaide Town Hall, March 3

Post-Glasnost, Russian composers experience a freedom never known in Russia, even before 1917. This concert of the work of "ex-Soviet" composers acknowledges this transition to a new state.

Elena Firsova's programmatic work *Cassandra* of 1992 speaks of a doom which awaits the world. The rising pitch of the opening bars asks a question, and begins a conversation between instruments, sometimes rowdy and angry, sometimes dreamy and distracted, sometimes tortured. Individual voicing by the orchestra clearly articulates each character in Firsova's drama. Does the gentle finale suggest resolution?

Giya Kancheli's *Diplipito* of 1997 includes bongo drums in the orchestration to represent the *diplipito* drums of his native Georgia, though the bongos don't appear until late in this enchanting 30 minute work, and then only in cameo. Kancheli's is a unique musical language, with references to many styles. The work commences with the note *A* sounded loudly and repeatedly by the piano, calling the orchestra to order. But order is soon lost, as Kancheli has ingeniously scored a work which seems to comprise disparate individual voices, incoherently self-absorbed, yet combining to produce a dramatic ensemble effect, like a dream. The music moves from gracious statement to dramatic interruption, from tonality to atonality, occasional crescendi punctuating the play. There is programmatic statement, pure music and parody of film music. The countertenor sings nonsense words, reminding us that speech is also musical, then at the finale whispers 'diplipito' repeatedly. The piece is totally convincing, leaving the listener wondering what other music is really about.

In his *Four Aphorisms* of 1988, Alfred Schnittke subdues his earlier polystylism and establishes a simpler language. Short and intense, this fine work comprises 4 dramatic and contrasting movements. A dialogue develops between the strings and other sections of the orchestra, rising and falling in energy, reaching a long, cathartic crescendo before a brief harpsichord flourish completes and musically resolves the work.

Sofia Gubaidulina's *Detto II* foregrounds the cello in an ethereal work for an ensemble comprising strings, winds, percussion and celeste. David Pereira's performance is engrossing, his cello bespeaking a spirit or soul in transition. Written in 1972, before Shostakovich's death and while 'decadent' composition was still out of favour, the work is ambitious and contemporary, and reflects Gubaidulina's religious convictions.

The final work is Tashkent-born Australian Elena Kats-Chernin's *Heaven is Closed*, a rollicking work with a rich vein of wry humour. Her orchestral writing is strong and colourful although the delivery of her message is slightly protracted.

This well-planned concert showcases the extraordinary talent to emerge from the USSR. The TSO's playing is beautiful and splendidly unified, David Porcelijn's exacting direction drawing the best from these complex and varying scores.

The 12 steps

Gail Priest

Langs de grote weg
(Along the highway)

't Barre Land

Queens Theatre, March 14

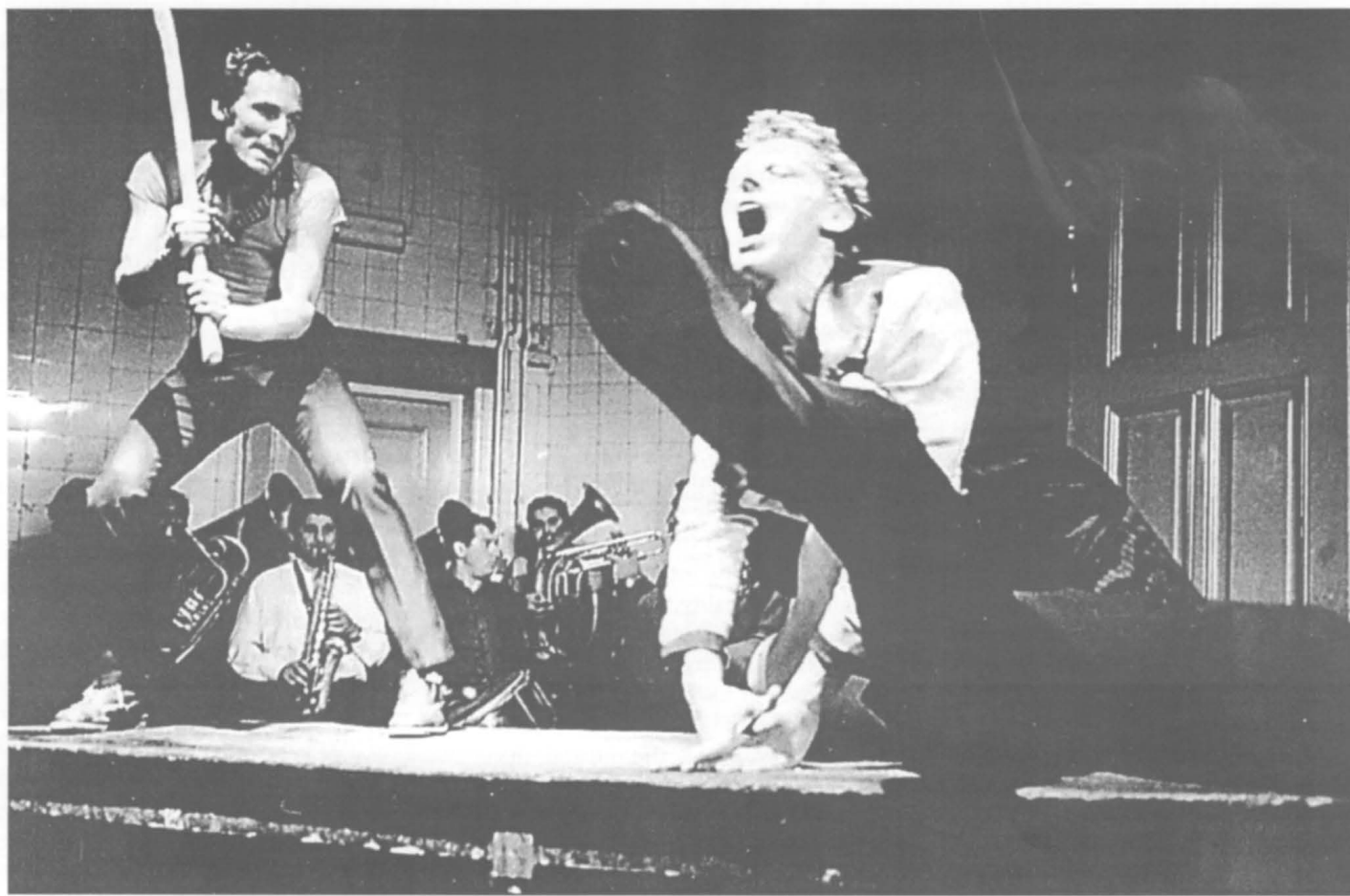
1989. First year drama school. Learning to hate Chekhov. They tell me it's comedy. *The 3 Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*. "I am a seagull." I'm not laughing (or not when I'm supposed to anyway).

1991. Krakow. *The Wedding*. Chekhov in Polish. Hysterical. I start to wonder what's been lost in translation.

2000. The Club, Adelaide. I am dancing like a Cossack, sweating out my drunkenness to the Romany band Fanfare Ciocarlia who have just run from the opening night of *Langs de grote weg*. Finally I understand Chekhov. It's all about vodka.

We stand down a lane, outside a roller shutter. I hear someone say that this is the oldest theatre still standing on the mainland. We enter the space to the rolling 'oompah' refrain of the Fanfare Ciocarlia that repeats with variations until the action starts. The theatre is old and derelict, like a gutted church. We are seated on precarious rostra that appear to be almost randomly placed; little tables and crates with shot glasses scattered over them are distributed. On stage are great vertical brass plates that serve to close the chasm-like space and a long table covered in vodka bottles. The actors are already on stage, barely distinguishable from the audience. The band does a chaotic lap and the play commences. The lights are left on.

At first it feels like an absurdist play. The actors appear to be a bunch of lost people in a nowhere place. Through most of the piece they address the audience while talking to the characters behind them. They don't gaze through or above us but



† Barre Land, *Langs de grote weg (On the highway)*

make pointed contact. You feel unsure as to whether you are actually meant to answer. Just as you decide, yes he is asking me, the character behind answers.

They are travellers stranded at a tavern by the bad weather and they need a drink. One man has no money and says "If I don't get a drink right now I may do something really awful. It is not me who is asking, it is the illness." The barman lurks on the periphery and abuses the customers. The desperate man offers his coat, the barman won't take it. Eventually he offers the locket around his neck saying "Don't touch the picture," and the bar erupts in activity. The band starts up, the bar is brought forward and we are generously plied with vodka to spare.

Now just for the record, let it be said, I was enjoying the piece before *Stolichnaya* appeared. After the vodka it really took off, mainly due to the memorable performance of Jacob Derwig who suddenly appears in the tavern, or pub as they call it (the actors themselves translated the play from Dutch to English), who regales us

with the tale of Bortzov, the drunk who has given his locket for a drink. Once a mighty landlord, he has been destroyed by the misguided love of a woman and the demon drink. At first the object of scorn, he now becomes the object of pity and he is further plied with spirit. And so are we!

Not a lot happens in this early work of Chekhov, but the single plotline is beautifully embroidered with rich characterisations and gentle humour. There is a spirit of energy underlying stillness in the play and the performance that I haven't experienced in theatre for a long time.

Okay, so I am the only one standing and ovating at the end, and yes the vodka warms a poor lonely girl's heart on a cold Tuesday night in Adelaide, but those around me, who are all chatting and toasting each other by now, seem to have had a pretty fabulous time too. As one of the characters says, "Happiness always hides behind your back, you never get to see it." Well, vodka and † Barre Land might just give you a glimpse.

Something happens on one leg, or TJ Kenipsian arrangements

Linda Marie Walker

les lieux de là

(Places over there)

Compagnie Mathilde Monnier

Union Hall, March 9-12

As well as music everywhere, there is visual art (referenced) everywhere—so strange given the lack of (celebrated) attention it's given by the festival (management) overall. Tonight after seeing *Fase* by Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker and Rosas, two different people mention two different artists: Hopper and Reinhardt. These two artists came to mind for them, while watching—the paintings of Hopper, the small insistent moves of Reinhardt. In *Giulio Cesare* there is clearly Duchamp and Magritte (and Man Ray). In *Writing To Vermeer*, Vermeer. *Más Distinguidas* "has everything to do with the visual arts", I was told (by a painter). *Desdemona* is "a collaboration between theatre and visual arts."

It happens in *les lieux de là*, whether intentional or by chance. There's a moment when the artistry of TJ Kempsey (mentioned in RT 2) comes again to mind. As it is just that 'maybe' territory that puts one in doubt, makes one wonder if what one sees is really there. Joseph Beuys is remembered. I heard Beuys being discussed before the lights went up. A Kempsey/Beuys intersection to do with arrangements (bodies) and material (felt)—ideas become attached to people forever, sadly.

Actually, I've gone to bed to write about Monnier's *les lieux de là*—gone to ground, in other words. Might just be late, might be to do with the performance being, to a large extent, laid flat on the floor. The dancers spent much time prone, as I recall (unreliable memory). It seemed already too late to get to 'places over there', too many bodies in the way, blocking, holding, pulling. The places over 'there' impossible, as impossible as being 'here'.

Little headings come to mind, topics for (future) essays. Like:

1. *You just can't get away from some people*

The dancers crawled onto and over each other, breaking away, returning. Seething bundles of bodies, slowing each other down. Falling bodies, crashing backwards, smashing into walls, leaping onto cardboard boxes. It's not pretty dance, as a whole.

2. *Being let go of, carted off*

Watching, vigilant, one tries to make sense, taking the title as a clue, as point of entry (unreasonable). So, carting away is read in relation to... 'whatever'. The body against bodies, so close as to almost merge. Often the fact of the solo-body didn't seem to matter, as this body wanted the intricate 'you' substance of flesh; instead, flesh on flesh; it's not, can't be, fine, delineated, dance, it's messy and complex—the squeezing of one person between two others who resist is a little like watching a lava-lamp, the body has to morph to get elsewhere (past), against the grain (literally).

3. *Music for keeps, like river*

There he was, Alexandre Meyer, the musician, at the back of the stage, sitting in a square of boxes and wires and instruments. Playing guitar some of the time. He was (self) contained, and his music pervaded the whole theatre (unlike the dance, which stayed put). We watched him, we watched the dancers; if we turned from them to him we'd find him on his knees (for example), low down like the dancers, striking a

set of strings. This was music to savour, to want to touch even. Tangible music. Once more, sound that stayed apart, and parted movement at moments when the fused bodies neared freezing.

4. *The mercy of a second half*

And then a voice, French. Might have been part of the music, but wasn't. One of the dancers was miked. The only word I understood was 'animal' ("something something something animal"). The voice became central to the second half, a constant toward the end, and the unwinding of huge bundles of felt was urged/directed by the 'speaker' (I wished I understood).

5. *The method of back-tracking*

"And then, when it's time, at the last minute we run away and we lose it—at least when we were little. We did nothing else but: prepare to escape. What is poignant in the case of *Giulio Cesare* is that when it's time, no one runs away. We go all the way to the altar, to the butcher's, we can't help ourselves, we go all the way to where we don't want to go, it's irresistible. Pushed by desire and terror mixed."

(Hélène Cixous) You can't help but be amazed at what you find in books. A motto from TJ Kempsey, who rang today, about arrangements: "go slow"—immediately I thought of *les lieux*. As arrangements of bodies came/went slowly, little by little. It was rarely about 'a' person or 'an' event, except at one exquisite moment when...

6. *Succumbing to the accordion*

One dancer, dressed in white, stood absolutely still, raised her right leg high in the air, and stayed like that for a long long time. Very still, controlled, and then changed her position, and stayed there, on and on. These few movements were crystal sharp, throwing all the climbing, throwing, dropping movement into relief; a moment to sense the form of the dance. As a complement (or homage) to this 'there' act, the musician, Alexandre Meyer, played the accordion. Standing, leaving the instrument on the floor, he pressed one key and slowly lifted (stretched) the bellow, holding the note like a plateau. Two modest lines, of both endurance and focus, came into alignment, succumbing to a need for respite and calm. Soon though the voice came, from the one who didn't fit, who was outside(r), and refused to leave. A kind of descent; and the moving of stuff (came), brown rhythmic substance (felt), like treacle, from here to there for no good reason.

les lieux de là was thick somehow, perhaps because it often crawled/crept (like slugs, massing, unmassing). It's movement-work

whose internal logic I cannot taste, although it "makes of our body on earth convulsed." (Cixous) Union Hall is not an inspiring venue, it is heavy/dour to sit in, it seemed to weigh upon dancers and audience.

The place over-there is a dark place, imagined; here given shape/space by sound. Dance-works make me wonder: "Ah if we could catch ourselves at it"; but what 'it'; perhaps the 'it' of trying to "see with our own eyes the face of our own door." (Cixous) I am grateful, therefore, to 'dance' for making 'it' self, with other eyes.

Power pianism and Moore Diana Weekes

Lisa Moore

Adelaide Town Hall, March 12

My first lesson with the legendary Rosl Schmid in Munich was a memorable occasion. Having listened, perhaps not so patiently, to my mediocre Mozart and too flashy Chopin, she announced emphatically, and in rather disparaging tones, that she could always tell absolutely everything about a person's character from hearing them play the piano. At the age of 23 I found this presumptuous, intimidating and definitely poor psychology. Now I know better. She was spot on.

Despite years of teaching, performing and concert-going, I have never been quite so aware of this as I was at Lisa Moore's Town Hall gig. A seasoned performer, Moore is a very professional and very powerful pianist who works extremely hard and seems totally in control of all the material she presents. At the same time she appears vulnerable, even a trifle anxious. With a technique more than adequate to handle big romantic textures, complex chord voicing and brilliant passage work, she shows a preference for the emotional overview, the big picture, the broad brush. Her style is simple and direct, not subtle or discreet. No lingering, no longing, but forcefully and forwardly authoritative from beginning to end.

The first half of the program consists of late-romantic/early-20th century works chosen to portray *Wilde's World*, musical styles which reflects fin-de siècle English romanticism (Cyril Scott *Lotus Land* and *Pierrot Triste*), the luminosity of French

impressionism (Debussy *Images Book I*) and the mysticism of Russian decadence (nine of Scriabin's *Preludes* and *Etudes*). Of these, I prefer her interpretation of the Scriabin pieces, all miniatures, where her ability to pounce on the harmonic skeleton and manipulate its melodic muscle makes perfect musical sense. They are all clearly and convincingly projected, passionately powerful.

However it is in the second half that Moore comes into her own with a performance of Frederic Rzewski's *De Profundis*, for speaking pianist (1992). A significant and complex work more properly (but inadequately) described as a music theatre piece, this is not only a test of pianistic strength and musical savoir faire, but a vocal tour de force involving extraordinary physical and mental co-ordination. I remember another lesson with Jascha Spivakowsky in Melbourne (at age 18) in which, desperate to somehow improve my seriously stodgy performance of the Chopin "Butterfly" Etude Op 25 No 9, he sat down and performed it perfectly while at the same time delivering a lecture on Spring, sunshine, birds, and the joys of youth. You have to be very, very good to talk and play at the same time. It was a knock-out. So is Lisa Moore's performance of *De Profundis*.

Based on excerpts from the 80-page letter written by Wilde to Lord Alfred ("Bosie") Douglas during his incarceration in Reading Gaol, the text is pithy, insightful, and poignantly descriptive, the language at times extremely intimate. Rzewski's realisation of the work involves musical and pianistic clichés punctuated and personalised by a wide variety of vocal sound effects including sighs, grunts, groans, and other expressive utterances too difficult to describe. Rigged with body mike, Moore delivers a vocal soundscape in perfect synchronicity with the musical gestures and guaranteed to heighten the text's emotional content. Blessed with a beautiful speaking voice, her delivery of the actual text is clear and confronting, often profoundly moving. Impressive, too, is the purely percussive sequence where, with the piano lid closed, subtle effects are created by tickling, slapping, and knocking not only the piano but the performer's own body, all—in this performance anyway—one and the same instrument.

Without an intimate knowledge of the score, I probably missed much of the

work's deeper meaning, but its ongoing references to Stravinsky's *Sonata* of 1924 are unmistakable. These are in some ways the most challenging moments pianistically—even reminiscent of Godowski's transcriptions of the Chopin Etudes—but Moore sweeps through the most chromatically convoluted passages and frenetic fugal labyrinths with the ease and greed of the Minotaur. You can usually tell how good a pianist is from the extent to which the instrument becomes simply an extension of the body. Rzewski's *De Profundis* is specifically written for an excellent pianist. This performance of the work by Lisa Moore may well be as good as it gets.

From the cutting room floor Virginia Baxter Keith Gallasch

Slow Love

Scott Theatre, March 11 - 14

Some people love *Slow Love*. Some people do not. Why is that?

Surfacing

If postmodernism has taught us anything, it is that there is depth in surface.

"Below the glorious surface patina lies some out-dated ideas and a second rate text delivered by uninvolved actors."
Adelaide Advertiser

"Just because we have eyes doesn't mean we know how to see." Peter Greenaway

Conversation overheard after de Keersmaker's *Fase*.

Man: I like something to be happening on stage.

Woman: The precision of the dancer's concentration on getting all those moves right, isn't that something?

Slow Love is pure surface, its figures are iconic.

When the actors become real we lose depth.

One of the male actors is in danger of turning into a character.

Slow Love is a widescreen, sumptuous, intensely coloured surface, the Godard of *Pierrot Le Fou*.

Slow Love has too many surfaces, too many images.

Too many surfaces thins the attention to surfaces.

Too many roses.

The fight is too real.

The fight is a surprise, it breaks the surface. It must.

There is lovemaking that looks like fighting.

I wait for surfaces to break.

Screening

Slow Love is hundreds of stage moves and hundreds of lighting states.

Watching *Slow Love* is like watching the film as well as some of the bits that made it onto the cutting room floor and a little bit of *Last Year at Marienbad*.

The blackouts are not blackouts. They are edits, the punctuation for replays, jump-cuts.

"It's sheer panic up there." Ivan Pecnik, actor *Slow Love*

Slow Love is fast—light on, light off, like walking repeatedly into a darkened room afraid of what is lurking there. A different fear (or desire) is realised every time.

Slow Love is not fast enough. In the age of Virilio, the theorist of speed, and the videoclip, the blackout is not up to it.

20-something conversation after *Slow Love*. "How about leaving out the still bits and showing us the actors running around the set changing costume or maybe the whole thing in 10 minutes."

Embodying

"The body itself is a psychic accident." *Slow Love*

The visual language of desire is limited. She undoes her bra and the light fades. He takes off his clothes and looks in the mirror. Blackout.

Young woman in audience: "Their movements are more like poses. The action (man-woman + woman-woman + man-man = stalemate) is predictable. This and the video makes it all feel like an extended mix of the Hugo Boss commercial."

There is a Hugo Boss commercial in *Slow Love*. Is this Hugo Boss' *Slow Love*?

Love is...

"Love is interrogation." Milan Kundera
Slow Love is the world in a room and love

holding hands with death.

Slow Love plays in the shadows of narrative, my erogenous zone.

I love *Slow Love*.

I remember following a lover's every move, watching him through a window walking to work, disappearing into doorways and when I couldn't see him, thinking about what he was doing. I almost lost track of my own life.

The woman

In my notebook I write something which I discover later is written over a page I've already written on. All I can make out is the word "Woman."

Slow Love begins with a woman's thought about having so much inside trying to get out. Then she slaps his face. He arrives and arrives and arrives. I love this.

"You see it before it happens." Lyndal Jones, *Prediction Pieces*

She instigates but doesn't control or carry out the action.

Where is the equivalent between the women of the fight between the men.

A woman says, "The libidinal climate has changed since the 1983 premiere."

In internet chat rooms where gender is a moveable concept more people identify themselves as female so others will talk to them. *Verve: the new writing*

In *Slow Love*, is bi-sexuality ever a real possibility?

A man twirls a black umbrella and sings "Singin' in the Rain", following in the footsteps of Gene Kelly. Two women jostle on the bed at the back. The other man sits moodily downstage hatching aggression. When the fight erupts the women stand with their arms folded across their bellies and watch.

"She drove an ambulance in wartime. In peacetime she couldn't even drive a car." *Slow Love*

Why doesn't she attack the other woman, confide in her, wear the man's clothes, lose herself in action, talk, yell? Why is she lost again in sultry leaning, falling, giving in, looking out? A film noir woman held in a genre-lock. Why show us this woman now?

Biomachine

Slow Love is a Biomachine

Four performers, like a machine, like a string quartet, generate infinite possibilities from a small set of passions and permutations.

The emotional matter of *Slow Love* is in the action of the bodies.

Imagine *Slow Love* at one end of the large Port Adelaide Biomachines warehouse Anna Sabiel suspended by wires at the other making mechanical music as she slowly transfers her weight to 44 gallon drums full of water.

After the affair

Slow Love is an Australian classic though most Australians have never heard of it. People who saw the original productions directed by Jean-Pierre Mignon in 1983 in Melbourne and Kerry Dwyer in 1987 in Sydney say it changed the way they saw theatre...and desire.

Dream after *Slow Love*: I am scolded by theatre ushers for reading the signs on the walls instead of watching the performance on stage. (The writing on the wall?)

Nightmare: the ushers turn to nurses and start reading each action on my part as a sign of transgression: *Rebecca, Gaslight, Suspicion*.

"I got here but I don't remember how."

Slow Love

"A work is never closed." Bill Seaman (*Red Dice*), Festival Forum

Slow Love is a text in which the world is larger than words.

Letter to Stratford from Adelaide 2000

Dear William,

Once theatre-going was safe. There were clear rules to frame and protect performers and audience members alike. As you said once, the play is, as it were, a mirror held up to nature and in it we can see reflections of our lives. As an audience member I was expected to peer into that mirror, to suspend my disbelief and attend to what the company (but most often the playwright) wanted. Characters were motivated, effect followed cause and, just before the rush to the car park, all turned out

well or poorly for the characters we had been observing. They stayed in their fictional worlds and we stayed in ours—in those comfy red velour seats.

But William, here in Adelaide, things have changed. From the first minute of this festival I've been unable to sit back and attend to the play as I usually do in the theatre. Well, I start by sitting back and then it goes wrong. The first show I saw was *Most Distinguished Pieces*, a solo performance by Maria Ribot. As I walked in I couldn't help but be taken by her naked form—stretched out, her back to us, like some classical goddess. As I settled in to wait for her to start, she began by peering into a circular mirror and rolling it the length of her body. The mirror reflected her every curve as she peered into it, making eye contact with the audience's reflected image. I had to look away. As if this wasn't enough (her watching me watch her) she performed the whole show without clothes and ended strangely by writing on her body with crayons as she danced across the stage. The whole performance was done with the lights on (so I felt particularly exposed) and regularly she would look directly at us, but me in particular, challenging my invisibility and making it hard for me to find pleasure in her performance. I didn't know what to feel or think.

Things didn't improve with the next show *Something on Bach* by Les Ballets C de la B. Things started well enough with a collection of idiosyncratic characters showing us their world and relationships, all held together by the music of Bach. Then, without warning, the song "One of Us" by the American singer Prince, blasted across the work. For the audience this was a great relief. All of us jumped to our feet, most sang and clapped along, some even climbed onto the stage and danced with the performers. Up there on the stage it was hard to tell performers from audience members. We became one. Then the song ended and with it the elation and euphoria. We were left in a state of bleak and dismal horror which extended for the rest of the show. The longer this desolation continued the more I felt some responsibility for what had happened. It was as if this most American slice of commercialism could only be as corrosive as it was because of my impulsive, rapturous and somewhat mindless support. As an audience member I was no longer seeing a reflection of nature, William, it was as if I

had entered the mirror to influence nature itself.

In the third piece, *Giulio Cesare* you would not recognise your Brutus and Cassius. Unlike the first 2 festival pieces, this performance appeared to respect the invisible line which separates the make-believe world of the players and our world as audience. However this separation was made messy when we were confronted by actors whose anorexic 'bodily truths' overwhelmed the make-believe to confront and unsettle us. This Brutus and Cassius, shambling and anorexically brittle, were almost impossible to bear. It was as if the images of these stick-like bodies in decline filled the mirror with an excess of nature and in so doing refused to be contained by their own reflection.

So, William, here in Adelaide your proposals about nature, mirrors and reflection don't appear to be holding. These new men and women of the theatre relish playing with and along the once tidy line which separated audience from performer. All the existing rules for engagement are being re-written.

Perhaps you shouldn't worry too much. For all the experimentation, for all the striving to forge a more 'watchable' theatre your work continues to offer inspiration. Fourteen of your plays (or spin-offs from them) are showing in and around Adelaide this week, suggesting that at least some ways of discovering the utterly new may lie in excavating your old Warwickshire words and forms.

Sincerely
Brad Haseman

Heavens

Keith Gallasch

Barbara/O - the strozzi project

Space Theatre, March 14

Soviet and Beyond

Adelaide Town Hall, March 13

The night before last I was in heaven, the music provided by my favourite composers from the former Soviet Russia—Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli and, now resident in Australia, Elena Kats-Chernin. Kancheli's *Diplipito* with its superb exchanges between counter-tenor (David Vivian Russell), cellist

(David Pereira) and orchestra (Tasmania Symphony Orchestra, conductor David Porcelijn), and its often lush, almost romantic scoring was transcendent, especially in its final, quietly breath-taking alternations between silences and a guitar-cello pairing with the counter-tenor descending into a percussive d-p-t-ing. In the Schnittke, Gubaidulina and Kancheli works there is strong sense of dramaturgy, of voices and forces at work in an unfolding drama. In the concert's finale I thought my heaven might be shut down. The title of Elena Kats-Chernin's new work was *Heaven is Closed*. But not so. Her heaven might not be religious (as it is for Schnittke, Gubaidulina and Kancheli) but it seems to be of the moment, the bliss of the present, soon a huge all-embracing dance. And although sections of the orchestra pair off against each other in marvellous counter-rhythms, the effect is cumulative, the orchestra as one voice, an uninterrupted whirling and tangoing, sweeping the audience along with it.

The next night, I'm in a new heaven, listening to the music of Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677), a contemporary of Monteverdi, and, from the evidence of this finely sung performance (mezzo-soprano Maria Jonas as Strozzi), an innovative and passionate composer whose music is relatively unknown. All the songs were memorable. Doubling the pleasure is the accompaniment on the long-necked chitarrone (Stephan Rath), baroque cello (Bernard Heinrich) and harpsichord (Andrea Scherer), initially off-stage with the instruments placed apart creating a sense of space corresponding with the falls of golden cloth, the flames that glow intermittently behind and the shadows that flicker across them.

The first image we see is of a tall dark haired woman (dancer and choreographer Michaela Isabel Fünfhausen), skin white, her back turned to us, standing on a black plinth, a statue, quite classical. Wrapped in fine white cloth that trails across the floor, she eventually half turns to look at us, defiant but perhaps curious, first one direction then another, soon unfurling the material until naked. She leaves. Strozzi appears in Renaissance dress, singing, moving slowly, elegantly until interrupted by the entrance of an insect woman (the same woman we first saw on the plinth), no longer innocent asexual classical beauty, hair sticking up in tight twists and knots, tongue blue, outfit black, addition-

ally dressed in the frame of a metal skirt (echoes of the final scenes of *Writing to Vermeer* where the women, now in modern black, slip into and hide in golden, metallic outlines of full dresses) and with the tallest of platform shoes. She sheds the metal dress precipitating a darkly ecstatic dance that will take her, in stages, to the work's conclusion.

Her body is strong and full but she moves with a strange angularity, spider like, bird-like, her arms shaping like wings to her sides and above, rubbing her hands before her like a bee, wide-eyed, intense, restless. Her shoes anchor her wilder movements but at times they impede her, she drags them, hoists and angles them acutely just as she does her hands and arms. She exits, soon to return, shoeless, earthed, rolling through golden shellac (the shedding of insects, like that woven into the cloth walls above her). It sticks to her. Gold and sweat glitter as she appears to pay half her attention to the singing—until she finds a half peeled fruit left by Strozzi. She is Barbara/O, some kind of Strozzi alter ego (Barbara of Baroque, Barbarian, Saint Barbara etc), an elemental force (another one, like Mrs Gollancz in *The Ecstatic Bible*), utterly discrete from the composer in dress, demeanour and movement, oblivious to her until she has worked out her own release. As the scenario evolves there will be some kind of union between these two.

Another doubling occurs in the music, an alternation between Strozzi compositions for the mezzo-soprano playing her, and those by Kats-Chernin for the dancer. Again there is a sense of the roles being diametrically opposed. However, in the music there is always the possibility of a merging because both sets of works are scored for the same instruments, and there are occasions when those musics flow into each other rather than interrupt or simply follow one another. Initially, Kats-Chernin's music sounds like a bewildered baroque, unsettled and unsettling, with insect-like clicks and buzzes, but soon a there's a forceful march of a dance, lopsided and guttural as the insect woman begins her increasingly turbulent exorcism, her hair falling out of its knots, the body spinning, casting off a heavy cloth robe—she stops, looking as if surprised at the suddenness of its shedding. Kats-Chernin's *Barbarian Dances 1 and 2* (with its cello-led asymmetrical time-keeping) release Barbara/O so that in turn she can remove

Strozzi's blindfold and at last take her hand, and the hand of the spritely harpsichordist, and map out a chalk circle which they will share in song and dance.

The simple scenario is more symbolic than narrative, working through images and associations, alternating Strozzi's song and Barbara/O's dance until they can co-exist. The action is not complex and is dressed with secondary and incidental action, little visual ideas and jokes—the women servants (Strozzi's 'shadows' who set the space) have turns at dancing with the musicians, small flirtations occur, someone falls asleep and looks like a picture, someone draws a classical column on the black plinth and sits atop it. Some of the imagery seems quaint—Strozzi hanging cutout hearts and arrows on hooks (something to do with the song lyrics?), and some of the stage action is uncomfortably placed, suggesting that the performance area in the space is too small for the scope of the production, especially when Barbara/O rolls on the floor, out of sight for many of the audience. The play of light and shadow in the early scenes has the potential to evoke the otherness the production requires, but is too undefined and random to be effective—again the space might be too small to make such a device work.

Opening night presented problems for *Barbara/O*, the production needs time and space to settle, but the power of the music is undeniable, as is the sheer strangeness of the dance and the energy committed to it (as opposed to the delicious ease of the singing). Whether or not the dynamic between the Strozzi and Barbara/O characters is strong enough to really sustain the work will also depend on how it develops—the eventual union of the 2 women is poetic but seems more to do with the dancer's passionate release than anything the Strozzi character does. Perhaps that's what it's about. Similarly, the radical difference between the conception of the 2 characters—Strozzi looking utterly of her time, Barbara/O so exotically contemporary, Strozzi calm and elegant, her emotion strictly in her singing, Barbara/O driven, all overt physicality and dark sensuality—make for a difference that at times lacks both subtlety and a sense of a bridge between this re-discovered woman of the past and the tormented woman of the present. Strozzi, it seems, lived a passionate, possibly illicit and certainly creative life, and

composed and performed her music in private because of the restrictions on the public lives of women artists. We sense none of this from the on-stage Strozzi, rather she is like a precious object; her energy and sensuality is placed in Barbara/O who has to double both as an alter ego and a contemporary of ours attempting to connect with, even rescue a great spirit from the past. Although the rescue works both ways it creates problems of meaning and balance. *Barbara/O* has begun, intriguingly but needs time to grow.

Other RealTime writers were less intrigued. Drew Crawford writes: "Claiming to have formed wanting 'to combine 'Early Music' with 'New Movement', Condanza place themselves - unwittingly - alongside Les Ballets C de la B whose *Iets Op Bach* has not only been the hit of the festival so far but a life-changing experience for many who saw their thrilling live combination of Bach and modern dance. Thankfully, the festival is not a competition, because even without labouring under comparisons with C de la B who closed only the night before, *Barbara/O* is still an anaemic piece, a few workshops short of a festival showing. The idea is interesting enough (if not actually dramatic) - one of Australia's finest composers re-animates and re-contextualises an under-appreciated master composer from the seventeenth century locked out of the canon because of her sex."

Diana Weekes was even less happy. "To begin with, it is not difficult to understand why Barbara Strozzi has remained anonymous for so long, however fascinating her music may be to the enlightened specialist. From Kats-Chernin we have Strozzi-based early Baroque meanderings in mostly minor keys slashed by sudden cut-offs, and a lot of improvisational ugliness masquerading as music. All rather dull and uninspiring. There is plenty of structure, but you really need the program to know about it. When it comes to a combination of scholarly research and informed performance practice, this festival has set high standards. *Barbara/O* - the Strozzi project seems to lack this artistic cohesion. For me it is disappointing not only because of a lack of discipline, but because thematic self-indulgence actually gets the upper hand."

Passion and small things

Zsuzsanna Soboslay

My Vicious Angel

Vitalstatistix

March 12

Iets Op Bach

Les Ballets C de la B

Festival Theatre, March 11

Slow Love

Malpertuis Theatre

Scott Theatre, March 12

Les Lieux De La

Mathilde Monnier Company

Union Hall, March 11

To arrive: an event in itself. Night in roadside Motel Hitchcock, Baygon and brick, restless child turning circles into sharp walls. As if a festival doesn't leave you raw enough. We come to the party already raw, unrested in madcap rooms. And always, for the baby's sake, on the lookout for swings. The clasp of her hand on my neck at midnight, dark hours; her needs for risk and certainty, new and old, in equal measure. Falling, running, recovering; being held. The intimacy of looking after: care, anew. A backwards progression.

Milk, menses, ink, stigmata, tears: this festival seems to play with what we let walk beside us, speak through us, what we shunt into discrete quadrants of our lives, until the raw-oil geyser of experience spurts, breaking/worrying/shaking the ground.

Falling, being held. My Vicious Angel: a play about a trapeze artist, fallen, paralysed. Two sisters replay their childhood, do a re-take on a mis-scripted youth of rivalry and dissatisfaction. Father disappears into the sea; neurotic mother fails miserably to knit together the bones of broken relationships. Aren't women, mothers, meant to knit things together for their families?

Her bones are broken; her lifeline is frayed. This spine is snapped, though memory still charges her to move... This play is quite poignant, in the end, in its re-scripting of a tale gone wrong. And yet, for all the splayed-out and spitting passions, its fine architecture and sometimes accurate words, it is too literal for me. *A fails b, cre-*

ates *c*: like the set, we climb ladders to memory and back again. There are layers in the swing of things where you don't know what's been broken, where the ground has gone. As they leave, I see in people's eyes an appreciation of how well the actors play children, parents, nightmares, but we haven't met our own complex cripplings, questioned our own ground.

Tumbling, juggling: there's a toddler—a real one—in *lets Op Bach* tricycling the stage amidst roastings, lechery, lynchings, wildfire. Her constancy touches me as I touch soil under crisis: her ribboned presence a *continuo* beneath the carryings-on. I weep, often, wet and long, throughout this work: when the man leers at the fully-dressed pubescent dancing amongst half-naked women, as if she, what is beneath this plaited, long-sleeved she, is an easy hamburger for the taking. Smell her youth. She balances a fold-up chair against her legs, almost dutifully, this small responsible being. She is also nearly strangled by the Ones With a Cause for chanting "I [still] love everyone in the world". The alto sings "*Slumber all ye care and sorrow/Til the morrow, /Like a child from worry free*" [BWV 197], a poignant counterpoint to this disharmony.

There is no answer here. A macabre circus: poetry is knocked over as it stretches a limb, a xylophone burns, the aircon duct throttles a fullstop. *And the child keeps cycling*. Like a Breughel painting come to life, a chaos of little integrities. This is molecular, not psychoanalytic, knowing.

This raucous, bloodied work makes me glad to be alive to see this mirror back on myself. I recognise where I fear life, what contradictions, imperfections I don't like to see. They're up there dancing, baby. Sometimes from such places of grief we can come to looking.

Adults only: Slow Loves: betrayals, bed-hopping, perhaps the beginning of new cognitions. These are not so much characters as types playing roles with which, outside of the theatre strobe, they might actually get bored. Passions with short fuses; love-gestures interchanging cheaply between lovers and lives. What holds it all together, the need to cheat and swap and plunder others' bodies? Between takes, in the blackouts, other options lie.

The love triangle has a fourth point, where



Mathilde Monnier Company, *Les Lieux De La*

the real questions can be asked. It is something about the men being examined here (not really the women, although for once we see both breasts *and* penises, thank god): something still radical, perhaps missed when this over 20-year-old work was first shown. "What holds us together is our passion for the same woman..." The men begin an exploration, sometimes violent, sometimes tender, of their similar mis-takes. Central to the work is some suspicion that no-one is quite sure what (as opposed to who) is being fucked.

There are beds, but not much sleeping here. Is sleep impossible once you are no longer a child?

Minding, caring. Les lieux de là. A dance of

vagrants, is it, an almost autistic shuffling (insular, though still in motion, rhythm-ing the sidewalk). We might just step over his body later when he sleeps. A masked man, the centre link in a human chain, trying to find a way to move, progress. Who is he? In this quite even-toned work, do we even care?

As I watch, I wonder how we are chained to each other—as lovers, friends, strangers; to space, to walls, to music and silence; as molecules. The dancers become moving mounds of blankets, get heads stuck in walls. One dancer is held by two men, another held suspended by a wall. We see two sets of legs at the same angle in space. What is it that really holds us? Does a pair of hands make a difference, or none?

I love you, but need to give you into another's arms... Our childminding falls through. We do a shuffle, cope. We lay her to bed at night in different unfamiliar beds. And surely what we should wish is a world where the vulnerability of the beholder is equal to or greater than the vulnerability of the person beheld. (Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty, and Being Just*). Patting her hair, we look into the orb of her skull, into a future that will always be as full of doubt and contradictions.

This is not a writing

Linda Marie Walker

Slow Love

Theatre Malpertuis

Scott Theatre, March 11-12

Giulio Cesare

Societas Raffaello Sanzio

Playhouse, March 9-12

There are sound-works everywhere this festival, in the performing arts; it's as if the festival is corralled by composers, musicians and instruments. This was so last festival (as I recall), perhaps I'm tuned differently this time. And of course it's to be expected, music being a strength of Robyn Archer's. These sound-works are substantial and integral to the 'theatre' they are found within.

Okay, maybe I'm wrong. Perhaps I should take this, sound I mean, for granted. But, but...there is Stevie Wishart playing her music for slow-love, music for characters whose slowness (about love) is maddening, letting it pass by, turn ugly, stupid, sad, etc. And the music plays on. The film will never end—are we still posing, hopefully/lessly, framed by cranks, the ones who wrote 'those' romantic books ("and when he drew her close to him, when they danced, his eyes..."), made those Hollywood 'pictures', sang those songs... Anyway, the speedy, exhausting action of *Slow Love* (an exhaustion in rapturous pursuit of itself) is precise, and often renders the rushed body languid and annoyingly dramatic. But, that's also the aesthetic, one of visual resolve, well-lit intention. What gives the work its dynamic, its sense of having come the distance (from 1983 to 2000) is the sound-work. I can't imagine that the funny-edges Wishart brought to the performance were evident back then. Except for the loud, didactic passages (partitions) that were

meant to anchor/unanchor me (perhaps; tell me where I was, theoretically), the music swept along, crackling now and then. Not sure if 'crackling' was sound or sound-system. It didn't matter. I liked watching Stevie Wishart. I wished she'd glowed brightly, on stage (like Alexandre Meyer in *les lieux de là*). Still, her constant presence was a resting point amidst the turmoil of the characters. It's wonderful when art forms sit on the verge of each, happy to be in the mix. Not in a confused way, but as if about to shatter intended sense. Stevie Wishart composed the music, played violin, hurdy-gurdy, and electronics, and sang.

This atmosphere that music 'becomes'—not an atmosphere that is 'provided' by sound, as if part of the set, or of the conditioning which implies (implores) emotion, time, tense, etc—is here central to both works. And it is about the music 'becoming' itself, and making itself separate, to be considered as language. (In the case of *Giulio Cesare*, as rhetoric, as speech, and conversation, and demand, and statement, and declaration.) This sound is not A Scape, thankfully. Instead it's a world, transitory, restless, repetitive, forceful (violent).

The two 'scores' are not equational, although they both work a language, or make a language workable or active, impossible too—they are that sort of matter or material. Each, a rich 'thing'; sound as a-thing, sonorous, crossing the space of seeing. A, and the, voice of 'everything'—and because it can't be single, being made-up of vibrations, it is already of the 'unlikely'. Romeo Castellucci writes in the program for *GC*: "It (awareness) is an awareness that borders on instinct (and inevitably ends up in tragedy...). It is being aware of lifting the language game to the unlikely, increasing the stakes to the limit of chaos, probably." Yes, and so it happens in the sound, even though it is composed, produced, timed. If Duchamp's *The Large Glass* was sound, it might sound like Castellucci's composition: a condensed poetic language (the thing about this thing is that it is a thing, and cannot be attended only via evocation—it's like the metal chair on stage which walks around, it is evocation (let's pretend) of 'nothing'—just itself). What (feeling, desire, love) comes about then is a need to consider (make-up) a language with which to talk of a sound-thing, specifically this *GC* one. As it is spatial,

like a room or a road or a desert or 'history' (as text). But not analogous, this is its trouble, and a good-trouble in this work.

(The live music of Stevie Wishart is more easily witnessed as sound-track, less object-like, but is nevertheless a form of sound-thing—a work in parallel with another, creating a resonant 'between-ness'.)

I'm sure Castellucci has read all of Duchamp's notes. Duchamp wrote: "One could find a whole series of things to be heard (or listened to) with a single ear." With a single ear...what does he mean? And yet...I thought I heard a voice, so I came this way. (I was touched by Stevie Wishart's voice. It was, almost, the only live voice in *Slow Love*.) The voice comes from inside, like a fluid; each voice its own voice, each a voice of possible voices—I answer the phone, hello, and someone says, is that you, yes, it doesn't sound like you ... are you alright? The voice makes speech (and this was part of the ruin of *GC*, more ruined than the 'landscape'—and maybe only audible by a single ear; as if there are two (ears), then it was necessary to listen elsewhere with the other (with one ear to the ground, for example). Voice is shared, and this sharing is not about meaning. It's 'thing.'

It might be that the sound for *GC* was the voice of invisible matter, or of matter long lost, of nerves stretched and broken, and memories ages old—just the voice of contractions unwilling to rest (like bad death; and death everywhere on the stage: stuffed animals, murder, decay, suicide). Sounds all mixed up (in me): trains (many), cries, flies buzzing, music, singing, crowds, banging. I thought several times during the performance that the sound-'thing' was the sound of mind itself/themselves, that what we were hearing was the minds of the not-actors, as the 'characters' of the performance. That this was what they were hearing inside, as the incoming of the outside, and the endless passing-by of the inside-past (trains).

You can sense what has happened. Sound, the thing of sound, has made me a 'bit' mad, because my favourite philosopher reckons voice is not a 'thing', yet I feel voice, as if reached/felt by it (like Wishart's voice—no other voice in *Slow Love* touched me, they were posed/clari-fied voices: this was their purpose.

GC was 'all-about' voice/sound, and the

thingness of things. If a chair walks and a cat's head spins and shards of *The Large Glass* appear (and explode) then sound/voice is 'thing' (calling another sound/voice to 'speak'). *GC* was one long interval: "That's when everything happens." (Castellucci)

The piano, and pianism, growing up

Chris Reid

Ensemble 415

Mozart and Haydn

Adelaide Town Hall, March 12

Music for the 'pocket orchestra', or keyboard, epitomises Western music making of the last two centuries—the interplay of voices (melodic and harmonic), the use (or abuse) of melodic form and development, and tempi, tone and texture. Composers' writing for the piano is a guide to their larger works and reveals their (compositional) character. Perhaps more of a composer is seen through their keyboard writing than for any other instrument or ensemble, especially as many composers sit, in introspection, to write at the keyboard.

Pianist Geoffrey Lancaster and members of Swiss Ensemble 415 cast new light on Mozart, performing three trios (KV502, 542 and 548) for piano, violin and cello. Lancaster's piano is similar to one that the virtuoso Mozart might have used. In the 1780s, the piano was a newish instrument, different from today's. Lancaster's has no pedals, a smaller range and, significantly, is quieter, with a light, delicate sound easily masked by louder instruments. Mozart's writing in these trios typically uses the piano to state the theme. This is then repeated by the strings while the piano provides harmonic support in a cascade of notes, before the roles are reversed. The style of keyboard writing seems to fall between that for the harpsichord and that for the more modern piano.

Lancaster, with Ensemble 415 members Chiara Banchini (violin) and Kathy Gohl (cello) gave a superb and insightful account of the Mozart trios. While the piano parts are very detailed, requiring virtuosic technique, the cello parts are comparatively sparse, though there are moments of magic. The violin parts allow some glorious playing and Banchini's vio-

lin possesses a delightfully rich, full sound. The ensemble playing is crisp, delicate and well articulated. Strangely, the sound balance seems to emphasise the strings over the piano.

The writing for the solo piano, in Haydn's sonata in E major Hob XVI:49, is more fully voiced. This and other sonatas by Haydn (and Mozart) influenced later composers such as Haydn's sometime pupil, Beethoven. (Beethoven favoured a heavier piano with a sustain pedal, producing a more expressive sound.)

Lancaster's rendering of the Haydn sonata is superb. The writing is more introverted than Mozart's, suggesting Haydn's mood or perhaps his musical development and freedom. The second movement, marked *adagio cantabile*, is most poignant, and the thematic development and use of subsidiary themes is highly dramatic and accomplished, presaging the next generation's Romanticism. The piano's expressiveness is pushed to the limit and its sound becomes thoroughly engaging. The final movement is light and enchanting.

People need to sit at the front of the Adelaide Town Hall to fully appreciate such instrumentation. But Ensemble 415 has given a wonderful series of concerts, casting new light on fabulous music of past eras and on the evolution of composition and performance.

We are one but we are many

Stephanie Radok

Beyond the Pale

2000 Adelaide Biennial of

Australian Art

Art Gallery of South Australia

Who are these people?
From which direction have they come?
And how shall we know them?

Beyond the Pale means outside the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Historically, the Pale refers to Calais when under English jurisdiction; or an area of Ireland under English jurisdiction; or the areas of Russia to which Jewish residence was restricted. It is a phrase related to restrictions and authority, borders and discrimination. The reference to the pale in the 6th Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art has many links: there is a paling fence

made by Ian Abdullah who also includes a milk pail in his work; there is pale skin painted by Julie Dowling, pale skin which is still Aboriginal skin; there are confronting works by Gordon Hookey who does a lot of swearing and paints a piggy John Howard humping Australia.

Brenda L Croft ends her catalogue essay: "Don't fence them (Indigenous people) out."

Well, Aboriginal artists are certainly not fenced out of the gallery. Much of their artwork is about their culture, their history, their contemporary context, thus it has a strong didactic level as well as humour, such as Destiny Deacon's dolls and gollies. Photographs show Darren Siwes as a ghostly presence in various locations in Adelaide; Michael Riley considers the arrival of Christianity; Rea's work replicates the aura of a museum display, Aboriginal people as targets of both ethnography and rifleography. Through their artwork, the artists, communities and experiences come into the gallery and into the consciousness of the people who see the work and understand that Australia, the continent, the country, the nation, the land, holds all these experiences. The work also says a lot about the people living on the land, their history and social present.

How long have I been looking at Aboriginal art?

My knowledge stretches back to 1972, when I was lucky enough to be shown cave paintings on islands near Gruyt Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Respect, wonder, fascination were my responses. I remember travelling in a slow boat through a world of islands, the clear sea, tropical rain, and a small shark following us in the shallows, stones like turtles on top of other stones. We fished, we cooked fish, we ate fish, saw frill-necked lizards and watched out for crocodiles. We visited Maningrida by light aircraft and bought baskets. I became aware of behaviour regulations when a man could not travel with or speak to or even look at his mother-in-law. There was segregation. I saw Third World living conditions. There was knowledge and revelation, power and powerlessness. I took away and kept with me the notion of another country, another prior country in Australia, very different from the country I knew but occupying the same ground.

Contemporary, modern, traditional, folk,

critical, tourist, kitsch, naïve, Aboriginal art mixes categories and crosses boundaries. Work that can be categorised under all these headings appear in this Biennial

In 1997 Howard Morphy curated an exhibition for the Museum of Modern Art at Oxford. The exhibition was called *In Place (Out of Time): Contemporary Art in Australia*. It included artworks by Gordon Bennett, Tom Djumburrpurr, Fiona Foley, Rosalie Gascoigne, Philip Gudthaykudthay, John Mawurndjul, George Milpururru, Eubena Nampitjin, Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Judy Watson and Clara Wubugwubug. In the essay Morphy argued that "The category 'contemporary Aboriginal art' poses a problem precisely because, since it is defined only on ethnic grounds, it is extremely heterogeneous and eclectic. While some works in the category are readily identified on formal grounds as 'Aboriginal', many others are indistinguishable in formal terms from paintings produced by contemporary artists of European descent. Through its diversity, 'Aboriginal Art' as a category challenges the traditional boundaries of the Western art world. It represents the diversity of world art without the categorical subdivisions; it is a denial of traditional art-history. The global significance of the category 'Aboriginal art' as presently constituted is that it includes, in an ethnically defined category, works that would equally fit into that dominant unmarked category 'contemporary fine art.'"

I pulled out this quotation from Morphy because he goes on to argue for the removal of boundaries between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art.

On coming down the stairs to the Biennial the first work that you see is Fiona Hall's *Occupied Territory* (1995) (which is not really part of the Biennial), a marvellous work, a work of marvel, in which small glass beads and wire form the shapes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous plants: fig, pear, angophora, acacia, oak, banksia and Norfolk Island pine. The next thing you see is the sister baskets made by Aboriginal women in missions in the 30s. Links and interlockings. The strong Adelaide Biennial that I see, perhaps for 2002, does not divide Australian art into Indigenous and non-Indigenous but mixes them together. Clinton Nain's spurts of bleach connect with those of Dale Frank, Matthys Gerber and Adam Cullen upstairs in the Male Painting Gallery. Hey.



Destiny Deacon, *It shows no fear*, 1999 courtesy of the artist

How do we evaluate artworks, decide what we like and why? How do we sense sincerity and urgency, passion and justness in paint and canvas? If I am told there is meaning in a work, will I find it there? Or do I need to feel it against my own senses, my own experience?

To my mind the most outstanding works in the Biennial are by Long Tom Tjapanangka. These paintings vibrate with vitality as do those of Mitjili Naparrula. Kitty Kantilla and Lena Nyadbi also show strong works. Gertie Huddleston's essentially naïve paintings are delightfully embroidered with detail. Then there is Destiny Deacon and Michael Riley's No Shame Productions video, *I don't want to be a bludger*.

This Adelaide Biennial of Contemporary Art provides a portrait of a people, a nation, diverse, wide-flung, capturing tradition, striking out into the future. Who is the audience for the Adelaide Biennial? And how shall we know them?

Undivided time Zsuzsanna Soboslay

A Quelle Heure Commence Le Temps?

Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne
Adelaide Town Hall, March 10.

I used to be aware of movement as a kind of humming. I'd watch molecules dance as

children rode rocking horses, or the stars turned. I don't know why I used to see this, except that it seemed reality was showing itself, and that the surfaces of my eyes, my skin were like that of timpani, the beat of the world amplified within, and the rub of my own muscles underneath lumping the surface into gestures and words outside.

Bernard Levy's libretto asks, "When does time begin?"—surely a question resident in our flesh: I listen now, but when does *now* begin? If I sing, does the *now* start when a note leaves my lips, or in my breath preparing to sing? As I listen to *you* is this your heart beating, the memory of it, or the anticipation that I hear? It is all these things, and especially in Gilles Tremblay's piece. Strings pull microtones out of a single harmonic point, splintering its substance. A thousand eggs crack in the sky.

And when the boat's sail sings, and baritone Michel Ducharme's vocal chords thicken and thin out like beaten canvas; when his voice pitches so finely within the orchestral frothing, so that you don't hear so much as see the pitch at which it levels, billowing; when the voice spews seawrack, or breaks, yelping, flotsam splintering into soprano from its base (a chocolate, foaming sound), my surface, too, is these.

Membrane carries the memory of an undivided time.

a, e, o, i... no less than the beginning of all life, all sounds, dropping like pearls. So, too, once, my daughter at three months, exploring a range high to low and in-between, rearranging an enormous aural experience as we travelled in the car.

Eddie lives

Suzanne Spinner

From Appreciation to Appropriation

Flinders University Art Museum
City Gallery, March 5 - April 16

The curator of *From Appreciation to Appropriation—Indigenous influences and images in Australian visual art*, Christine Nichols, states that the clear intention of this exhibition is "educational" and, to that express end, 6 floor talks and panel discussions were programmed. I attended 4 of these at which Elizabeth Durack was to be present to tell her side of the Eddie Burrup story. However, Durack only made herself available for the final panel session.

However, as the week progressed terms were teased out, queried and re-defined. Lester Irabinna Rigney, an Indigenous academic, called the term "Indigenous art" scandalous. "Indigenous knowledge" should be used, she said, when referring to the politics of exhibiting other people's cultures. Doreen Mellor, the curator who was gulled by the Burrup fiction, said that the issue is about professional relationships and trust, and that it is broken when a bona fide gallery, the Durack Gallery, provides false information about an artist they represent. Mellor described the affair as a "private obsession or even neurosis" which then crossed over into the public domain. Later, Mellor took issue with Professor Julie Marcus' comments from an earlier panel. Mellor argued that the issue is less about power and more about mutual respect, more to do with the lack of an actual exchange, a question of ethics rather than of power.

At the final session, the tension was palpable—Elizabeth Durack and Perpetua Clancy sitting next to the Chair, Professor Gus Worby, and flanked on

each side by Indigenous curators and artists. Clancy was critical of what she had been listening to during the week, arguing that the focus had been on the persona of Eddie Burrup and the person of Elizabeth Durack rather than on the paintings. She also contended that the exhibition and talks program had not been "educational", because they had been "one-sided." Clancy said their whole aim in entering Eddie Burrup in Aboriginal art exhibitions and competitions (at Tandanya and in the National Aboriginal Art Award) had been to "get the work noticed on its own merits." She said the art of Eddie Burrup had been "applauded and hailed as the work of genius", whereas the work of Elizabeth Durack had been "vilified." In her conclusion, she referred to "I myself, as the son of Eddie Burrup", which left us all gob-smacked at her audacity. The fiction expands, it does not retreat.

While Indigenous and many non-Indigenous speakers began their addresses by acknowledging and thanking the custodians of the land we were on, Elizabeth Durack began in a strange way by speaking about how delighted she was to be in Adelaide and praised its charms as a city and a place where there was "a special relationship between the races." Durack talked about her life in the Kimberley more than 50 years ago and concluded saying she "been in this game for so long" that she had "no intention of defending (her) life work—let it stand." Later on in discussion she made it clear that she had no intention to stop painting as Eddie Burrup. It's Eddie or nothing—"even to myself there are elements of mystery in the creation of Eddie Burrup." Durack speaks as if she is possessed by Burrup, as if there is no conscious choice involved. Both she and Clancy claimed theirs was "a bold, audacious act done without a lot of thought." There must have been a "lot of thought" forced on them since, but they have not resiled from the original, impetuous impulse. Durack made it clear that she is completely mystified by the notion of asking permission. It would have seemed to her "like asking for the right to walk into your own home." She persists in portraying her decision to become Eddie Burrup as simply the act of an artist taking on a *nom de plume*.

Christine Nichols responded to the Durack charge of "one-sidedness", saying

that not only had there been the programmed appearances of the artist in the panel discussions, but also that Durack was the only artist in the show whose voice was heard in the gallery, in an extensive Film Australia interview which was playing on video.

The real question was posed by Djon Mundine when he asked why it was necessary to pretend to be an Aboriginal person if (as the Duracks contended) the work was so good? She replied that it was not easy to explain but that, in short, "I can no longer paint or draw as Elizabeth Durack." She spoke of "looking for a way to get him out. It's not easy to get Eddie out." When she was further questioned by Duncan Kentish about why she had chosen a male persona and why her daughter calls herself Eddie's son, Durack responded that "androgyny is so much a part of Aboriginal mythology"—an interesting deflection in itself.

So the story goes on. Elizabeth Durack has been unmasked but Eddie Burrup will continue painting. I wonder who buys 'his' work?

Here beginneth the lesson...

Chris Reid

Ensemble Explorations

Adelaide Town Hall, March 14

J S Bach was unique in his ability to blend musical form and emotional content. Such was his technical and musical mastery that he was able to write a new composition for chorus, soloists and musicians for most Sundays and Church holidays, as well as writing other works in between. Some 200 of his cantatas remain. These were the most important musical works in the Lutheran community—the cantata is a sermon in music and the Cantor, Bach, had a vital role in a religious society.

Ensemble Explorations, led by cellist Roel Dieltiens, comprises performers from all over the world who assemble to perform only a few times per year. The infrequency of their gathering doesn't seem to diminish their coherence as an ensemble—theirs is clearly a meeting of hearts and minds. Fresh from their successful support for Les Ballets C de la B's

performances, the Ensemble played superbly, with ease, grace and balance, using period instruments which have a delightfully smooth texture and timbre.

The three Bach's cantatas performed by the Ensemble feature different singers—soprano Greta De Reyghere in *Weichtet nur, betrübte Schatten*, bass baritone Max Van Egmond in *Ich habe genug*, and counter tenor Steve Dugardin in *Widerstehe doch der Sünde*. The singers are supported by strings and either organ or harpsichord continuo. The oboe appeared in the first two cantatas of the evening.

Bach's splendid multi-voicing underpins his cantatas. In the first, *Weichtet nur, betrübte Schatten*, the oboe introduction is succeeded by a weave of three main voices—the oboe, and the excellent soprano and cello—and the interplay is gorgeously seductive. Typically, the main text of the cantata will be sung at a didactic pace—*allegro* or *andante*—but the introductions are sometimes slower. Ann Van Lancker's oboe introduction was delightful in the first two cantatas, and its mellifluous, haunting sound melded beautifully with the cello and the singer.

In the second cantata, Van Egmond was outstanding, his voice and manner sublime, working beautifully with the oboe and violin parts. The third cantata of the evening was a shorter, more simply voiced work, employing strings, organ continuo and counter tenor.

The Ensemble's final work for the concert was Bach's Suite No 2 in B Minor for flute, strings and harpsichord continuo. The 'overture-suite', employing dance forms in several short movements, was a widely known musical structure at the time and Bach was especially adept at it, scoring suites of dances not only for orchestra but for solo instruments such as violin and cello. This is the secular Bach at work. The Suite No 2 in B Minor is one of the best loved of all Bach's suites, the writing for the flute being quite magical. This is a work that rewards virtuosic flute technique, especially in the Badinerie, and flautist Frank Theuns was excellent—when called back for an encore he played it even faster!

Dismantling Chance

Kirsten Krauth

Verve: the Other Writing
Contemporary Art Centre of
South Australia

March 3 - 10

Desire

Want to do something; Do it
Do something without wanting to
Do something wanting not to
Be done to
Be done

Cornelius Cardew

Schooltime compositions, 1967

I'm cooking with Rosalind Brodsky. We're dismantling a cake. First we remove the cherries, "scrape off the butter cream", disassemble, separate the filling until we're left with nothing, as the video plays backwards. I'm in the reading room at CACSA, navigating through Suzanne Treister's eccentric CD-Rom *Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky*, in a zen-inspired luminous space with Japanese furniture to sit or lie on and an unfolding optical screen giving privacy. Set up with videos to watch, books to read and computers to play with, it's hard to move. A visual arts program dedicated to writing which encourages you to browse is inspiring and it's a tribute to CACSA that this space is inviting enough to sit for hours.

As you walk into *Verve*, a number of texts frame the walls and are enclosed in glass, reminders that texts too can be captured and preserved. Valuable. Many of the works are not new but they are co-ordinated to help you reflect on language and how it's evolved. I wish Albert M Fine's *Piece for Fluxorchestra* (1966) had been performed at the *Verve* forum last week. A set of instructions for 24 orchestra members (anonymously sitting in the audience) who play words as instruments. Each performer has a number and text and timing is everything. For Fluxperformer number 8, it's "Stand up and announce to the audience 'I was planted here as part of the performance,

and as such, I refuse to perform.' Then sit down. Get up and walk out." Andy Kaufman would have loved this, a piece orchestrated to confuse and prey on and confound audience expectations.

In Australia there is a popular artform called 'timing'. It pervades everything from horse racing to bushfires

Chris Mann
The Rationales

I start to investigate the reading room shelves. Black folders. It feels like research. There's witty diatribes, background to other artworks around the space, notes from handwriting experts, and the Mallarmé poem on which Bill Seaman's *Red Dice* is based. Translated here as *Dice Thrown Never Will Annul Chance* was written in the late 19th century and is astonishingly sophisticated in its playful use of language, spacing, voice and fonts. Teri Hoskin, curator of *Verve*, comments that it's "important to trace a lineage" in terms of hypertext, to help people realise that although it's a new form, it's one that works back to old traditions of playing with logic and chance. I begin to read...Chris Mann's *The Rationales* is worth investigating. Witty and sardonic, Mann examines with Oz culture and myth and arts politics in a series of *Rationales For*: Australian Experimental Arts Group; Composer and Writer Apprenticeships; Deployment of Gossips; Getting up the morning; Mirrors; Eggs for breakfast; Habits; A Relationship Between Artists and Community: "so what" is post-modern 'know how'." The book of dedications, too, is a collection of those pages which often intrigue, start off the wondering about connections, before the novel is even begun. One that inspires the imagination is "For SMUDGE, my silent one-eyed critic, who helped me more than I can say." A family pet? A slip of the finger on the pen?

I knew that's where I belonged because that's where I wanted to be.

Sadie Benning
girlpower

The video collection curated by Adele Hann (manager Mercury Cinema)—*White Noise, Making Out in Japan, Here I Sit, girlpower, Subterranean Homesick Blues*—traces a line through experimental film, an interweaving of voice, comic and text. Film and video works rarely figure in discussions of writing and there's a strong focus here; the relationships between editing and hypertext, the possibilities of jumping off into new directions, revealing and concealing, are made clear.

Sadie Benning's *girlpower*, made when she was 19, is a hand drawn zine-like diary, the narrative of a girl out-of-place, which samples TV shows, grrrl bands like Bikini Kill, and pop culture references. Her voiceover narration is strong and cool—"In my dreams I could never fly fast enough"—as is her cross-gender identity. She wanted to take her shirt off and look like Matt Dillon. She wanted to ride a bike like Erik Estrada. The film heads off into fantasy exploring the importance of space in the mind for take-off, that place so important for writers: "When I sang I became every member of the Go Gos, Blondie, Joan Jett...I did it all."

Alyson Bell's *Here I Sit* also exquisitely explores imaginative space. It starts off with layers of diagrams—Fig 1, Fig 2—over time lapse photography of a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, its beauty and precision reminiscent of early Greenaway, composing a visual poem via stylised text, and a woman who appears softly, submerged, eyes haunted, the same still expression: "I sit where life becomes a burden." Diagrammatic and mapped spheres turn inside out, fire and water burn, blur and fizzle, reminiscent of Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*. Only at the end is the film given extra emotional impact when you realise it is based on *Poems from the Madhouse*, a collection of texts written by Sandy Jeffs, who has been battling schizophrenia. I rewind the tape to begin again, knowing this perspective. Don't miss it.

I'm listening to *Catchphrase* as I write. A

series of strange phrases joined and punctuated by voice—Poppycock, Burrito—in the game show format. It reminds me of Seaman's *Red Dice*, a revolution of surfaces and textures played out on a floor to ceiling screen in French and English. Like the powerful stage language of *Mizumachi*, it works on the combinations and cumulative effect of verbalising strings of objects and terms while watching sets of sensual processes. Machinery. Weaving. Factory. Code. Assembly. Industry. Seaman is obviously engaged in a love affair with language and his film is incredibly seductive, "an authored engine of desire", entwining us in its folds of meaning via shafts and spinning wheels, tongues and mechanics, slippage and sentences suspended. Although there are no people in these films, bodies are implied in the way the machines work, invisible operators, biomachinists navigating the "intermingled voice of chance."

In *Verve*, Teri Hoskin offers the chance to "brush up against other writing", arguing that "Verve operates from the places where writing intersects with visual arts, music, performance and current digital practices." The exhibition is an imaginative, generous, philosophical and often funny one, with seemingly incongruous elements gradually falling into place. Other hands-on aspects like calligraphy and hieroglyphics workshops and artists' readings, give a texture to the text, acknowledging the sensual nature of construction tools of pen, paper and performance. Of course, an exhibition on hypertextual writing wouldn't be complete without a chance to contribute words of your own. You can log onto *Pricklings* (ensemble.va.com.au/pricklings.html) and write 100 words about what 'other writing' means to you. *Pricklings* will, in turn, "make a pattern or a design based on a number of variables including time of submission and the number of words." As Sandie Benning scrawls in childish handwriting at the end of *girlpower*, "this has been a continuing work in progress."

Letter

Dear Editors

I wanted to bring to your attention what I believe to be a postmodern experiment

gone awry in *The Canteen* feeding the festival. Distrusting the bizarrely forensic selections in the refrigerators, I approach the bain marie each day only to enter Purgatory. Today it was mushroom frittata, chicken and chorizo ragout, lamb curry, couscous, boiled potatoes, roast beef and a wok of stir fried vegetables. Yesterday there was an oxtail casserole with kidneys, ratatouille and green Thai curry with no rice, only cous cous. What does it all mean I ask the waitress? Have it all, she says. I don't want it all, I stutter. Give me some clues, some options. Today there is fish but no chips. I don't want a closed reading but this is a gaping chasm. So desolate have I become that on occasion I have stumbled into the night with nothing on my tray but the fork and knife which for the time being still seem to make some sense.

Is it just me or are there other lost souls out there

Yours
Still hungry

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