

## Windmill Performing Arts Cat

Based on the book *Cat*

by Mike Dumbleton and Craig Smith

Director Cate Fowler

Movement Jeff Meiners

Design Morag Cook

Composer Glyn Lehmann

Early Childhood Mentor Prof. Wendy Schiller

Education Associate Julie Orchard

Performers Jacqueline Cook,

Ninian Donald and Nadia Ross

*Cat*, developed by Windmill Performing Arts as part of the Picture Book to Performance Initiative, is a delightful concept. An early age installation theatre performance, based on Mike Dumbleton's picture book of the same name, *Cat* takes the audience on a journey down to the backyard to discover the troublesome life of Cat and her encounters with Dog, Frog, Mouse, Chicken, Fish and Caterpillar. The performance, created by Cate Fowler and her production team, is a rich learning experience for the young audience, with a focus on encouraging play as a means for growth. Fowler achieves this with innovative use of performance space, audience interaction, stimulating music and physicality and through Morag Cook's visually engaging design.

The emphasis on play is established from the outset of the *Cat* experience, with the young audience being treated to beanbags and picture books, music and artwork on arrival at the State Library venue. As the children inquisitively explore their space, butterflies flutter into the room, beckoning the children to follow the performers into the theatre and the world of *Cat*. Cook's design instantly stirs the children's imagination as they enter a stylised cartoon backyard with soft toy flowers, a dog kennel and a green lawn for the audience to sit on. The performance space, a garden with the audience seated on the lawn, is a sound directorial choice by Fowler, providing non-restrictive seating for the young audience, with enough room for them to squirm, lay, roll and play.

Suddenly, puppets spring to life in the backyard, a chicken clucks down the garden path and a white bird soars in the sky above. The puppets are lifelike and play with the children, encouraging them to respond. Characters begin to enter the space, Jacqueline Cook playing inquisitive Cat, Ninian Donald the mischievous Dog and Nadia Ross the pesky Mother. The performers are all energetic, their physicality, dancing and singing capturing complete attention and evoking connection. Ninian Donald's is the stand out performance, his facial expressions and bouncy energy amusing young and old alike.

The sound track, a happy go lucky composition by Glenn Lehmann, is an ideal accompaniment. Fowler's focus on children's play is reinforced by the use of everyday objects to create sound. Techniques as simple as using swishing paper to replicate the sound of wings flapping are used to maximum effect and provide children with ideas they can later use at home in their own adventures. It is this relevance to the real world of children that makes *Cat* so engaging. *Cat* really is the perfect introduction to the magic of theatre for young audiences. ★

Kym Begg



In May 2008, the 16th ASSITEJ World Congress and Festival for Young People was held in Adelaide. As part of the program, national and international youth arts practitioners came together to showcase and share their work for young audiences. Lowdown presents over 30 reviews of the provocative and thoughtful work presented.

assitej  
May 9-18\_2008

### What BooBoo thought...

#### WRITER PROFILE

Name Isaac Harding

Full Name Isaac Safari Newman Harding  
aka BooBoo

Age Just turned one

Favourite Food Banana

Isaac is a young writer - very young - in fact, only just turned one, who is very experienced in exploring and discovering new ideas and situations. He enjoys speaking his mind in a range of dialects and often accompanies these with non-verbal communication methods. The performance of *Cat* by Windmill Performing Arts that was held as part of ASSITEJ was Isaac's inaugural theatre performance.

#### The Review

Oooh, smile, wriggle point ooooww, wuff, point point, o-oh clap, clap. Clap, clap. ★







## The Arab-Hebrew Theatre of Jaffa *Ach Ach Boom Traach*

**Writers** Norman Issa and Yoav Barlev

**Director** Norman Issa

**Performers** Yoav Barlev and Norman Issa

**Set and Costume Designer** Tamir Shefer

**Lighting Designer** Ziv Voloshin

**Original Music** Allah Abo Amara

**Assistant Director/Stage Manager**  
Fares Hanania

The Arab Hebrew Theatre of Jaffa's *Ach Ach Boom Traach* is a story about two brothers caught in a perpetual cycle of bickering and reconciling. Their bickering escalates when they become transfixed by a beautiful box, or treasure chest that floats above them.

A very minimal but colourful set consisting of a dozen or so rectangular shaped boxes becomes functional as the brothers cooperate and use them to try and reach the box. They are unsuccessful and their attempt only sparks more conflict.

Later the box magically descends to earth and without success the brothers individually try to open the box. It is only when the brothers reluctantly come to a truce that the box opens on its own accord. Inside of the chest the brothers find a smaller chest and inside of this chest there is a smaller chest and so on. The chest represents land and the smaller boxes represent the forefathers of those people that have fought over land in countries such as Iraq and Iran.

The play is recommended for children three years old and over and whilst they may not fully understand its underlying message, the audience certainly enjoyed it. The actors mime antics establishing each of the brothers' need to out-do each other had little kids and adults alike laughing shortly after the show began. Some Aramaic language is used in the play but mostly the actors use an improvised language that is also very funny.

The sound effects really contributed to the energy of the show, reminding me at times of Tele Tubbies. Then there are catchy tunes and high-energy dance pieces that are like the Eurovision Song Contest that again really caught their young audience's attention.

There is a touching scene in the play where one of the brothers binds the other with rope. The imprisoned brother begins to cry and the brother that bound him becomes aware of the inappropriateness of his behaviour. It is moments such as this and the scenes of cooperation and reconciliation that make the show a very valuable learning experience for a young audience.

Tilly Tjala Thomas, five and a half years old says of the show, 'They spoke different but I understood what they were doing and it was funny. I liked waiting to see what was in the box and watching them fight, like when they had a sword fight. It was good that they were friends again at the end.' ✪

Jared Thomas



Molly, Isaac, Amy and Anu are all members of writeSYTE, Southern Youth Theatre Ensemble's playwrighting workshop group

## Zeal Theatre and Ellis and Bheki

### Australia v South Africa

**Creators/Cast** Bheki Mkhwane, Tom Lycos, Ellis Pearson and Stefo Nantsou

Everything's black. Malevolent, ominous music broils through the air. Security guards from A.T.A.K. prowl like panthers and stare everyone down (apparently they only hire very angry men). I'm told to 'keep off the pitch'. Others are frisked. Contraband is produced, offenders warned. It's interactive, confronting and amusing, often at the same time. The tone for *Australia v South Africa* is set.

Zeal has created a tightly scripted, highly physical performance which explores multiple facets of racism and racist behaviour.

It encourages cheering, audience participation and every so often, moments of awkward reflection; for while supporting your favourite sporting team is not racist as such, it is a form of discrimination. Whether they intend to or not, Zeal makes us realise that it isn't that big a step from chanting 'Aussie Aussie Aussie Oi Oi Oi' to 'Sieg Heil' and goose-stepping. We have a right to be proud of our country, our culture – but to what extent?

Under the microscope are masculinity and machismo; the competitive male doesn't come off too well. We witness a very funny scene where two of the characters are so competitive they strip off down to their jocks in order to win the 'Most Clothes in the Bin' competition.

## AUSTRALIA & SOUTH AFRICA

It's theatre on the edge. Raw. Loud. In your face. Funny. It's challenging and engaging. You get sucked in. Most amazingly, it seems to encourage kids to stand up against the bullies and the racists. Young people in the audience I was a part of called out 'You're racist' and 'They've paid their money, they've got every right to be here.' They booed when the South Africans were being kicked out and cheered when they outwitted the security guards. It helps, for a moment at least, to put the shoe on the other foot.

Perhaps the most delightful thing about the production was the awareness of theatricality. There were so many clever moments flash photography, the vocal sound of Zwaahh Network Sports sting, descending stairs, entering elevators, even elevator music which fades away as the actors walk away from it.

The part everyone I went with talked about afterwards were the two taxis travelling in opposite directions to arrive at the same destination. All done via a simple flip – everyone pivots and faces the opposite way – so the passengers become the drivers and the drivers the passengers. It is the perfect symbol of a production by a creative team who know exactly how to make engaging theatre for young people.

✪  
glen r johns

### What Molly thought...

*Australia v South Africa* was an amazing physical theatre piece which had an energetic and fun atmosphere. There were minimal lighting and costume changes and the main props were four benches. The four performers provided all the sound effects for the piece, which was highly polished and in sync. It was a humorous plot, both in physical and vocal theatre and maintained the audience's attention throughout the entire performance.

The highlights included the roving which took place as you entered the theatre. There were three confronting security guards who interacted with the audience members, occasionally pulling out a bottle of vodka from a bag or a pair of scissors from a back pocket.

Though a humorous and light-hearted performance, there was an important message being displayed to the audience about racism and equal rights. It was easy to understand and very enjoyable to watch. I highly recommend it to all. ✪

Molly Wundenberg, aged 15







## Hands **MALAYSIA** Percussion Team Chaos in Unison

**Artistic Director** Bernard Goh

**Administrative Director** Eric Ch'ng Lip

**Choreographer** Jimmy Ch'ng Lip Hann

**Performers** Jimmy Ch'ng Lip Hann, Thong Yoong How, Boyz Chew Soon Heng, Ng Siu Yee, Qiqi Seah Hui Chi, Leow Sze Yee, Emikly Tay Chiew Lee, Cross Chin Chun Keat, Bobby Wong Man Seng, Chang Yih Feng

**Costume Designer** Daniel Cho

**Visual Advisor** Liew Kung Yu

**Production Manager** Soon Pei Yee

**Stage Manager** Pat Gui

This piece suffered from a very tedious beginning. For whole minutes the audience watched while on stage the performers stretched and set up the drums while one then two drummers sat on the floor tapping out with drumsticks the seconds we were waiting for the show to begin. Rather than giving a sense of anticipation to the piece, this beginning gave a sense of disconnection and an impression that the performers were not really aware or caring that the audience was there. Children fidgeted and talked while waiting with nothing to focus on. When I compare it with the Okinawan classical dance piece *The Voyage* by Japanese Kijimuna Dance and Music Troupe, where the performers instantly engaged and addressed the audience, playing games and telling their stories before beginning their traditional music and dance the difference in the level of connection and tone set for the piece with the audience is apparent.

After this rather stagnant start, the piece picked up at once when the very lithe and athletic musicians ran, danced, spun and jumped over the drums, drumming in unison and creating energetic rhythms and forms. Unfortunately, the pacing continued to be a problem. Periods of intensity were interspersed with moments of quiet where the dancers seemed tired out and the rhythm waned. The concept of chaos within this unison is sometimes explored, such as when one drummer separates from the others and starts

knocking down the drums and stopping others from making their music, but was not really fully realised.

In the active and energetic parts of the show, the performers were both powerful and beautiful, commanding the full attention and excitement of the children and wider audience. The combining of wider elements such as dance (at times so athletic and unexpected that it reminded me of the French art form parkour) with the Chinese Traditional Drums, one of the oldest Chinese traditional arts in Malaysia, was riveting and enjoyable to watch.

By the end where a rather spectacular drum tower is created to reach a high gong on the stage as a final note, the audience was hooked, but I could only hope that the pacing and concepts had been pulled together to make this ending more satisfying and conclusive. ★

Samantha Ryan

## The Suitcase Royale Chronicles of a Sleepless Moon

**Devised and Performed** by Joseph O'Farrell, Miles O'Neil and Glen Walton

**Producer** Fiona Pride

**Photography** John O'Neil

It's totally whacky! It's Monty Python versus The Goons. Spike Milligan would have revelled in it. I suspect Samuel Beckett would have identified with it too.

It's the latest production from The Suitcase Royale, Melbourne's purveyors of what they describe as 'junkyard theatre'. Judging by the state of the stage on arrival, imagination and glorious improvisation know no bounds.

The set resembles a cluttered untidy student's flat. There is chaos everywhere. Bits of machines, devices, models and odd looking props that you'd find in a garage sale, workshop, or badly managed shed, litter the entire area.

Apparently, on their way to Adelaide, the cast found an abandoned wooden crate at the side of the road. It now doubles as a submarine on stage with the cast even conducting proceedings from inside it.

The plot? Oh, yes. It's there somewhere, but I swear it changes all the time, especially when someone says 'I must have left the guitar in the green room!' or with the stage in darkness, and silent, you suddenly hear the muffled word 'sorry!'

Maybe that's part of the plot too.

## VICTORIA

It's the expressions on the faces of the three actors, who also devised the show, Joseph O'Farrell, Miles O'Neil and Glen Walton, that gives the impression that they are frequently unsure what is going on themselves, that really 'makes' for such hilarity. They superbly wrong foot the audience by forming a musical trio in order to sing a song about a butcher's murdered wife, 'Sheila's Gone'.

Alas, the butcher, who has just turned poor Sheila into sausages in this small, dusty outback town is continually up to his murderous tricks, aided by the local doctor. Meanwhile, the local journalist sniffs a story among these dastardly deeds and unfathomable adventures.

To reveal that the journalist ends up next to the butcher's tasty menu will probably come as no surprise, nor will the doctor's sawing off one of his own feet and arms.

*Chronicles* works brilliantly on account of its frantic pace, which never slackens. Visual humour abounds, especially when one of the characters digests his moustache while devouring a jar of pickled onions. Students of all ages would love the scatter brained, mad cap uncertainty of it all.

The lucky adult audience emerged exhausted, wonderfully entertained by three of the zaniest minds around. ★

John Ovenden.





# Buzz Dance Theatre Cinderella Dressed in Yella

**Artistic Director** Felicity Bott  
**Composer** Melanie Robinson  
**Set Design** Paula Hart  
**Costume Design** Anna Serna  
**Dramaturg** Christine Best

Fairy tales have been fodder for reworking for centuries from Perrault right through to the horrible sanitising and moralising Disney indulges in. The fairy tales most of us know are a long way removed from their original forms. In what seems to be a theme of the festival (children at play) *Cinderella* is thus reworked.

Six friends (three girls, three boys) meet every day to play. Today it's girls' choice and after a couple of short introductory games Yella chooses *Cinderella* and casts everyone accordingly. This explains why everyone is in a mix 'n' match of brightly coloured dresses. Tomorrow it will be the boys' turn and Transformers will be the theme for the day.

For a dance-based company there's not a lot of dance (what movement there is, is a combination of fairly basic contemporary dance and tumbling currently very in vogue) neither of which have the 'wow' factor I expect or want. There is much more 'acting' which for the most part the performers appear uncomfortable with.

However, the primary problem I have is that it (seemingly) has audience on all four sides. Tiered seats face the front of the stage and acromats with seated children forming the remaining three sides. I am constantly distracted and annoyed that the performance seems to be in the round but the majority of the audience is ignored.

WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA

I do notice the kids are all wearing t-shirts in bright block colours, but don't take it any further than that. It isn't till about fifteen minutes into the performance when one of the dancers invites a group of the children up to participate that the penny drops. They are a part of the show. Over the course of the performance, eventually every child dancer (40 or more) eventually takes their place onstage. These interactions are a highlight and are when some of the most interesting dance sequences take place.

Once the process was explained via the Q and A session, it all made a lot more sense and the 'in the round but facing the front' factor didn't bother me quite so much. In fact, I grew quite enamoured of the idea of community being incorporated into a performance. However, this is where the difference between an in-schools two day workshop which culminates with a performance outcome and a public season clash.

If you are going to mine a well-loved classic, it's probably wise to have something fresh to say. Marks must go to the Artistic Director for trying a novel concept, but unfortunately for me this one has to be filed under 'valiant attempt.' ✱

glen r johns

# Urban Myth Theatre of Youth Curfew

**Director** Glenn Hayden  
**Assistant Director and Writer** Caroline Reid  
**Composer** Peter Dutton

**Companies Participating** in Curfew Urban Myth Theatre of Youth, Tutti Arts, New Met Interactive Dance, Cirkidz.

**Lighting Designer** Sue Grey-Gardner

**Audio Visual** Nic Mollison

*Curfew* features a cast of over 400 choristers, actors, physical performers and musicians from across South Australia. It was the only South Australian inclusion of a 'for young people by young people' show on the ASSITEJ program and therefore much anticipated.

As its title suggests the show highlights the complexities that arise when a curfew is imposed upon young people. The subject matter was dealt with in an absurd style with an atmosphere akin to the great David Bowie *Ashes to Ashes* film clip. The mood generated through the design, including the fantastic use of multimedia is a very commendable aspect of the show.

*Curfew* begins with the Tutti Arts performers portraying a kingdom with its King and Queen unable to produce a child. The Queen becomes pregnant with twins through the aid of invitro fertilisation. The Queen dies giving birth to the twins and consequently the King dies of heartbreak. The prince and princess grow to be Spider Boy and Murder Girl, dictators who suppress and eat the youth of their kingdom. The youth later take up arms and take revenge on their oppressors.

I was a teenager living in Port Augusta when notorious Mayor Joy Baluch fought for a curfew to be imposed upon the town's youth. Curfews have been suggested more recently in the Northern Territory and views on the necessity of a curfew to curb juvenile crime resulted in vigorous national debate on the issue, proof that the topic delivers exceptional grounds for drama.

SOUTH  
AUSTRALIA

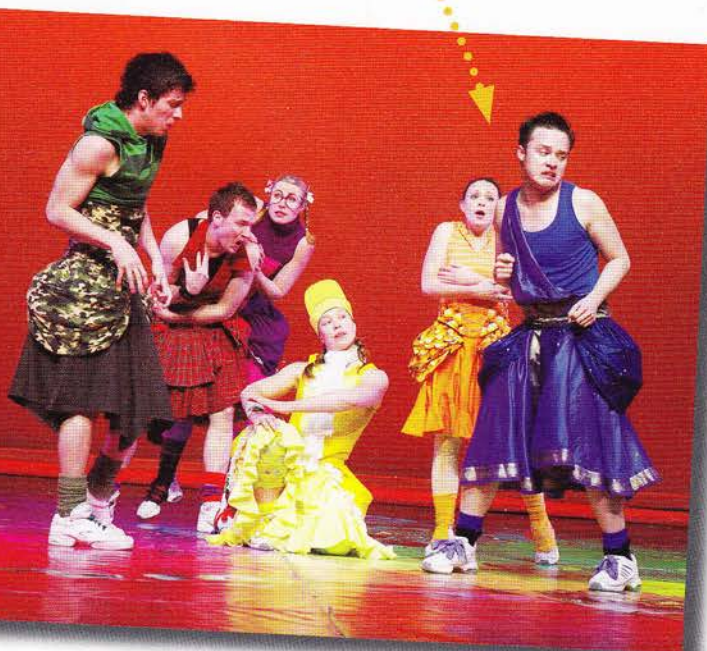
Unfortunately drama never really came to the fore in *Curfew* for several reasons. The first is that the sound didn't work properly and I believe that the great spectacle of so many performers often drew from what was attempting to be articulated. This meant that the audience was never able to completely follow a narrative thread, detracting from their entertainment. It is important in any performance that elements such as characterisation and plot be strong, even more so in large scale performances.

The mass scale of the performance and its many elements including an orchestra, a choir and dance allowed for moments of beauty. Solo singing performances and New Met Dance were especially strong and entertaining.

Also of particular note was Urban Myth Theatre of Youth performer Tom Christopherson, the show's Master of Ceremonies. He was engaging, entertaining and versatile.

In regard to the strength of South Australian performers in *Curfew* there is much promise for South Australian youth performing arts and Urban Myth Theatre of Youth. ✱

Jared Thomas





VICTORIA



## Barking Spider Visual Theatre Inc Dispatch

**Writer** Penelope Bartlau  
**Advisory Director and Designer** Tim Denton  
**Actors** Penelope Bartlau and Klari Agar  
**Puppeteer** Justine Warner  
**Sound Design** Angela Grant  
**Composer** Robert Vincs  
**AV Design** Edward Dowling  
**Dramaturg** Gilly McInnes  
**Producer** Michael Agar  
**Costume Designer** Dan Goronszi

In her Artistic Director's statement, Penelope Bartlau reveals the influence of Hindu philosophy in the creation of her puppet production, *Dispatch*. She quotes the tenet that, 'from nothingness we come. By nothingness we are sustained and to nothingness we are returned.' Yet, *Dispatch* is far from a nihilistic, existentialist examination of the meaning of life. It is a curious, often perplexing journey into the mystery of existence through the eyes of a small puppet named Sorrell.

A shipwreck survivor, Sorrell is washed ashore upon an island with an infant child, rescued from the waters during the storm with a handful of belongings in a collection of suitcases and a trunk. These are vestiges of life, the memories of time, preciously guarded, each with their secret meaning and each a potent reminder of a life lived.

Bartlau, dressed in the black guise of the puppeteer's alter ego of mystical, omniscient messenger of fate, Maman Brigitte, breathes life into the inanimate phlegmatic castaway, Sorrell. She is helped by her silent assistant Gheda (Justine Warner), as she relates the tale of the mother and her child, who drowned and transformed into mermaids.

The Japanese influence is strong in the piece, not only in the creation of the transformation myth, but also in the Bunraku puppetry technique, performed with accomplished dexterity and style by Bartlau, a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts' Puppetry course, and heavily influenced by the magic of Philippe Genty.

*Dispatch* is doll's house, parlour game puppetry, drawing on Bartlau's own experience and I suspect too heavily influenced by an ownership that often obscures the simplicity of the drama. The story of Sorrell is played out as a Victorian, Gothic representation of dreams and memories that shape our view of life, and through the metaphorical art of the puppeteer examine our clinging obsession with possessions and the notion of death as a liberation from the encumbrances of a material world.

There is no denying Bartlau's expertise as a puppeteer, but as the solitary storyteller of her tale of Sorrell's journey towards Death, she is unable to sustain the dramatic impact of her fifty-minute performance. Perhaps, she might have been more successful had she created a much shorter work, or employed additional actor/puppeteers to embellish the drama. Ironically, divestment of such dominant control over the work could have resulted in a less obscure and more captivating and comforting encounter with the mystery of life and death. ★

Peter Wilkins

## Christine Johnson and QPAC

### Fluff

**Creator/ Set Design** Christine Johnston

**Choreography** Lisa O'Neill

**Music** Peter Nelson

**Performers** Christine Johnston, Lisa O'Neill and Peter Nelson

*Fluff* is loud, riotous and boisterous with quiet, gentle moments. It traces the journey of ten toys once they have been forgotten or discarded by their owners. Through play and experimentation with toys, *Fluff* taps into the heart of the child, while cleverly engaging the mind and encouraging participation through the theatrical elements of sound, song, image, movement and story.

*Fluff* takes place in a home for lost toys which is quickly established with Peter Nelson, performer and musician, introducing the toy rescuers, vocal acrobat Christine Johnston and the doll-like dancer Lisa O'Neill, through projected images of their world travels searching out and taking in lost toys. On returning home, ten lost toys are pulled from the basket. There are projected snapshots of their former lives giving the audience some back-story on the kind of life they lead prior to being lost. Each toy is welcomed, their rescuers serenading them with song and dance, accompanied with cheeky sampling by Peter Nelson. Finally they are named and shown their bed, each with its own nightlight.

This exploration of a toy's life resonates with children and adults alike, who have had a toy and lost it or perhaps inadvertently or even purposely dropped it somewhere.

QUEENSLAND

This familiar scenario establishes a bond between performers and audience. This rapport builds throughout the show as the audience witnesses the various stories. One boy asks his mum, 'Will the children get their toys back?' Throughout the remainder of the performance he reaches his own conclusions and during the final applause tells his mum he'd like to take the toys home.

The structure of introducing and getting to know the ten lost toys proves a successful format with the young audience members. This takes place through the process of counting toys; naming toys Flatsy, Scary Cheeks, Humpty Hot Pants and Fluff, of course; creating song and dance for each toy and collecting memories of each toy's past with visual images. The audience is introduced to and invited to participate in sampling sound to be used in songs. The structure thoroughly supports an analytical exploration and practical engagement with the theatrical experience.

The pleasure of *Fluff* is its fun and the feeling of being invited back to the antics of childhood, which took place behind a closed bedroom door, a place of free play. ★

Ursula Beaumont





## Play BST Gamoonjang Baby

Writer Ko, Sun Duck

Director Nam In Woo

Actors Kim So Ree and Seo Young Myung, Jae Hwan Heo and Sung Rim

Visual Director Lee, Hyun Ji

Set Designer Kang Jung Hwa

Costume Designer Oh, Mi Jung

Music Director Heo, Si Ra and Kong and Kyung Jin

Play BST's production of *Gamoonjang Baby* from Korea is a joyous, uplifting, life-affirming celebration of female independence and the power of the human spirit to triumph over adversity.

Combining traditional elements of music, mask, dance and performance, the highly talented troupe under Nam in Woo's vibrant direction present their dynamic, effervescent version of the myth of Gamoonjang's Baby. The most independent of three sisters, Gamoonjang arouses her father's anger and is banished. After a fearful flight from home, she arrives at the home of the Tree Root men. Love blossoms between Gamoonjang and the youngest of three sons, Mattom, and the pair marry without his father's consent. Enraged by Matoom's defiance of tradition, his father banishes the unfortunate couple and Gamoonjang once again finds herself dispossessed and compelled to rely upon her will and the spirit within her womb.

In the magical, mythical world of legend, the heroic resolve of the independent spirit triumphs over the suffocating influence of unbending tradition. Gamoonjang and Matoom set up their own farm, the crops prosper and Gamoonjang announces the expected birth of their child. A new world dawns with the rising sun of hope, joy and prosperity. In a final rite of grateful celebration, rice cakes are distributed to the audience, and this delightful, heart-warming production ends with a celebratory dance and song of thanks.

KOREA



Although advertised as suitable for young audiences aged 7 – 12 years of age, the performance I saw played to a largely adult audience, who, from the very opening audience warm-up by the two energetic musicians and two actors, were utterly entranced. Using traditional percussion and string instruments, masks, shadow puppetry and simple, striking imagery to represent the birth of Gamoonjang and her two sisters, or her frightening struggles with the dark and threatening forest or the swirling river (two simple lengths of material, operated by the musicians) that dragged her under, this versatile company of four played out their modern interpretation of one of South Korea's oldest legends on a circular earthen-coloured ground cloth with a folded screen as a backdrop and musical instruments at the side of the cloth.

Remarkably skilled, vividly expressive and bursting with joyful vitality, Play BST combined skillful audience participation with moments of magical theatre, captured the hearts of their audience and struck a powerful blow for the independence of the free spirit. ✱

Peter Wilkins

## Uncle Semolina (& friends), Gilgamesh

VICTORIA

Co-Director/ Lighting Christian Leavesley

Co-Director/ Sound Philip Rolfe

Performers Katherine Tonkin, Mark Tregonning and Richard Pyros

Stage Manager Janine Forbes

When I admit that I actually got up out of a sickbed, and drove for over an hour just to see this production, I hope you'll understand that its glittering reputation had preceded it into Adelaide, and that this was a 'show to see'.

*Gilgamesh* re-enacts a 5000 year-old Iraqi Sumerian tale, reputedly the world's oldest surviving story written on twelve stone tablets. It tells of King Gilgamesh, born two-thirds god and one-third man, a powerful, charismatic and ruthless ruler whose brutal domination of his realm inspires the gods to create an equal, Enkidu, half man, half beast, to balance his world.

The two form such a good friendship that they embark on a series of reckless, sacrilegious adventures, for which Enkidu's death after offending the goddess Ishtar becomes retribution, with the distraught Gilgamesh beginning a search for immortality.

What distinguishes this imaginative production is that it's all presented inside a giant enclosed children's sandpit, resplendent with the kind of matchbox toys and plastic human forms that we all played with ourselves as children, and which gave the writer- producers, Christian Leavesley and Philip Rolfe their original inspiration.

Here, in the pit, the three actors, Richard Pyros, Katherine Tonkin and Mark Tregonning immediately bond with their young audience by furiously concentrating on using the toys to play the respective roles in their story, even occasionally tossing some out of the playpen.

Reminiscent of the reign of terror of the former Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, this dramatic re-telling of the ancient story devotes much to themes of brutality, masculinity, menace and oppression, while still embracing love and loss. However, where the show encounters difficulty is in bridging the gaps between the stories, because they themselves were so fragmented when discovered.

Originally presented inside a forty feet long shipping container, where the claustrophobic atmosphere heightened the tension, this production in the Adelaide Centre for the Arts, might have benefited more by being presented in the round. This way, audiences could have become more closely involved with the actors, especially after an hour when attention spans were beginning to wane, only to be seized back by strong language, sexual references and much shouting on stage.

This production has been on the road for four years and with prestigious venues behind it including the Sydney Opera House, London's Barbican and arts centres in Beijing and Shanghai, *Gilgamesh* deserved its appreciative response by the end and must surely consider a national tour. ✱

John Ovenden





DENMARK

## Teater Refleksion and Teatret De Røde Heste Goodbye Mr Muffin

**Performers** Claus Mandoe and  
Else Anker-Moeller

**Director** Bjarne Sandborg

**Script** Claus Mandoe (based on a children's  
book by Ulf Nilsson)

**Set Design and Puppet** Mariann Aagaard  
assisted by Silje Heltoft

**Photography** Jan Rüz

*Goodbye Mr Muffin* tells the story of a boy and his pet guinea pig, Mr Muffin. The story has two strands that are sensitively entwined; Mr Muffin is old and grey and reflects upon his life while the boy knows his dearly beloved pet is nearing the end, which initiates his deliberation on death.

The audience is introduced to Mr Muffin, the puppet, his shoebox house and a few of his favourite things; almonds, dandelion flowers and his mail box. Over the course of the play, the boy writes a number of letters to his guinea pig. He acknowledges Mr Muffin's age, considers what death may be like while reassuring that death isn't bad, it's not dangerous and nothing to be afraid of. In response to the letters, Mr Muffin first shreds them and then retires to his rocking chair to remember his good life, his strong days, his wonderful family and the adventures they had together. The reminiscing is depicted using a range of puppetry techniques. One family adventure is beautifully animated with miniature cut outs of the family traipsing across the countryside. Mr Muffin's house, a light box, utilises shadow puppetry and opens up to reveal home, a cosy room with all the creature comforts a guinea pig could wish for. The walls are adorned with pictures that come to life, revealing further memories.

*Goodbye Mr Muffin* is based on a children's book by Ulf Nilsson and produced by Danish Teater Refleksion and Teatret De Røde Heste. Targeting audiences aged 6-10 years; the work has a strong rhythmic, theatrical structure that utilises the power and magic of puppetry beautifully. Mr Muffin is detailed and well crafted theatre that inspires wonder and surprise throughout the 40 minute performance.

Claus Mandoe's performance as the boy and puppeteer is seamlessly executed with sharp attention given to the detail of guinea pig antics. Else Anker-Moeller's sonorous cello underscores the performance bringing particular inflection to Mr Muffin's movements adding further to the humour of the relationship between the boy and his deftly animated pet.

The storytelling of Mr Muffin is humorous and heart warming and depicts a wonderfully caring relationship between a young boy and his pet, which doesn't shy away from the sometimes difficult topic of death. The boy cares deeply for Mr Muffin and Mr Muffin reciprocates – he's a dear companion and ultimately teaches an invaluable lesson about death. ✪

Ursula Beaumont



## Teater Tre SWEDEN Halli Halla

**Cast** Sara Myrberg and Per Dahlström

**Director** Stalle Ahrreman

**Concept** Sara Myrberg

**Script** Lena Stefenson

**Costumes/ Stage Designer** Ylva Sanner

**Costumes/ Assistant Stage Designer**  
Josefin Lindskog

**Music** Matti Bye

**Lighting** Lars Liljegren

**Make-up Artist** Helena Bernström

**Technology** Göran Lidbrink

**Producer** Jessica Persson

Started in 1979, Teater Tre is a collaborative mime-based ensemble. It is based in Stockholm, but renowned internationally for its work with young children and especially those in early childhood. Their offering for ASSITEJ 2008 is *Halli Halla*, a gentle, engaging half hour adventure play about the meeting of a boy, played with all the awkward self absorption of the young male by Per Dahlström and the friendly, forward girl (Sarah Myrberg). In his guarded world of solitary independence, the boy is content to play alone, resisting advances from the girl to share his ball and her rubber rope in collaborative play.

In spite of her persistent cajoling, the boy, in typical fashion, stubbornly refuses to be drawn into the girl's world, until his ball is lost during their struggle for attention. It is found by the girl and in a generous act of conciliation and selfless friendship returned to him in his blue cylinder, wrapped up with her precious red rope.

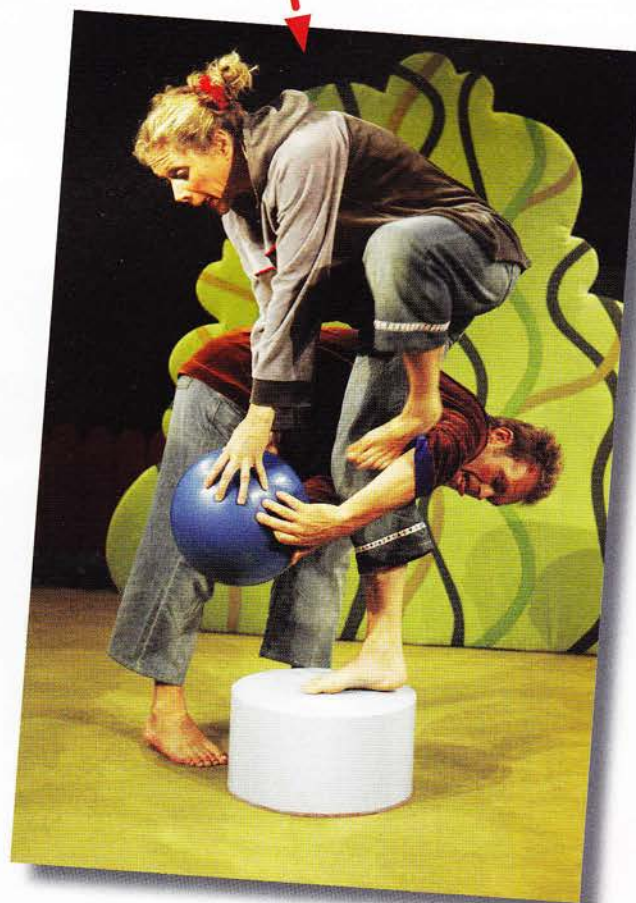
So simple is the concept, so clear the message and so gentle the production that the youngest members of the audience were entranced, entering wholeheartedly into the occasional, natural moments of audience participation and offering their spontaneous criticism (he's very funny!) or their enthusiastic, helpful advice (it's behind the bush!)

Teater TR3's skill in performing to the very young is obvious in every moment of *Halli Halla*. Under the direction of Stalle Ahrreman, Dahlström and Myrberg establish the ideal tempo, drawing their young audience into a world of wonder, delighting them with harmless, comical slapstick, greeted by high-pitched giggles from the excited children. They are reinforcing, without didactic persuasion, the virtues of friendship, cooperation and collaborative play.

Experts in the physical expressiveness and educational value of their theatre for the preschool child, Myrberg and Dahlström take their young audience on a playful, fun-filled and simple magical journey. It is beautifully timed, unadorned by artifice and conjuring surprise, wonderment and the involvement of the children, who instantly recognize themselves in the world of play of *Halli Halla*.

Teater Tre's production is a theatrical gem for the very young and a charming lesson in early childhood education through the magical world of theatre. ✪

Peter Wilkins







VICTORIA

## Polyglot Puppet Theatre & Ilbjerri Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre Cooperative

### Headhunter

**Co-Directors** Sue Giles and Wesley Enoch  
**Puppet Designer** Katrina Gaskell  
**Composer** Lou Bennett  
**Performers** Megan Cameron, LeRoy Parsons and Melodie Reynolds

There is a refreshing playful larrikinism, cloaking a more subtle and serious message in *Headhunter*, Polyglot Puppet's production about place and identity for 5-8 year olds. Using rod puppets, shadow puppetry and simple Bunraku techniques, Polyglot, under the skilful and purposeful direction of Wesley Enoch and Sue Giles, weave a contemporary tale of dispossession, and the quest for place and the eternal spirit of belonging. It is a simple message for a young generation in an age of reconciliation. The story, inspired by the contributions of kids at the Victorian College of Koorie Education and a short story by Archie Weller, is told with direct honesty, personal commitment and captivating energy.

Brother and sister, Rick (LeRoy Parsons) and Gina (Melodie Reynolds) leave their Nan's funeral and head off in Nan's red car on the road to nowhere. Each has a secret mission, unbeknown to the other. Rick has concealed in the boot of the car the pompous and increasingly hyper head of the statue of the town's white founding father, dislodged when he accidentally reversed into the statue. Gina has stolen Nan's ashes, so that they can be returned to her birthplace. Both

are watched over throughout the journey by a large black crow. Nan's spirit is always close at hand.

Parsons and Reynolds erupt with an expressive energy that propels the plot forward and holds the attention of most of the younger members of the audience. The Space Theatre presents a challenge to performers, more accustomed to touring and performing in smaller spaces. The simple puppetry techniques manipulated by puppeteer, Megan Cameron, and South Sulawesi artist in residence, Abdul Hakim, lacked the sophistication necessary in the larger space. Fast, funny and performed with a sense of comic urgency, *Headhunter* is less about two people on the run, than it is about their people's plea for respect and reconciliation, while also conveying the aboriginal struggle for recognition and independence.

With all its satirical facetiousness and cynical irreverence, *Headhunter* continues to proclaim its important message of reconciliation. I would have preferred less didactic recrimination, replaced by a new direction to an old form and a more forward-looking vision for a post Apology population. ★

Peter Wilkins



KAGE

## Headlock

**Director** Kate Denborough  
**Concept/ Text/ Original Lyrics** David Denborough  
**Set/ Lighting Designers** Andrew Livingston and Ben Cobham, Bluebottle Composer/ Sound Designer Byron Scullin  
**Costume Designer** Paula Lewis  
**Performers** Luke Hockley, Tim Ohl and Gerard Van Dyck  
**Producers** Jennifer Barry and Belinda Hellyer, Keep Breathing  
**Production/Stage Manager** Philip (Frog) Peck

One impulsive act. One rash moment of male bravura. That is all it takes to turn a young man's world upside down. The sound of broken glass shatters the silence, followed by the screeching of tyres as another car is stolen. Police sirens reverberate through the theatre. It is a powerful opening to KAGE's electrifying and provocative production of *Headlock*.

Kate Denborough's moving and sensitive production of this original work propels the audience through a surging wave of emotions, challenging our preconceptions of male behaviour and evoking unexpected responses towards the conventional norms of a society that brands criminality, stereotypes the perpetrators and erodes our essential humanity.

Though subtle and wrapped in the velvet glove of emotional response, there is a Brechtian politic at play in this powerful contemporary parable.

*Headlock* is the story of three adult brothers, deserted by their father, raised by their mother and left to fend for themselves. The brotherly bond is strong, and the three boys are members of a wrestling club, and vying for the championship prize, until they decide to steal a car and are caught by the police. Matthew (a finely etched performance of the deaf brother by Luke Hockley) and the larrikin youngest brother, Dean (an athletic and agile Gerard van Dyck) are spared a prison sentence by the middle brother, Shane (a sensitive, powerful and moving performance by Tim Ohl), who bears the burden of responsibility for the brothers' rash action.

Played out on a full size wrestling ring, *Headlock* moves back and forth between the prison and times the brothers spent together, wrestling, spraying graffiti, leaping off jetties and living on the edge of danger and excitement. This is a male world bound by the strong bond of brotherly love. *Headlock* is a contemporary morality tale, holding the mirror of male behaviour up to nature, at times struggling to suppress a violent and resentful aggression, at times a moving testimony to mate-ship, brotherly love and affection. Told through evocative physical theatre and with minimal dialogue, *Headlock* unabashedly presents a probing inspection of masculinity, while offering a universal indictment of a system that imposes disenfranchisement and the alienation of the human spirit.

A powerful, enduring theatrical experience, superbly choreographed and performed with disconcerting truth, *Headlock* makes the audience at once both judge and jury of all humans caught in the headlock of social alienation and political prejudice. It is a powerful and sensitive voice in a troubled and disoriented world. ★

Peter Wilkins





## Real TV

### Hoods

**Writer** Angela Betzien

**Director** Leticia Caceres

**Music and Sound** Pete Goodwin

**Design** Jonathon Oxlade

**Performers** Jodie Le Vesconte and Christopher Sommers

**Production Manager** Kylie Mitchell

**Lighting Design** Glen Hughes

'It's only after three years and 200 performances that we've now arrived at a satisfactory ending' says Director Leticia Caceres about Queensland theatre company Real TV's production of *Hoods*.

In future, it will be up to audiences themselves to decide what they think happens to the young couple who act out this contemporary tale of Hansel and Gretel.

This spellbinding story by Angela Betzien, sensitively directed by Caceres, centres around two young people who ride suburban trains each night to a wrecking yard on the outskirts of a city where they tell each other stories. On this particular night, Kyle, Jessie and baby brother Troy are waiting in an abandoned Commodore for their mother to return. While Kyle broods with his head buzzing with Playstations, Jessie wants a game of 'I Spy'. Meanwhile, it's getting dark and the adjacent shopping centre is closing for the night, with its ever-present menacing threat of security guards and their snarling dogs.

The baby won't stop crying because it's hungry and needs changing, and neither Kyle nor Jessie know what to do, because they have no money or clean clothes.

## QUEENSLAND

The plot gives rise to all sorts of fits of the imagination. Neither Kyle nor Jessie have the attention span to stay on any one particular subject for very long and need to play these games, some real, others imaginary, in order to fill the void. Both actors, Christopher Sommers and Jodie Le Vesconte bring tremendous energy to their endeavours with the audience clearly identifying with their problems.

The play superbly mirrors the ugly side of family breakdown with neglect, abandonment, alienation, oppression and poverty uppermost, and lack of community interest lurking anonymously in the background. It's a scene we regularly see and this is brought vividly to the fore by some exceptionally poignant writing. The brief scene where they go to the ATM machine, only to discover there is no money in their account is especially well depicted.

As to the ending, will the mother discover the trail that Jessie is leaving for her to find? Will the baby die of dehydration first, and equally importantly, will Kyle and Jessie overcome their uphill battle to face a rapidly uncaring world with all its sudden technological changes? You will have to judge for yourself, but you must see it. ★

John Ovenden



## Ben Walsh Junkyard Symphony

NEW  
SOUTH  
WALES

**Performer and Creator** Ben Walsh

**Produced in Association with** Strut and Fret Production House

Most theatre practitioners would rather scrub a critic's toilet than perform for teenagers. The brave who set out on this fearful mission are not only competing with raging hormones and rampant anarchy, but also the might of formidable multi-billion dollar media corporations dripping with MTV street cred and attitude as they deliver an irresistible form of pop culture.

*Junkyard Symphony* crashes into this punch-up with a mighty bang, a couple of thuds, and a distinctly rhythmic clang, clang, boom. Ben Walsh has engineered an entity that sits in a space between theatre and the rock concert. It uses theatre as its context, but then launches beyond this to utilise the popular forms of electronic beats and live percussion to create a show that doesn't necessarily require a 'sit down - shut up' conventional theatre attitude from its audience.

An eclectic spread of junk litters the stage as a dejected man in an over-sized suit enters the space. We watch as he ascends an illusory train created through the sound of a percussive contraption dangling from his hand. With deadpan expression and paper in hand, the man then makes his way from the train to his place of work a cubicle for a white-collar paper shuffler. As he sits at his desk ignoring phone calls, the delicate micro percussive possibilities of his desk begin to become apparent, eventually spilling forth into a symphonic cacophony of pencils, paper, staplers, sticky

tape rolls and more, all orchestrated into one aural and visual ballet. He creates a symphony that eventually becomes his catalyst to flee the modern world and seek refuge in the title's junkyard.

This loose narrative is mostly created through sporadic direct addresses to the audience. It is essentially used to string together a number of high-energy musical performances that constitute the meat of the show.

There is a wonderful chaotic energy and confidence that flows from Ben throughout the performance as we move through the different combinations of assorted musical junk. It is an energy that brings with it both a sense of excitement and fear as the performance structure's smooth surface continuously frays at the edges through adlibs with the audience and some seemingly purely improvised segments of percussion that occasionally lose their way.

This danger is also what injects *Junkyard* with its life force. I wonder what the presence of an outside director might add to this sporadic explosion of a production. One thing's for certain, you definitely won't find yourself falling asleep when you travel to the *Junkyard*. You might even find yourself tapping your feet... maybe clapping along... or even spontaneously jumping out of your seat and throwing down the gauntlet to your fellow audience members for a mad dance-off in the aisles! ★

Lachlan Tetlow-Stuart







VICTORIA

## Men of Steel

**Original Concept** Sam Routledge  
**Created and Performed By** Hamish Fletcher, Tamara Rewse and Sam Routledge  
**Sound Design** Aaron Cuthbert and Jared Lewis  
**Technical Manager** Jared Lewis  
**Produced in Association with** Strut n Fret Production House

Molly, Isaac, Amy and Anu are all members of writeSYTE, Southern Youth Theatre Ensemble's playwrighting workshop group.

### What Amy thought...

*Men of Steel* is an entertaining, exciting piece about the life of two cookie cutters. The performance uses minimal lighting and amazing props. The three actors use a mixture of their own and pre-recorded sound effects. They make food come to life in inventive ways and work together superbly. They wear simple costumes, so as not to draw attention away from the great performance. They use regular kitchen utensils in interesting and astounding ways. A toaster changes the gender of one cookie cutter, a sieve makes an excellent helicopter, and eggcups turn evil, trying to kill the eggs, splattering them all over the front row. They had excellent scene changes, using window cleaners, an all round excellent performance. It is a high-energy performance, with lots of mess the whole way through. *Men of Steel* is a great choice for all ages. ☆

Amy Scott, aged 14.



### What Anu thought...

*Men of Steel* was performed by one woman and two men who were wearing aprons and chef hats. The whole performance was on a small table, which had three cupboards underneath. The actual 'Men of Steel' were cookie cutters in the shape of people. There was popcorn being popped live on stage, dog food, vegetables, eggs, dough, tomato sauce, ice cream and so much more! There were three different performances and at the end of each performance, a major clean up went on so that they could start a completely fresh story. It was really messy which made it really fun to watch. It was so messy that the audience members sitting at the front had to wear giant bibs so that they didn't get food all over them. They interacted with the audience by offering them disgusting combinations of food. One of the highlights was when one of the cookie cutters was dying and one of the performers squirted tomato sauce from underneath the cookie cutter to make it look like there was blood coming out of it. That was one moment when the front row were glad to be wearing those bibs! *Men of Steel* was about telling stories through food and funny sounds. I found it really amusing because of the sounds, the use of food and that they weren't scared to make a massive mess! One thing that could have been improved was the horrible smell of the dog food. Yuck! ☆

Anu Francis, aged 12

## Patch Theatre Company

### Mr McGee and the Biting Flea

**Writer** Pamela Allen  
**Director** Dave Brown  
**Composer/ Musical Director** Timothy Sexton  
**Designer** Dean Hills  
**Lighting Designer** Dave Green  
**Production Manager** Bob Weatherly

Harmony, like good story telling, is a wonderful and inclusive moment that should leave you wanting more. Everything about Patch Theatre Company's *Mr McGee and the Biting Flea* is harmonious.

Tom Sexton's musical score establishes the mood and atmosphere, creating the perfect platform for the audience to engage mentally and visually with each of Pamela Allen's six stories *Mr McGee*, *Alexander's Outing*, *Inside Mary Elizabeth's House*, *Belinda*, *Brown Bread and Honey* and *Mr McGee and the Biting Flea*.

In a theatre surrounded by children, the everyday object becomes whatever it needs to be to lend weight to the illusions created and the words used to take the audiences on these six very different journeys. The stage gives way to worlds of cleverly crafted illusion. Buckets and brooms, balloons and frocks are magically transformed into ponds, walkways, bridges, museums and rooftops. Add the tight, enthusiastic and thoroughly engaging performances by all three performers and Patch is onto a winner – again!

Each character and their story are well supported by Dean Hills' set which was, for me, a railway station luggage room; a place of transit inhabited by bags, cases, containers and packages each of which houses someone's story, experience or simple life lesson.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Crates arrive and depart. Dough is kneaded, the cow is finally milked and clothes removed. Each simple special effect along with excellent songs and harmonies reinforce the gentle messages each of these pieces pass on to the audience. Alexander the duck's mother's warnings are to stay together and be careful, stop and think when solving a problem, listen, expect the unexpected when visiting Mary Elizabeth's house and think about what you eat in *Brown Bread and Honey*.

I was left laughing when I remembered the cries of 'no you won't' in response to the farmer's question about whether he will be able to milk the Viking helmet wearing, ukulele playing cow in his wife's absence, and 'he's got no clothes on' when David Pidd removes his clothes as the second Mr McGee, to the delighted screams and 'Grrs' and monster type hand movements of the audience when they become the monster living inside Mary Elizabeth's house.

Visual representation and music are powerful tools in activating the imagination. Director Dave Brown's superb vision and direction makes for a happy and tight show that has its audiences on the edge of its seat, umming and ahing and squealing when needed. It's such a pleasure to be in a theatre surrounded by children thoroughly engaged in what they are watching. ☆

Estelle Muspratt





THAILAND

## Makhampom Theatre Group Never Say Die (Mahajanok)

**Artistic Director** Pradit (Tua) Prasarththong  
**Cast** Pradit (Tua) Prasarththong, Duangjai (Phiao) Hirunsri and Richard Barber

**Narrator/ Tour Manager** Richard Barber  
**Sound** Sarayut (Eddy) Phetsamrit

*Never Say Die*, devised by Thai Makhampom Theatre Group, is an exploration of current conflict and social issues prevalent in contemporary Thai society. Directed by Pradit (Tua) Prasarththong, the piece conducts this examination from the perspective of a traditional Buddhist myth, *Mahajanok*, a tale concerning a king called Mahajanok, lost at sea and found by an angel Mekkala, who deliberates with the king about humanity, perseverance and death. A combination of classic Thai dance – drama, modern physical theatre and storytelling is employed by Prasarththong to present this dialogue between ancient and current.

The performance delves into three issues in Thai society, the humanitarian disaster in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, the conflict and tension between Burmese refugees in refugee camps on the Thailand and Burma border and the violence and killings in Southern Thailand where Islamic insurgency in Muslim Malay Thai provinces is occurring. Three characters present these issues, a corpse collector for the Tsunami disaster, a young girl raped and severely punished in a refugee camp and a Muslim man caught up in racial persecution. The character's stories are moving, providing an instant paradigm shift for the audience, altering their attitudes towards conflict and oppression in Thailand. The physical performances by Prasarththong and Duangjai (Phiao) Hirunsri capture these tragic moments with a commanding power, encapsulated by the physical presentation of the suicide of a young refugee, after she

is forced by her parents to vacate the family home as punishment for being raped.

The traditional Thai dance combines well with the physical performance, to create a sense of flow throughout the piece. It provides a contrast in performance style for the re-telling of the Buddhist myth, told through the dance.

Richard Barber, the storyteller, connects the issues presented by *Never Say Die* to the audience's own lives, through questioning, contemplating and even interviewing the characters. However, Barber's vocal strength is poor and he lacks performance energy, detracting from the overall feel of the piece and creating some awkward moments of theatre. At times the language barrier of the performance is evident, making dialogue occasionally hard to digest. This aside, the combination of the content and physical performances is thought provoking and certainly serves to bring focus on contemporary conflicts tearing at the fabric of Thai society. ★

Kym Begg

## Snuff Puppets & Indigenous Artists Nyet Nyet's Picnic

**Artistic Director/ Designer** Andy Freer

**Director** Ian Pidd

**Choreographer** Earl Rosas

**Musical Director** James Wilkinson

**Builders/ Designers** Nick Barlow, Andy Freer, Ben Fox and Daniele Poidomani  
**Performers** Janaya Charles, Robbie Avenaim, Peter J Rosas, Dennis Fisher, Naretha Williams, Daniele Poidomani, Daniell Flood

**Music** James Wilkinson, Robbie Avenaim

**Lighting Designer** Katrina Gaskell

**Research/ Script Development** Carolyn Briggs, Andy Freer, John Harding, Ian Pidd, (Nyet Nyet Story as told by Wal Saunders, Gunditjmarra Man)

ASSTIEJ 2008 opened with Snuff Puppets epic indigenous tale, *Nyet Nyet's Picnic*. A product of collaboration between several indigenous and non-indigenous community art organisations from the Aboriginal nations of Victoria, *Nyet Nyet's Picnic* is an ambitious exploration by Andy Freer and Ian Pidd of the myths and monsters derived from Indigenous Australian mythology.

A genuine opening night buzz of excitement was in the air before the production signaling a much-anticipated event. With the audience scattered around a large desert oasis, complete with a water spring, native trees, a burning fire and a wonderful array of aromas wafting through the space, a powerful feeling of imminent entry into a transformative other world of transcendent imagination was all pervasive. As urban Indigenous characters began to converge on the oasis, a transcendence of sorts did occur as slowly large and spectacular puppets - beasts, bunyips and spirits - lumbered onto the stage, transporting the audience into realms of possibility, fear and magic.

## VICTORIA

From the bulky bearded Yaroma, the hideous large footed Bungee Bungee and the breast loving Nyet Nyets, a diaspora of colourful, humorous, and filthy creatures came to life before the audience's eyes. Children were ecstatic, screaming with delight at the unreal occurring before them, reaching to touch or jumping in fright as the creatures passed slowly by. The design and puppetry coupled onstage to create captivating visions of earlier Australian landscapes.

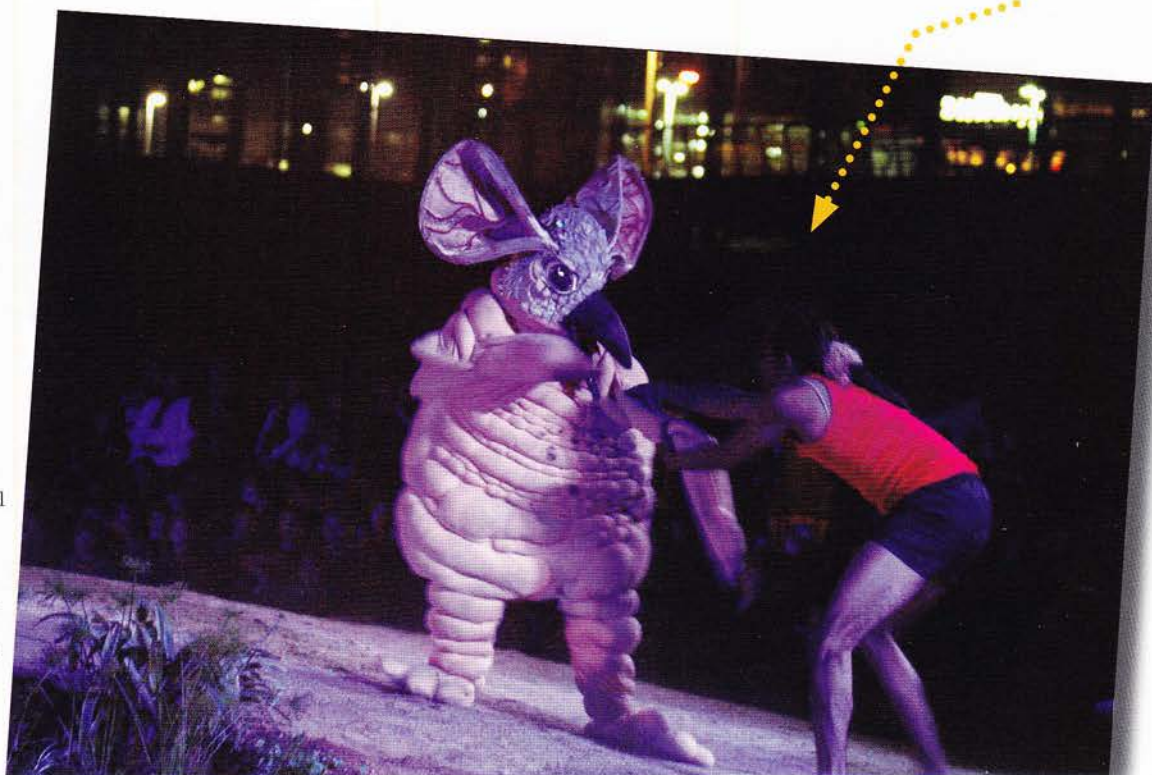
Unfortunately, the narrative and performances of *Nyet Nyet's Picnic* hindered its overall success, detracting from the astonishing power and creativity of the puppetry and design. The narrative was poorly devised, a collection of short scenes and stories arranged with no overall connection, a clash between beautiful tales of ancient Indigenous lore with poorly constructed scenes set in the present and a park ranger who really belonged in a different play altogether. With no sense of overall direction, the play lost the necessary elements of tension and surprise to keep audience engaged, making the second half, once all the puppets had been revealed, repetitive and tedious to watch.

Most of the performances were of a satisfactory standard; working to create the illusion that the puppets were alive. However, several were not up to the task, the monotonous delivery, lack of performance energy and ill-defined characterisation betraying the immense promise of this production.

Although the puppetry and design was unforgettable, *Nyet Nyet's Picnic*, failed to match expectations.



Kym Begg







## floogle

### Ollie and the Minotaur

**Director** Sarah John

**Writer** Duncan Graham

**Actors** Wendy Bos, Sarah Hunt and Adriana Bonaccorso

*Ollie and the Minotaur* begins as the tale of three old friends in their late twenties who go away for a drunken weekend together. Writer Duncan Graham does an excellent job exploring and portraying women's sexuality and friendship. While these characters seem happy and their friendships strong in the beginning, the happiness of one of the friends and betrayal of another quickly threatens the stability of their long shared history as the truth is slowly revealed.

The play then paints the darker side of humanity- where friendship equals cruelty, love equals hurt and sexuality can be a sharp-edged knife. Each character is damaged in the piece by sex, which is portrayed as a means to hurt and use others. It looks at the underlying tension between the fictions and fantasies we build around our lives and the truth that we'd sometimes rather not see.

*Ollie and the Minotaur* seemed to me not so much naturalistic as stripped back to the essentials; it is bare, dark and brutal. The set is deliberately sparse, in the climax scene there is a black out and candles are lit to create even further intimacy and hone down the focus of the audience even further on the characters and their interactions. The language is similarly focussed and bare, each dramatic point is played to maximum advantage.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

It is worth noting that *Ollie and the Minotaur* was programmed as part of ASSITEJ's Emerging Companies Showcase, and as such is not a show for young audiences under 15. It had very strong language, drug and sexual references. It is a very adult piece with sometimes disturbing themes.

The script builds tightly to a climax, with a highly tense and unresolved ending. By the end of the play, I was riveted to the seat.

Adriana Bonaccorso, Wendy Bos and Sarah Brokenshka all gave excellent performances. Sarah John did a wonderfully tight job of direction. The actors and dialogue felt genuine and the dialogue crackled. An excellent performance from an emerging company. ★

Samantha Ryan



## Junges Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf Robinson & Crusoe

**Direction and Choreography** Renat Safiullin and Katja F. M. Wolf

**Creators** Nino d'Introna, Giacomo Ravicchio

**Cast** Christof Seeger-Zurmühlen, Xolani Mdluli and Mathias Haus

**Set and Costume** Ulv Jakobson

*Robinson & Crusoe*, a dance play by Nino d'Intona and Giacomo Ravicchio, further explores the themes of colonisation and the fight for dominance featured in Daniel Defoe's classic novel *Robinson Crusoe*.

The play begins with two pilots stranded on an island after their planes are shot down in battle. The two pilots are on opposing sides, and one is black and the other white. Upon discovering each other Robinson and Crusoe begin to fight for rank and dominance.

A dynamic live percussionist not only assists in establishing mood and marking transition between scenes but provides pulsing accompaniment for the very masculine dance sequences, similar to Capoeira, that depict the violence between Robinson and Crusoe.

Robinson speaks his first words to Crusoe by saying, 'I have to kill you or you will kill me.' At this point it becomes apparent to Robinson and Crusoe and the audience that neither has comprehension of each other's worlds through verbal language. This realisation whilst diffusing Robinson and Crusoe's desire to kill each other doesn't however diffuse their competitiveness, even when they become interdependent in the quest to survive.

## GERMANY

The language barriers between the two characters make for good dramatic tension and much comedy.

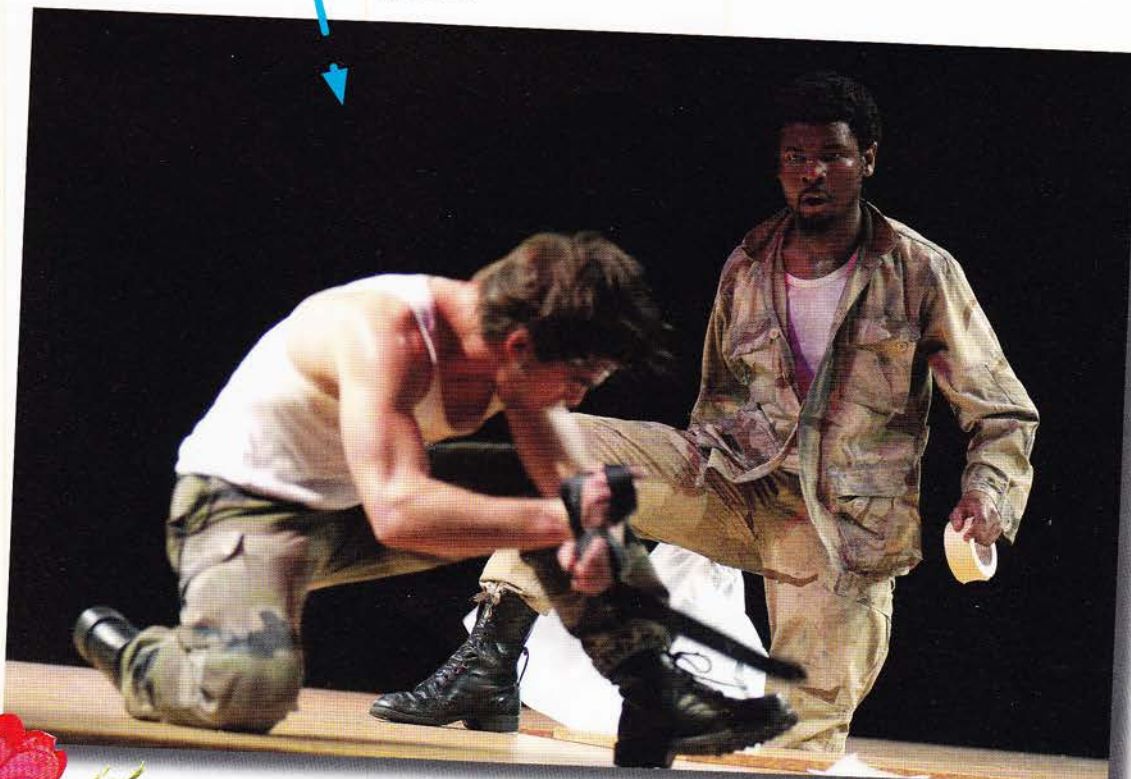
Through the use of mime Crusoe conveys to Robinson that he misses his loved ones and wants to return home. Robinson takes action and writes a help sign in the sand but Crusoe removes it aware that each other's saviour will be the other's enemy.

Before Robinson and Crusoe swim from the Island in opposite directions we see a very powerful and emotional scene whereby Robinson leaps toward Crusoe and Crusoe raises him above him in a symbolisation of transcendence. This is gesture is repeated by Robinson leaving the audience member sitting next to me audibly sobbing and myself a little teary.

The show is recommended for an audience aged ten years and over. Apart from being a very important play for young people to watch in order to understand that despite differences in culture, colour and language we share humanity, it is an excellent show to introduce boys to theatre and dance due to its masculine physicality.

The actors playing Robinson and Crusoe worked extremely well together and contrasted fantastically. The set coupled with the sound scape created a sense of isolation, desperation and foreboding. I was amazed that within an hour such a range of emotions and insights were conveyed so intelligently and beautifully. ★

Jared Thomas





## Krinkl Theatre

### Suitcase and Ziggy Swift

**Writers /Devisers/ Puppeteers** Lara Cruickshank and Padi Bolliger

*Suitcase* and *Ziggy Swift* is a double bill by Krinkl Theatre, an Australian puppetry company established in 1999 in regional New South Wales. It is a poignant work, created and performed by the company's co founders Lara Cruickshank and Padi Bolliger. *Suitcase* is a deeply moving piece about poverty. *Ziggy Swift* follows and is an uplifting, short burst of fun.

Before the audience is ushered into the theatre, people gather, self-absorbed and chatting loudly. Two street people, shabbily dressed, sit crouching in a corner clutching a suitcase. They observe the crowd from their viewpoint but are hardly noticed – an apt way to start a show about society's invisible people.

*Suitcase* is sensitively and simply told. The puppeteers deftly tell the story of a family, a child and its parents, living out of their suitcase using minimal props, a beautifully animated puppet child made of newspaper and audience interaction. The audience witnesses and is engaged in the family's daily happenings; polishing shoes, drawing pictures, a tender moment, a feeding frenzy, playing games. Some from the audience have their shoes shined and others play soccer with the child, much to the audience's delight despite some difficult sight lines. Like the creators, the characters are inventive with what they have in their possession, tracing pictures in rice and playing ball with rolled up paper. All this is communicated in an empty space, in silence, without dialogue. Careful selection and placement of events builds an emotionally rich story, which at one point almost slips into sentimentality.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

The sweetly heartwarming moment is quickly averted to the heart-rending plight of the characters. *Suitcase* is carefully selected moments that are all the more powerful for the creators' finely attuned attention to structure.

*Ziggy Swift* is a seven minute story about Ziggy, a schmoozing, flirting, break dancing puppet busting some moves to a pumping beat under the watchful eye of his bodyguards. Ziggy is a hyper mobile mover made of garbage bags, complete with backwards facing baseball cap and the mandatory bling. This punchy little piece of puppetry is a welcome relief after the heart-wrenching content of *Suitcase*. Ziggy is fun and lightens the mood without detracting from what has gone before.

Krinkl works powerfully with the universal language of image. Their compelling storytelling has great adaptability no matter what country or venue they might find themselves performing in. The simplicity of the work clearly communicates a poignant story for our times. ★

Ursula Beaumont



## Dschungel Wien

### Surprise (Überraschung)

**Director/ Producer** Stephan Rabi

**Choreographers** Adriana Cubides, Raul Maia and Stephan Rabi

**Composition** Music Matthias Jakisic

**Dancers** Adriana Cubides and Raul Maia

**Costume** Meike Sasse

**Lighting Designer** Stefan Enderle

In a world of white, surprise springs from a single moment of wonder in Dschungel Wien's production of *Surprise (Überraschung)*. The very word itself rolls off the tongue with the promise of an event about to envelop the spectator.

As the audience enter two actors warm-up on the white ground cloth, surrounded by white curtains, in loose white clothes that flow with the motion of their lithe and supple limbs. A sense of fun frolics on their smiles and it is obvious in their mischievous glances that the unexpected lurks in waiting for the show to begin.

Suddenly the show begins, punctuated by the sliding rhythms of the electric violin, composed by Matthias Jakisic as an incessant accompaniment to the remarkable versatility and flexibility of dancers, Adriana Cubides and Raul Maia. For forty minutes they hold their audience entranced. The very young sit transfixed, drawn into a spontaneous world of the imagination, instinctively responding to the limitless possibilities of their imaginary universe.

Cubides and Maia, under Stephan Rabi's precisely choreographed direction, magically transform reality, surprising and delighting with each new invention. Their white pants open out to conceal one leg while the other sprightly leaps into a one-legged dance. Ingenious, joyous and agile, Cubides and Maia continue to conjure one surprise after another.

## AUSTRIA

Skilful and impulsive in their transitions, the dancers capture the magical, unrestrained world of a child at play. Maia's transformations into the angular lizard or the leaping frog reveal the dancer in perfect control.

White wheelbarrows become a struggle for possession, the eternal rivalry of the envious child. Even the very young recognise in the struggle, the age-old conflicts, resolved eventually through the power of play to transform. Every action sparks a new reaction in the wellspring of spontaneous response. *Surprise* celebrates the boundless imagination of the child at play. Mercurial, joyful and bursting with the energy of invention and surprise, the child's world is revealed with fun-loving insight, culminating in a joyous escapade in a wheelbarrow filled with water that splashes gloriously across the stage, transforming the space into a waterslide playground where the free spirit delights in the magic of surprise.

So simple, so playful and so refreshingly free, *Surprise* is a show to delight young and old and remind us that imagination need know no bounds. ★

### What Isaac thought...

Austrian dancers Adriana Cubides and Raul Maia, together with their violinist, create a truly unique and constantly entertaining physical/dance piece.

Surrounded by a white stage, walls and props whilst wearing nothing but simple red garments their portrayal of children playing and exploring could not have been more captivating. The level of energy never fell short of breathtaking, captured continuously in moments of pure creativity. An ideal example of one such moment is a stunning routine where the dancers transformed their bodies into balloons, constantly inflating and deflating, demanding a high level of control. The violin provides to this routine, as with them all, beautiful music in perfect harmony with the movement. This is also when coloured lights are introduced into the pale set, providing the eyes with yet another visual feast. The light is also reflected off the only set pieces, wheelbarrows. I was frequently amazed that such seemingly simple tools could have such a diverse and unexpected range of uses. Their final use encompassed water, the floor and very little friction. Without blowing the finale, *Surprise* makes for a show designed for the whole family, entertainment guaranteed. ★

Isaac Astill, aged 15

Molly, Isaac, Amy and Anu are all members of writeSYTE, Southern Youth Theatre Ensemble's playwrighting workshop group.





## KOREA & UNITED KINGDOM

### Hanyong Theatre Company & Buk Se Tung The Bridge

**Producer** Choi Young Ai  
**Director/ Writer** Peter Wynne-Willson  
**Writer** Ko Sun Duck  
**Director** Nam In Woo  
**Designer** Kim Kyung Hee  
**Lighting Designer** Lee Hyun Ji  
**Costume Designer** Lee Jin Hee  
**Composer** No Son Lak  
**Sound Effect Designer** Lee Ji Ho  
**Translator** Lee Ji Min  
**Company Administrator/ Translator** Park Young Hoon

**Dramaturg/ Program Editor** Jang Eun Jeong

Often known as the 'forgotten war', the Korean conflict of 1950-53, even after more than half a century since the ceasefire, remains unresolved and no peace treaty between the communist north and the democratic south has been officially signed. It is against this historical backdrop that Hanyong Theatre Company in association with Buk Se Tung have created the powerful and profoundly moving collaborative Korean and British production of *The Bridge*, a story of two cultures, trapped in a violent ideological war.

Set in a landscape of desolation, destruction and barbed wire, three Korean children wail in heartrending grief over the grave of their mother, an innocent victim of this terrible war. The Korean actors, speaking in their native tongue, lend the production a poignant authenticity, an inescapable testament to the horror of the wartime experience.

The action flashes forward to Birmingham in 2005. Korean war veteran, Hugh Davies, a youth of only nineteen at the time of his first tour of duty to Korea, has been laid to rest. Granddaughter Ellie decides to retrace her grandfather's footsteps and meet the Korean woman who has been corresponding with him over the years. The action flashes back to the meeting between Davies, wounded in a bomb blast and the three children who cared for him, forging a heart-warming bond as they learn each other's names, discover each other's languages and play children's games.

Davies hides a terrible mission – to destroy the bridge that divides the opposing forces, knowing that he will send the elder girl, who has run onto the bridge that separates the children from their father in the north, to an inevitable death. The schoolgirl behind me gasps in horrified disbelief. The reality of this dreadful war from a time long before she was born touches her deeply. She will not forget the 'forgotten war'.

Ellie meets the young girl and her brother, now much older but forever scarred by a war that tore their world apart, and continues to divide a nation. The brother still harbours the anger of his childhood, while his sister seeks to repair the bridge between culture and time.

For ninety minutes, the school audience sat transfixed, inexorably drawn into an event brought to life so vividly, so powerfully and so poignantly. Seamless in its execution, groundbreaking in its collaboration and performed with such artistry, *The Bridge* is a plea for universal cooperation and a testimony to the enduring virtue of the human spirit. Hopefully a production as powerful and superbly performed as this, will continue to play its important part in building bridges between all peoples of the world. ★

Peter Wilkins

### Windmill Performing Arts The Green Sheep

Based on the book *Where is the Green Sheep?*

by Mem Fox and Judy Horacek

**Director** Cate Fowler

**Composer** Fleur Green

**Installation Design** Roy Ananda

**Early Childhood Mentor** Prof. Wendy Schiller

**Education Associate** Julie Orchard

Laughter, surprise, singing, and dancing, all sprinkled with an amount of intellectual stimulation and performed by a diverse array of talented sheep; What more could you want from theatre?

*The Green Sheep*, Windmill's suspense-thriller for the very young, has quickly become a cult classic for the children of Adelaide. Three seasons to date in this city alone have sold out, packing in innumerable excitable young faces in search of the fugitive sheep. In May the sheep and friends returned from a recent globetrotting world tour to play ASSITEJ, chalking up another sold out success and a mass of amazed faces.

The technique of taking a popular children's book and transforming it into theatrical splendour has been used successfully by Windmill throughout the company's illustrious history. The credit in this instance goes to Mem Fox and Judy Horacek's hugely successful book *Where is the Green Sheep?* The book has been faithfully adapted into an experiential performance installation that utilises Horacek's familiar illustrations as part of a design by Roy Ananda. It seats the young audience in a pen surrounded by magical revelations and actions that spring forth from the pen's fence, animating and bringing to life the book's diversely talented sheep.

If you are one of the seven people in Australia who has yet to witness this little gem, my best attempt at describing it would be to consider it as one elaborately staged episode of Crime Scene Investigation. Rather than occurring in the slums of New York City, we are in a beautiful meadow, growing peacefully in a vast room of Adelaide's State Library.

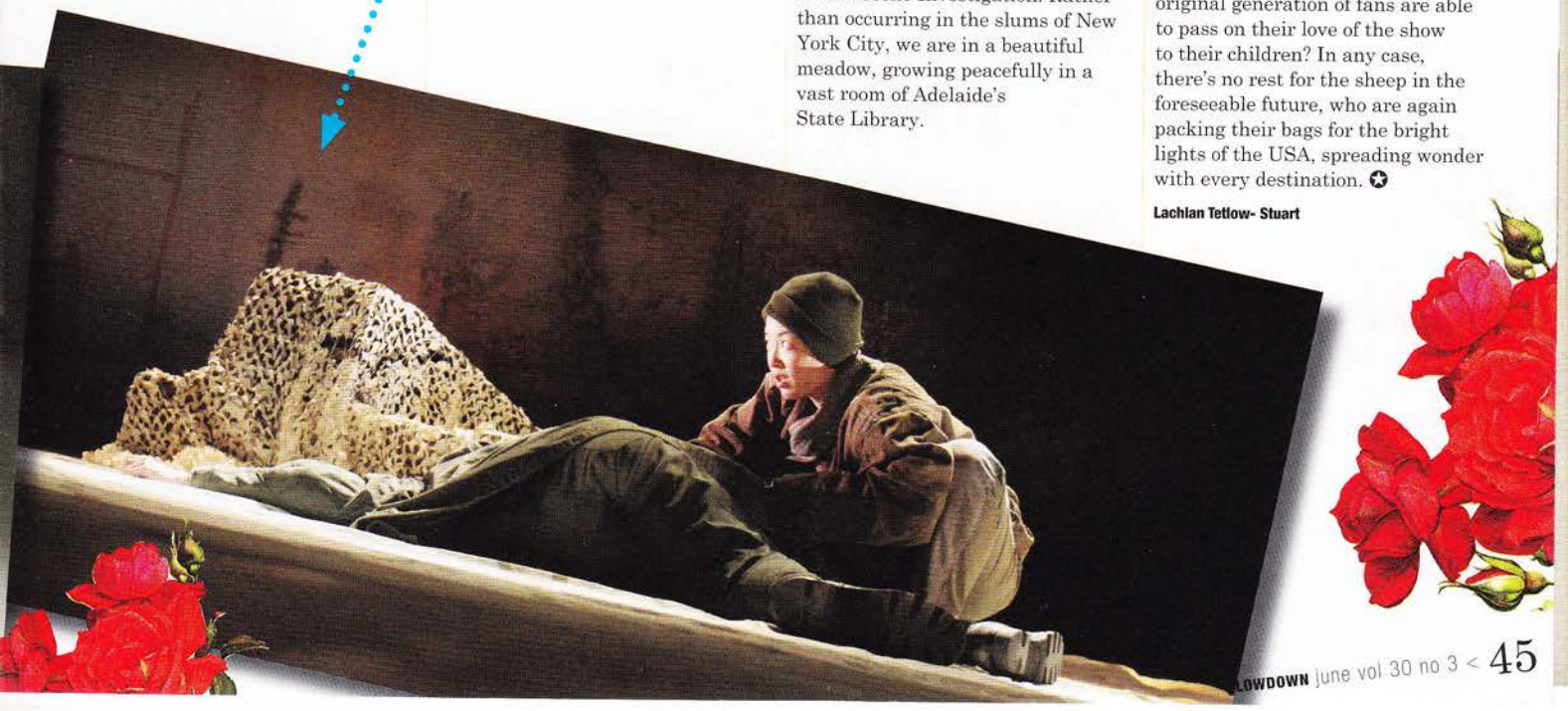


We must also supplement the inhabitants of the dark underworld of NYC with a selection of colourful and daring sheep a blue sheep, a red sheep, a bath sheep, and a bed sheep, just to name a few. Finally, to cap of the tenuous analogy, we nab our suspect, discovering the title's illusive subject tucked-away asleep in a magically illuminated manger.

If the mere touring schedule and sold out seasons isn't enough to attest to *The Green Sheep's* success at creating a lively theatrical experience for the very young, one only has to experience the work and witness the attentive thrill the show maintains for its duration with an age group where this feat is a rarity. A scan of the pen at any point during the show reveals a sea of bright young faces with attentions firmly fixed on each of the simple illusions, intently beaming with wonder and joy. The revelation of each sheep brings with it a gasp, a point, shouts, cheers, or laughter. These are all grand testaments that surpass any superlative I, or any marketing statement, can dream up in praise of this joyful work.

Considering the mounting success and continuing life of this stronghold in Windmill's repertory, will we one day get to the point where the original generation of fans are able to pass on their love of the show to their children? In any case, there's no rest for the sheep in the foreseeable future, who are again packing their bags for the bright lights of the USA, spreading wonder with every destination. ★

Lachlan Tetlow- Stuart







## Arigon Starr The Red Road

**Writer/ Performer** Arigon Starr  
(Kickapoo, Creek)

**Director** Randy Reinholz (Choctaw)

**Executive Producers** Jean Bruce Scott,  
Randy Reinholz

**Stage Manager** Rose-Yvonne Colletta

**Costumer** Christine Wright

'June 4, 1977 - personal log', a young girl writes, channeling Star Trek in the All Nations Café where she is sitting having been deposited by her parents for the day. 'I wish I was white. No one messes with a white girl', she says, dreaming of herself as a Nordic blonde in the style of Olivia Newton John. The great irony of this moment, I think to myself, is that Star Trek was one of the first television series to include a regular character played by a black American and a female one at that! It's a big day in the little café. The new stove looks as though it may be repossessed, there's a protest or something big brewing down the road and the regulars and a few blow-ins are eagerly awaiting the arrival of town alumni and celebrated country music star Patty. The normally subdued café and its customers are hyped up, welcoming and overwhelmed by the attention of the waiting media who are there to film a television special with the disingenuous Patty playing host.



## UNITED STATES

Over the course of the next hour we meet both the locals and the blow-ins. There are twelve characters, all of them played by Aragon Starr. Most of them are Indian and each has something to share about their life, their heritage and their situation. What should be a fascinating look at Indian culture now and in the past and a young girls struggle to embrace that culture does not quite get there.

Arigon Starr is clearly at home as a solo performer in this one woman show. Her wonderful full voice transcends characters that are otherwise dogged by lack of clarity in conversation and in transition. Her songs should be the perfect platform to illuminate the show's themes. I do see that they attempted to provide much needed additional information to the narrative. But characters, songs and scenes blend together leaving in their wake confusion and a sort of apathy on behalf of this audience member to engage further.

By the end of the hour our wannabe white girl decides to embrace her heritage. But how? When was the epiphany? At what moment did she decide to embrace her heritage and culture? Like the rest of the content this key message, this happening got lost in transition. ✱

Estelle Muspratt

## Slingsby The Tragical Life of Cheeseboy

**Director** Andy Packer

**Playwright** Finegan Kruckemeyer

**Performers** Stephen Sheehan and Sam McMahon

**Composer** Quincy Grant

**Design** Wendy Todd

**Sound Design** Nick O'Connor

**Lighting Design/ Design** Consultant Geoff Cobham

**Illustrator** Andy Ellis

**New Media Artist** Simone Mazengarb

**New Media Consultant** Sophie Hyde

**Stage Manager/ Projectionist/ Performer** Sam McMahon

**Production Manager/ Operator** Roland Partis

**Executive Producer** Jodi Glass

Conceived by Andy Packer and written by Finegan Kruckemeyer, *The Tragical Life of Cheeseboy* is nothing short of exquisite and too wonderful to sum up in 400 words.

In a white cotton tent, seated on a low wooden bench, I am privy to a wonderful lilting tale of a boy's journey of loss and enquiry through to discovery and acceptance. Cheeseboy, a boy made entirely of cheese falls asleep on his boat, which is moored to the cheese planet on which he lives with his parents (also made of cheese). He awakes adrift, far from home. Only the moon knows that his home and parents have been engulfed by a firewall, leaving nothing but fondue its wake.

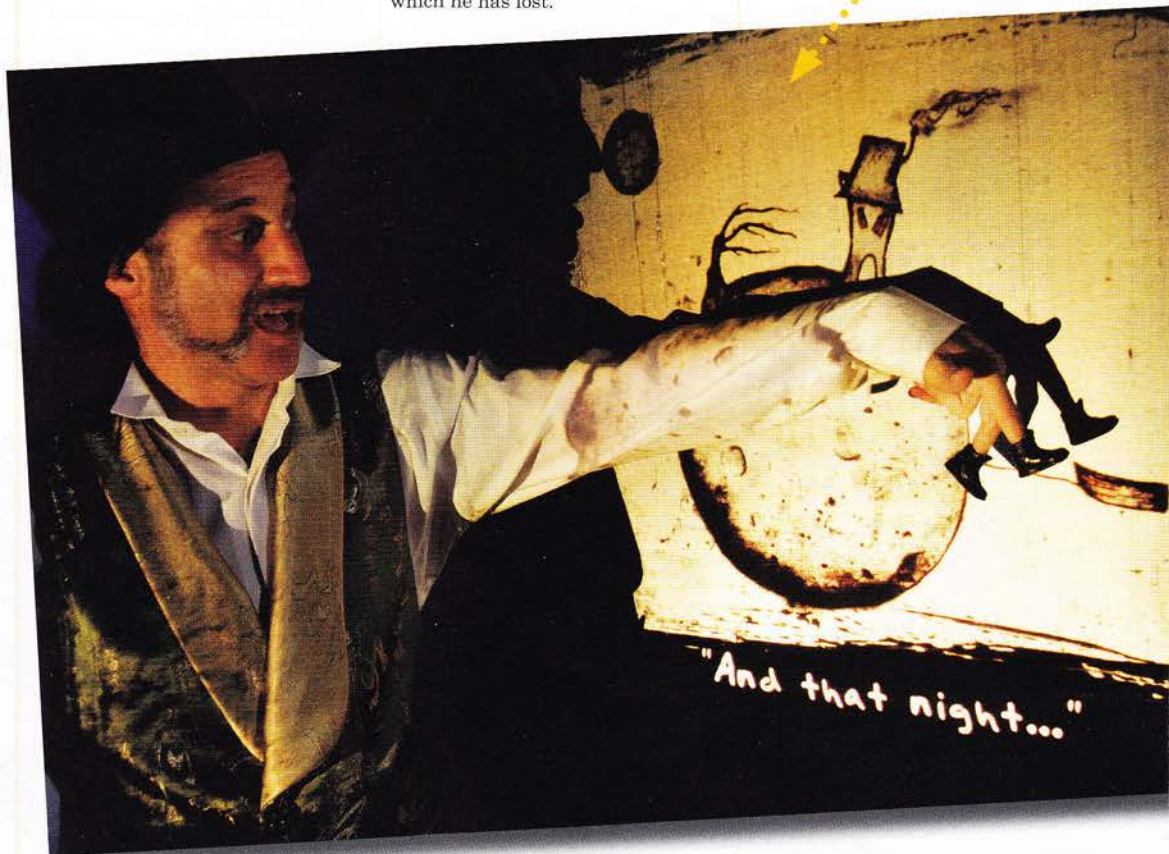
Lights and shadows, magnets and sand, boxes and suitcases and a couple of pieces of brie form the stage on which Steven Sheehan and Sam McMahon bring to life the tragic and yet beautiful story of boy growing into and experiencing a new world, all the while looking for that which he has lost.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

At the end of each day Cheeseboy has built a little bit more of his life in the sands on the planet he now inhabits and each night the tide comes in and changes that which he is unknowingly building. Desperate for more time to find his parents, Cheeseboy asks the moon to stop coming, stopping the tides and making day constant. Just as this new and strange world has an affect on him, his requested changes impact on his world and the people that inhabit it. Eventually Cheeseboy accepts night as an important and necessary part of his day. The moon eventually finds the right words to tell Cheeseboy about his parents.

Beautiful and haunting songs, magical, simple projections and lighting combine with a simply delightful script to form a story every one of us knows and perhaps dreads. It made me think about the things I take for granted, the relationships and people I rely on and what would happen if I had to do without them. I hope this shows enjoys many seasons. If you, the reader have the opportunity to see it, take your Mum or Dad. When you hold their hand, enjoy it, because there will come a day when you will have to hold your own as they will not be able to hold it for you. ✱

Estelle Muspratt







JAPAN

## Kijimuna Dance and Music Troupe The Voyage (Michi-nu-sura)

**Director/ Playwright** Megumi Tomita

**Lighting Designer** Yoshimi Sakamoto

**Stage Manager** Takayuki Inomata

**Producer** Hisashi Shimoyama

**Dancer/ Choreographer** Kaname Goya

**Dancers** Wakako Komine, Ayano Nishimura, Haruka Oshiro, Akino Tamashiro, Natsuki Yamashiro and Wakana Nagayama

**Musician/ Composer** Hideki Hanashiro

**Musician** Taisuke Yonaguni, Kanako Hatoma

What magic is it that can hold the attention of a full theatre of young primary school children, who can neither understand the language of Kijimuna Dance and Music Troupe from Japan, or be familiar with the Japanese traditions that inform the traditional dance and music in the performance of *The Voyage*? It is the magic of tranquility, the sorcery of music and the necromancy of the spirit of the dance that transported audience, young and old, into the world of all humanity, the common thread of universal human understanding. Using the ancient techniques of comic Kyogen to capture the young audience from the start and the exquisitely timed and synchronised grace and serenity of Noh to gently display the opulence of richly embroidered costumes and the gliding, mesmerising movements of the dancers across the vast Dunstan Playhouse stage, *The Voyage* celebrates the joy of living.

Ideally constructed in a series of short movement sequences to engage young children from another culture, and lasting only forty minutes, *The*

*Voyage* depicts a fascinating and colourful array of village characters from the Okinawan region of Japan. They are a people who treasure the joy of life with laughter, song, music and dance. Throughout the course of the performance we are introduced to all strata of this content and well-ordered society from simple peasants to privileged royalty, from opulently clad Okinawan women in their elaborate headdresses and colourful kimonos to fisherman with their simple garb and instantly identifiable headdresses as well as the farmers in the field, tilling the soil with the rhythmic ritual of the ages. Theirs is a simple life, far from the mayhem of the modern city.

Integral to our understanding was the accompanying music of the Chinese violin, the stringed Okinawan Sanshin, the flute, drum and castanets, ingeniously played as a character enters through the audience among the children. With no trace of coercion, the young audience was drawn into magical moments of call and response participation, echoing the Japanese words of welcome and gasping spontaneously at the fairy lights that lit up the stage and the darting comet of light across the backdrop.

Here is a company that understood the heart of its audience and shares its belief that we can all walk together and live together even if we have different ways (Michi-nu-sura means 'the way of') and different speeds. *The Voyage* is an uplifting affirmation and celebration of the wonderment of life. ★

Peter Wilkins



## The Conch

### Vula

**Director/ Co-Producer** Nina Nawalowalo

**Associate Director** Tom McCrory

**Original Design** Tolis Papazoglou

**Composer** Gareth Farr

**Lighting Designer** Stephen Blackburn

**Stage Manager/ Puppeteer** Salesi Le'ota

**Producer/ Production Manager** Derek Simpson

**Object Animation Advisor** Rebekah Wilde

*Vula* (Fijian for 'moon') is a beautiful story, sensuously told. The stage itself is flooded with water, and looks incredibly lush softly lit in front of dark washed silk curtains. Water, soft light, music and traditional ceremony and dance interplay to explore femininity and the interplay of traditional Fijian and Pacific island and culture with modernity.

The first half focuses on traditional dances and themes. The women dance and undulate gracefully, using the water and lighting to best affect. It is mesmerising. In the dance piece *The Lagoon*, puppetry and movement is used to turn traditionally woven items into fish and creatures of the sea. Another moving piece is *Tu Kupenga* (the net) in which one of the dancers dances underneath a fishing net, finally working her way free.

NEW ZEALAND

The cultural influence is mainly Fijian, but in parts is combined with Samoan, Moari, Tongan and Rarotongan dance forms. It explores the culture from the traditional elements such as Kava drinking ceremonies and Tuiga ceremonial headdress to the everyday rituals of washing and bathing.

In later parts of the work modernity and colonisation is explored, such as in the dance *Camakau*, where a sail moving across the stage slowly reveals the two women slowly more Westernised, complete with Victorian looking outfits and bibles, singing a church hymn. Modern New Zealanders are depicted living everyday, watching *Home and Away* on TV, but with their old cultural traditions still echoing through their lives. There are comic parts in the piece, although they aren't astoundingly funny, they do add to the overall performance.

This piece would benefit from being a tad shorter, as it dragged slightly towards the end. However, the dancers were beautiful to watch and the use of the textures and materials to tell stories imaginative and at times unexpected. It is an astonishing first work for newly established company *The Conch*. I certainly hope to witness more of their work in the future. ★

Samantha Ryan

