

BACK TO BACK

ANNUAL REPORT 2008



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2008

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

FROM THE CHAIR, THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Many arts organisations, as they age, are required to reinvent themselves. Back to Back Theatre, now in its 22nd year, is fortunate as we see, as we age, to refine the ways we engage creatively; the company has been afforded the opportunity to mature.

In 2008, we have produced a new work, FOOD COURT. It sold out six weeks prior to premiere and heads into the wider world in 2009. Its evolution over three years emerged from a creative development project called DUMB, which also spawned another work, yet to be realised, titled GANESH VS THE THIRD REICH. GANESH underwent a creative development process in 2008 and will undergo further creative development in 2009, with a premiere in 2010.

At Federation Square we undertook a technical development on TOUR GUIDE, which has been commissioned for further creative development in Linz, Austria, in 2009. The technical development involved testing FM signal for delivering soundtrack wirelessly to audience members.

Artistic Associate, Marcia Ferguson, led a team of Geelong-based artists including our ensemble members in LIGHT LETTERS, a residency project within the northern Suburbs of Geelong including the students at Nelson Park School, individuals from Cloverdale Community Centre and the Dorothy Thompson Centre and Norlane Primary School students. We will be working in earnest with Nelson Park again in 2009.

THEATRE OF SPEED collaborated with a host of Australia's most dynamic choreographers in a dance / theatre / video project called THE DEMOCRATIC SET, as well as a text-based creative development, TEXT, with director David Symons. Both projects are scheduled for further development in 2009. Other community engagement in 2008 included our annual SUMMER SCHOOL and an eight-day residency with the Adelaide-based companies Restless Dance Company, No Strings Attached and Tutti Ensemble.

For their contributions to these projects, we would like to thank Rob Rees at St. Laurence Community Services; Sue Hartigan at Cloverdale; Rose De Cook at Dorothy Thompson; Wendy Smith and Di Leverett at Nelson Park; Jo Ludowyck at Norlane Primary; Nick Hughes and Ingrid Voorendt at Restless.

The seemingly bullet proof SMALL METAL OBJECTS headlined The Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival and was awarded a prestigious Bessie – a New York Dance & Performance Award – for the New York season. SMALL METAL OBJECTS also travelled to the Toronto's Harbourfront Centre,



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Vancouver's PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, Flynn Center for the Performing Arts in Vermont, Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, On the Boards in Seattle and finally, to the Singapore National Arts Festival. For their work on the above projects, we would like especially to thank: Mark Russell and Meiyin Wang in New York; Tina Rasmussen in Toronto; Arnie Malina in Burlington; Philip Bither and Michele Steinwald in Minneapolis; Lane Czapinski and Sarah Wilke in Seattle; Jason Chan in Singapore; Kristy Edmunds, Vivia Hickman, Maureen Gardner, Kara Milier, Kara Ward and Edwina Lunn in Melbourne.

We are indebted to Board member Patsie Frawley to whom we bid farewell after 7 years of fine service: we will miss Patsie's acuity, generosity and warmth. We welcomed Monica Walters to the Board and long-standing, intrepid THEATRE OF SPEED member, Brian Tilley, to the ensemble. (He said the only thing bad about FOOD COURT was that he wasn't in it.) Then the lovely Belinda Hellyer joined us as Giving Manager mid-year. We are ever so lucky.

At the conclusion of 2008 what becomes increasingly important to us is the opportunity to create new work. Our challenge is to maintain the health and growth of the company, to develop as artists in the midst of an organisation that has a responsibility to an ever-expanding range of internal and external stakeholders.

For all their work in whipping us into shape and assisting in quiet and not so quiet ways, we thank: the ensemble, the staff, the Board, collaborating artists, project partners funders, peers and colleagues. It is an honour to work in collaboration with you all.

And of course, we thank our audiences, those who come to our workshops and participated in our programs and our friends, families and carers: we are grateful.

ROSE HISCOCK CHAIR
BRUCE GLADWIN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
& **ALICE NASH** EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

ABOUT BACK TO BACK THEATRE

Back to Back Theatre was founded in Geelong in 1987 to create theatre with people who are perceived to have a disability. It has gone on to become one of Australia's leading creative voices, focusing on moral, philosophical and political questions about the value of individual lives.

With a full-time ensemble of eight actors, Back to Back creates work that is idiosyncratic, passionate and at times confronting. Back to Back's ensemble is made up of actors perceived to have intellectual disabilities, a group of people who, in a culture obsessed with perfection and surgically enhanced 'beauty', are the real outsiders. This position of marginality provides them with a unique and at times subversive view of the world. The stories they create explore "the cold dark side" of our times, be it the sexuality of people with disabilities, the uses of artificial intelligence and genetic screening, unfulfilled desire, the inevitability of death, and what the fixation with economic rationality and utilitarianism means for people excluded from the 'norm'.

With Bruce Gladwin as Artistic Director, Back to Back has nurtured a unique artistic voice, placing the ensemble at the centre of social and cultural dialogue. Through a process of research, improvisation and scripting, and collaboration between the ensemble, Artistic Director and invited guest artists, new work is realised.

ENSEMBLE

"We're people who do shows.

We're all quite short, but each one is a little bit taller than the one before.

We're agile and work professionally as a theatre company.

There are other things we do as well ... warm ups, research, trips to Melbourne, lots of meetings, and time off when we need it.

Sometimes we have noodles for lunch.

The artistic director's name is Bruce and he makes us laugh. He gets on the table, pretends he's a dog, and then turns into a robot. He tells us to put our noodles down.

We love people. We believe in angels, shows and Britney Spears.

Hugs all round."

MISSION

Back to Back Theatre creates new forms of contemporary theatre imagined from the minds and experiences of a unique ensemble of actors with a disability, giving voice to social and political issues that speak to all people.

2008 HIGHLIGHTS

SMALL METAL OBJECTS tours to New York, Vancouver, Toronto, Burlington, Seattle, Minneapolis & Singapore

Back to Back Theatre wins a coveted 'Bessie' (New York Dance & Performance Award) for **SMALL METAL OBJECTS** at the Staten Island Ferry Terminal, presented by Under the Radar / The Public Theater

LIGHT LETTERS Community workshops and residency in North Geelong

FOOD COURT premieres at the Melbourne International Arts Festival

THEATRE OF SPEED launches **THE DEMOCRATIC SET**

STAFF

Alice Nash, Executive Producer

Bruce Gladwin, Artistic Director

Marcia Ferguson, Artistic Associate

Marisa Chiappi, Finance Officer

Pauline Cady, Funding Development Manager

Stacey Baldwin, Administration Manager

Belinda Hellyer, Giving Manager (from July 08)

ENSEMBLE

Mark Deans

Nicki Holland

Rita Halabarec

Sarah Mainwaring

Scott Price

Simon Laherty

Sonia Teuben (touring only)

Brian Tilley

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Bobbie Hodge (1996 -)

Gillian Hoysted (2006 -)

Ian Bracegirdle (2006 -)

Monica Walters (from May 2008 -)

Patrick Over (Secretary) (2004 -)

Patsie Frawley (2001 - June 08)

Rick Merrigan (Treasurer) (2004 -)

Rose Hiscock (Chair) (2003 -)

Simon Laherty & Sarah Mainwaring
(Ensemble Representative) (2008 -)

Yoni Prior (2002 -)

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GUEST ARTISTS & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Adrian Hann
Adam Berry
Andrew Livingston
Bec Reid
Bernadette Sweeney
Bluebottle3
Box Wars
Caroline Lee
Chris Abrahams
David DellaFiora
Diana Hume
Dianne Leverett
Disability Media
Eduard Ingles
Genevieve Morris
Gerard Van Dyck
Grit Media
Hugh Covill
Jen Hector
Jilli Romanis
Jim Russell
Jo Leishman
Jo Ludowyck
John Bolton
Kate Sulan
Lachlan Carrick
Leanne Stein
Lloyd Swanton
Mark Cuthbertson
Melissa Reeves
Michelle Riessut
Mother's Art
Nelson Park School
Nina Bonacci
Olivia Allen
Peter Farnan
Phillip Ivan Pietruschka
Rhian Hinkley
Ross Mueller
Sarah Ford
Shio Otani
Skye Abikhair
Stephen Oaks
The Necks
Tony Buck
Wendy Smith

THEATRE OF SPEED (Community Workshop Participants)

Samantha Bade
Phoebe Baker
Tom Banks
Angus Bannister
Laura Berrisford
Adam Berry (on leave)
Joan Black
Robert Croft
Sarah Keating
James Lewis
Polly Munday
Tamika Simpson

FUNDERS, SPONSORS & PARTNERS

CORE

Arts Victoria
Australia Council for the Arts

PROJECT

Bešen Family Foundation
City of Greater Geelong
Department of Families, Housing, Community
Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
Grosvenor Foundation
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
Myer Foundation
Percy Baxter Charitable Trust, managed by
Perpetual Trustees
United Way Geelong
VicHealth
William Buckland Foundation

COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS

Alcoa Celebrate All Abilities Festival
Cloverdale Community Centre
Dorothy Thompson Day Centre
Harwood Andrews
Herbert Greer Rundle
Inclusiveness Events Network
Nelson Park School
Norlane Primary School
No Strings Attached
Restless Dance Company
St Laurence Community Services
Tutti Ensemble

ARTS
VICTORIA

Victoria
The Place to Be

Australian Government

Geelong

Geelong
Arts Centre

Living
the Art

R.E. ROSS

Geelong
Arts Centre

Geelong
Arts Centre

Geelong
Arts Centre

Geelong
Arts Centre

THANKS

Adam Berry
Adam J Howe
Ann Tonks
Ashley Prosser at Nelson Park
Ben Speth
Bill Harris
Cameron McNaughton
Caroline Lee
City of Greater Geelong
Colin Lane
CUB Malthouse
Daniela and Archie
David at Arena Theatre
David McGuinness
David Symons
Debra Thompson
Di Shaw
Don Shaw at Geelong Performing Arts Centre
Donna Aston
Edwina Lunn
Evan Watts
Fergus Linehan
Frank Wood
Geelong Performing Arts Centre
Genevieve Morris
Graeme Hodgkinson
Herbert Geer
Jamie O'Brien
Jamie Stahl
Jenny Hector
Jill Smith
Jim Russell
Kara Miller
Kate Sulan
Kaz Paton
Kirsty Edmunds
Louise Walsh
Luke Gleeson at the Courthouse Youth Arts Centre
Madison Technologies
Marc at Music Workshop
Mark Cuthbertson's parents
Maureen Gardner
Melbourne International Arts Festival
Obi and Rose
Patsie Frawley
Peter Jago at Digidesign
Rachel High
Rose Myers
Sarah Goningen
Sue Hartigan
Sylvia and David
Tim Orton
Tina and Graeme
Vittoria de Stefano at Harwood Andrews
Vivia Hickman

We have tried to remember everyone!
Forgive us if we've failed.

06 07



ENSEMBLE REPORT

LIGHT LETTERS "Kids from Nelson Park and Norlane West thought I was a role model. I worried the Nelson Park teachers wouldn't accept me. I was afraid I might lose my temper with those three boys in Nelson Park. Hard to concentrate. It was beautiful, working community stories into a single performance. Our drawings are in the artist book".

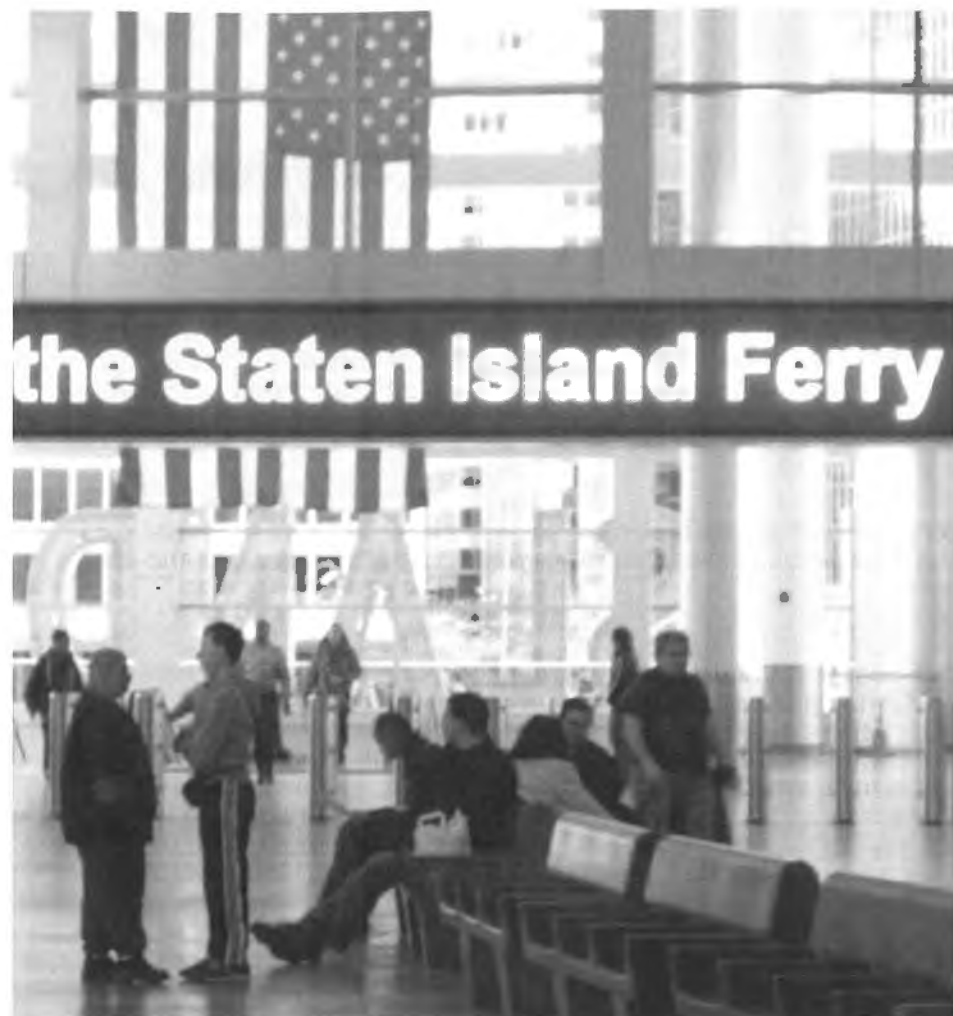
SMALL METAL OBJECTS "Sell out shows in Seattle are way better than when it's not sold out. Singapore was best because every morning you had a buffet breakfast and ate whatever you wanted".

FOOD COURT "A lot of people said how could Bruce make us do FOOD COURT? We say 'bribe us'! We say 'screw you 'cos it's art and you can do those things in art'. We made it, us. We like challenging people and to be challenged in our work. People's perceptions see us as inferior, dependent, low status, crippled, mindless. We can be immoral, mistaken, in love, an actor. We hold strong opinions. I knew it would bring up arguments to take my clothes off. I was confident, happy to do it because I felt accepted. I want to say through my body, that in my eyes, people don't want to recognise people with disabilities. Hell, we did not feel vulnerable. I felt powerful".

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT "We did a play with Jim Russell about the peacock family and their café, burnt down by cigarette. So much laughing. It was surreal playing indoor cricket with kids at Torquay, being the most popular person out there. When I bowled every single kid cheered me on".

THEATRE OF SPEED "I performed many TV scripts with Phoebe. When James suggested the prince lean down to kiss Snow White, I thought OK, I'll see what happens. In DEMOCRATIC SET I dressed in the candy-stripe dress. I was a bit cold. Cross-dressing is a little different. Building up a party scene with no music was psychotic. Didn't make any sense at all. I loved that. I loved Box Wars, the two guys stunt fighting scene; Mark was possessed in the robot costume".

THE ADELAIDE RESIDENCY "...was hard. I tried to keep track but I was unable. Large amounts of improvisation and little time to rehearse. I felt like I failed. I was too nervous to make any offers, I can't think of anything. I feel confident most of the time. Sometimes there is unrequited love".



Simon:
 "SMO has
 been asked
 to 80
 countries.
 It's much
 too popular."

SMALL METAL OBJECTS 1ST TOUR 08

SMALL METAL OBJECTS (SMO) premiered and sold out at the 2005 Melbourne International Festival. It won the inaugural Age Critics' Special Commendation and was nominated for a Helpmann Award for Best New Australian Work.

In 2008 SMO was performed in 7 cities internationally.

NEW YORK

11 – 14 January 08, Staten Island Ferry Terminal, New York, USA

Presented by The Public Theater and Under the Radar Festival / APAP

SMALL METAL OBJECTS was presented at the Under the Radar festival, a project of the [American] Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP), curated by Mark Russell and hosted by The Public Theater.

New York audiences for SMALL METAL OBJECTS (SMO) were endearingly curious. Cast and crew added two new words to their touring vocabulary: 'snow forecast' and 'windchill factor'!

On 15 September 2008, in Manhattan, the company was awarded a Bessie Award for the New York season of SMALL METAL OBJECTS. The New York Dance and Performance Awards, informally known as the Bessie Awards in honor of Bessie Schonberg, are awarded annually for innovative achievement in dance and related performances, particularly so-called "downtown" performances.

Back to Back was also part of the Under the Radar Symposium, a glorious gathering of leading contemporary arts presenters.

TORONTO

22 – 26 January 08, Eaton Centre, Toronto, Canada

Presented by Harbourfront Centre World Stage

The season was presented in Toronto's iconic Eaton Centre, an immensely busy domain, an arduous space for the show, where a last minute change resulted in a vaulting void in the centre of the playing space. SMO showed its resilience and beauty amidst the chaos.

In conjunction with the SMO season Back to Back ran two days of experimental sound workshops as part of Harbourfront's HATCHlab. Harbourfront partnered with Toronto's Picasso Pro (a program that provides a vital bridge between beginnings and real integration for artists with disabilities in the performing arts).

VANCOUVER

30 January – 3 February 08, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver, Canada

Presented by PuSH International Performance Arts Festival

The venue – as an extant democratic space – proved beautifully austere and poetic. Audiences and critics alike were awed.

The season coincided with PuSh's Assembly – a convening of international presenters and theatre makers – so was once again seen by a myriad of producers, including many Canadian presenters and presenters from west coast and north western United States.

Bruce Gladwin led a half-day seminar with practitioners in the disability arts field focusing on the processes and structures that define Back to Back. The workshop was organised by PuSH and facilitated by local disability organisation Theatre Terrific.

TOURING PARTY

Director	Bruce Gladwin
Performers	Simon Laherty, Sonia Teuben, Caroline Lee, Jim Russell
Production Manager	Bernadette Sweeny
Sound Operator	Phillip Ivan Pietruschka
Stage Manager	Jo Leishman
Executive Producer	Alice Nash

SMALL METAL OBJECTS 2ND TOUR 08

BURLINGTON

17-18 May 08, University Mall, Burlington, Vermont, USA
Presented by Flynn Center for the Performing Arts

This was a tough season but the audiences loved it.

Back to Back ran a half-day workshop with Burlington based Awareness Theatre Company, an enormously welcoming theatrical group composed of people with and without disabilities.

SEATTLE

29 May – 1 June 08, Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle, Washington, USA
Presented by On the Boards

On the Boards, a leading US presenter of contemporary performance, in association with the Seattle Art Museums' Taking the Pulse series, presented 5 performances of SMALL METAL OBJECTS at Seattle's brand new Olympic Sculpture Park. It was a very unusual and peaceful site.

The critical and audience response to the piece was overwhelmingly positive.

In addition to the performance, Bruce Gladwin took part in a panel discussion, "Performance in Public Spaces".

MINNEAPOLIS

6-7 June 08, Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Presented by Walker Arts Center

The Walker Art Center is a contemporary art centre in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Walker is considered one of the United States' "Big Five" museums for modern art. The season was presented in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, one of the largest sculpture gardens in the United States, within view of the garden's centerpiece, the *Spoonbridge and Cherry* water fountain by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

The company was to have presented four performances but hurricane warnings forced the cancellation of the opening night performance. The remaining performances were met with great tenderness by Walker audiences.

The Walker linked Back to Back with community disability organisation Interact Center – a centre for professional level training, developing performances and exhibitions in multiple artistic disciplines for artists with a wide range of disabilities. The company undertook a variety of community interactions, including attending a potluck dinner, meeting Interact actors and participating in a forum "Embracing Radical Inclusion in the Performing Arts".



SINGAPORE

15-17 June 08, 'Vivo City', Singapore
Presented by Singapore National Arts Festival

Back to Back Theatre was presented in Singapore by the Singapore National Arts Centre. The season was in a very, very densely populated mall – one of so many in Singapore – and one of the loudest environments that we have ever worked in. The season received excellent responses from audiences and critics alike.

During our stay in Singapore, Back to Back facilitated a half-day workshop with Very Special Arts Singapore, a charity that provides people with disabilities with opportunities to access the arts for rehabilitation and social integration – promoting the creative power in people with disabilities. This was attended by 15 local disability theatre makers with and without disabilities: a time of dialogue, exchange and learning on both sides.

TOURING PARTY

Director	Bruce Gladwin
Ensemble Performers	Simon Laherty, Sonia Teuben
Guest Artists	Jim Russell (Burlington only), Christopher Brown, Tina Bursill
Production Manager	Berni Sweeney
Sound Operator	Phillip Ivan Pietruschka
Stage Manager	Jo Leishman
Executive Producer	Alice Nash

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET 08

From 25-29 Feb 08, Bruce Gladwin and Alice Nash attended the 2008 Australian Performing Arts Market at the Adelaide Festival Centre. At the Market: Bruce Gladwin presented a Searchlight Pitch Session of Back to Back's next major work, FOOD COURT (slated to premiere at the 2008 Melbourne International Arts Festival); Alice Nash was part of a Panel discussion "Challenging Expectations" about "companies and artists who challenge the mainstream through unconventional presentation formats, unusual content, interdisciplinary and digital media work"; Alice Nash was a guest speaker at Crossing Borders, the Australia Council's intensive workshop for companies new to international touring and the company co-hosted a drinks function, the Made in Melbourne Soiree, for international and Australian peers. The company was also represented at the Market by Sarah Ford of Quatenaire.

GANESH VS THE THIRD REICH CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT 08

Throughout the year, Stott Theatre, Old Courthouse Building, Geelong

GANESH VS THE THIRD REICH is, an exploration of cultural appropriation in all forms, be it the theft of symbols, icons, rituals, aesthetic standards, or behaviour from one culture or subculture by another. Taking in the territories of nationalism, globalisation, multiculturalism, religion, spirituality and pop-culture, its single linear narrative is presented as a hero's journey.

The narrative tells of the Hindu elephant-headed God Ganesh's epic journey to Nazi Germany to recover the ancient Hindu symbol, the Swastika, from Hitler. As the journey progresses, the ethics, morality and responsibility of presenting such a narrative becomes an issue of debate by the presenters of the work. The further Ganesh travels, the more enmeshed the presenters of the work become in the politics of appropriation. In form the work seeks to utilise multiple, layered examples of cultural appropriation as a means of commenting on the thematic.

The creative development was spent working with the ensemble mapping a hero's journey for Ganesh, examining archetypal narrative structure, investigating personal family histories of the actors and researching Hinduism, India, WW2 and The Holocaust. The material is incredibly rich and symbolically and emotionally dense. The devisors brought with them personal experience which injected the development with an investment well beyond self-reflection. It is instead a genuine new work of fiction.

The 'form' seems to be a very deconstructed, stripped back environment with the visual imagery created through text and rudimentary representation with found objects. In future developments in 2009 we will explore the use of a prosthetic elephant head, and extending the visual imagery and expanding the potential for the narrative.

COLLABORATORS

Director

Bruce Gladwin

Guest Directors

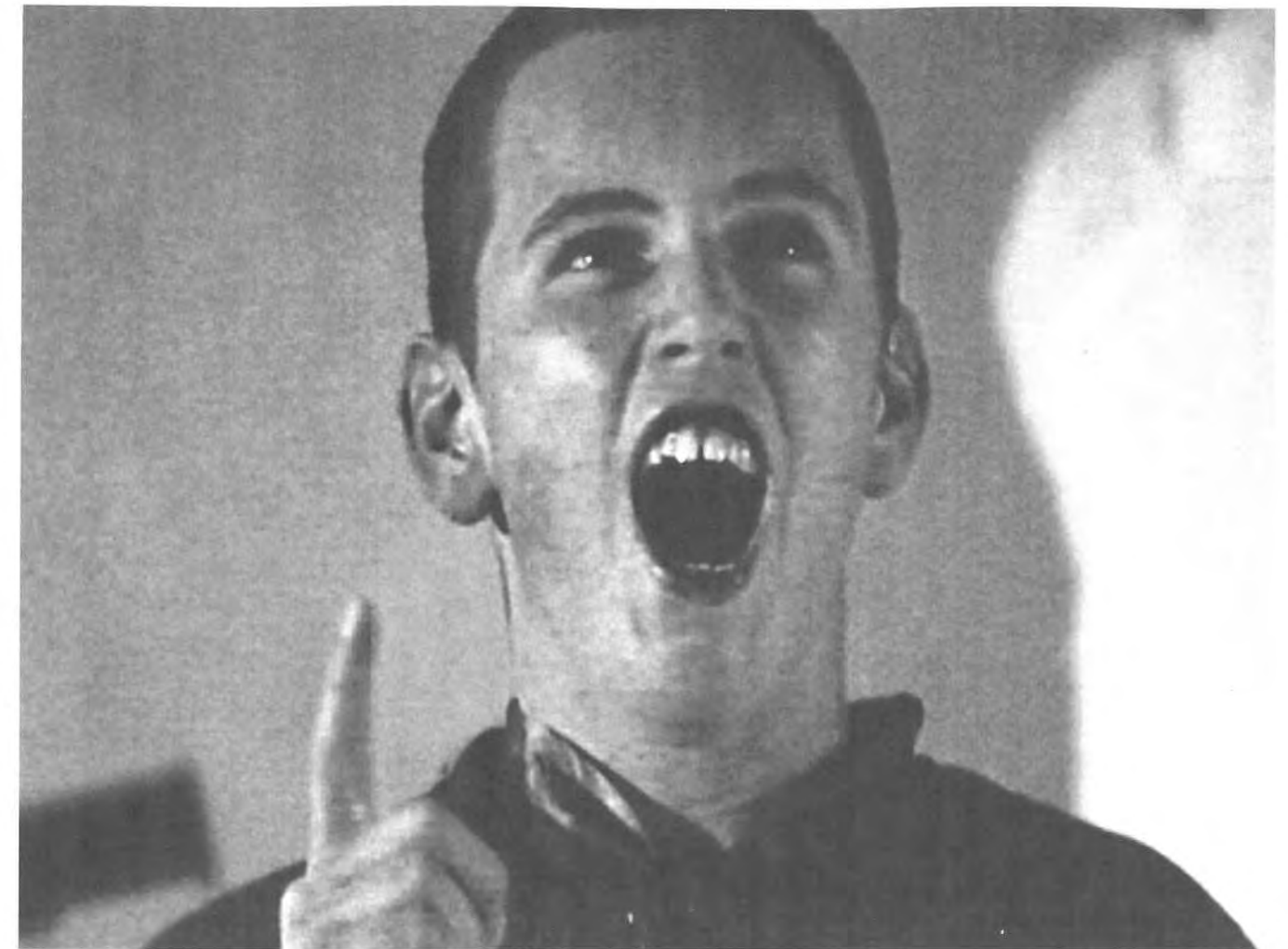
Marcia Ferguson and Kate Sulan

Ensemble

Mark Deans, Nicki Holland, Simon Laherty, Rita Halabarec, Scott Price, Sarah Mainwaring

Animation

Rhian Hinkley



LIGHT LETTERS CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT & SHOWING 08

25 June 2008, Nelson Park School, Libau Avenue, Bell Park, Geelong

Like a fire beacon on a sea cliff, LIGHT LETTERS sends messages to distant travellers and unknown lands: a signal for help, a warning of danger, a statement of existence: people live here, this territory has life.

A short time ago, in a fishing village not far from the sea, families lived well. But when the fish fail to fill their nets, the arguing begins, and with each argument, storms of black spots whorl upwards to the bright and burning sun, and cling there, until permanent darkness settles over the world. The children set out, travelling vast distances over the sea to restore light to the earth, until finally, having failed, they send a universal message: SAVE OUR SOULS. Messages of love, LIGHT LETTERS, bring the children home, but in this narrative, the restoration of trust comes at a price.

The LIGHT LETTERS 2008 Residency was conceived as series of workshops, partly with the aim of gathering content for the development of a text-based visual arts installation in North Geelong in 2009.

With the simple objective of creating a far-reaching dialogue between people with disabilities and the broader community, LIGHT LETTERS proposed a universal thematic of "sending a message to the global world".

Back to Back artists worked in four centres across northern Geelong; with older residents at the Dorothy Thompson Day Centre and Cloverdale Community Centre and with students from Nelson Park and Norlane West Primary School.

The LIGHT LETTERS residency generated extraordinarily powerful material sourced from the needs and offers of community participants, especially the students from Nelson Park School. Artists felt a strong connection with these kids through the intensity of the residency process.

COLLABORATORS

Nelson Park School

Brayden Bitmead, Jacinta Butcher, Kylee Carter, Daniel Drue, Sarah Fedley, Daniele Frith, Michelle Frith, Josh Haigh, Emily Marshall, Blake Morris, Aimee Nicholls, Ina Rekhi, Hayden Scott, Loretta Devlin Smith, Dylan Stevenson, Morgan Tasic, Kane Vetma

Norlane West Primary School

Alesha Anderson, Nikita Bone, Sebastian Buckley, Emily Carr, Alyssa Eap, Connor Filep, Emina Glumcevic, Macy Gonczarek, Domenic Lecchino, Rosalie Lecchino, Isiah Melhuish, Simona Parevska, Makayla Parker, Dallas Riccardi, Olivia Sardo, Cameron Shirley, Sruthis Tatakula, Jayden Trajcevski, Amber Withers, Ashlea Withers

Residency Director	Marcia Ferguson
Writing Coordinator	Ross Mueller
Animation	Stephen Oaks
Publication	David Dellaflora
Community Liaison	Leanne Stein
Production & Stage Manager	Skye Abikhair
Support Worker	Jilli Romanis
Coordinator Nelson Park	Wendy Smith
Coordinator Norlane West Primary	Jo Ludowyck

Back to Back Ensemble: Simon Laherty, Brian Tilley, Scott Price, Sarah Mainwaring

Cloverdale Community Centre: Len Blacker, Alan Deans, Anne Deans, Ulie Hines, Muriel Murphy

Dorothy Thompson Centre: Rose de Kook (Team Leader), Maree McLeod, Aileen Phillips, Doris Alford, Maree Arditto, Frank McGeady, Lillian Marks, Steven Markov, Charlie Vander Meulan, Brian Mowat, Rosalie Shaw, Ken Trickey, Jan Hutchinson

TOUR GUIDE TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT 08

7-9 July 08, Federation Square, Melbourne

At Federation Square we undertook a technical development on TOUR GUIDE, which has been commissioned for further creative development in Linz, Austria, in 2009. The technical development involved testing FM signal for delivering soundtrack wirelessly to audience members.

COLLABORATORS

Director	Bruce Gladwin
Sound Design	Hugh Covill
Sound System Design	Phillip Ivan Pietruschka
Production Management	Berni Sweeney, bluebottle
Ensemble	Brian Tilley, Scott Price, Mark Deans, Simon Laherty

Wild animals will kill you

FOOD COURT PREMIERE 08

9-12 October 08, CUB Malthouse, Southbank, Melbourne

Presented by the Melbourne International Arts Festival

FOOD COURT tells the story of the persecuted and persecutors. Response from audiences reflected the harrowing and unrelenting nature of the work.

Never underestimate the power of archival memory, the back-of-the-drawer experience, a shelving unit of unfit memory and unpleasant taste. In rehearsal collaborating artists witnessing the show's evolution responded with their own stories of being tormented or tormenting others, people began to speak of relationships with their mother, father and siblings. The emerging show began to solicit an emotional response.

When do you draw the line to the involuntary, instinctive direction a collective work takes? When do you as a director seemingly in control in the rehearsal room sit at the edge of what is comfortable, where the actors stretch the boundaries of genial observation by the improvising of a horrific act, a violent and sexually charged persecution? At the end of the improvisation everyone feels the charge and energy in the room: they know the scene is good, it worked, it was like an exorcism, no one had to struggle for dialogue, the dramaturgy was solid but not conscious, horrific and brutal but completely satisfying.

For the cast, FOOD COURT's creation had been a very enjoyable and energised experience, perhaps as makers we were not fully prepared for the powerful audience response.

The meaning and gravitas within the company's work is intrinsically linked to who the performers are, what they represent and what can be projected upon them. There are two major dramatic tensions for the audience that exist in FOOD COURT. Both tensions feed off each other.

The first tension "Is this an actor with a disability before me playing a person with a disability or are they playing a person without a disability?" FOOD COURT never allows this oscillating question to be answered.

I suspect for many of the non-disabled audience there is a strong need to know: "Is this show about us or them?" There is a need for reassurance that it is only a drama, a fictitious representation. Or are these people playing from experience? Because they are disabled this could be autobiographical?

The second tension is a formality that says: "Sit, do nothing, be quiet, watch and listen." What prevents the audience from taking action against such a harrowing display is theatrical convention. In remaining silent the audience become complicit with the crime committed on stage.

BRUCE GLADWIN Artistic Director

COLLABORATORS

Director, Set Design & Text
Performers & Text

Bruce Gladwin

Mark Deans, Rita Halabarec, Nicki Holland, Sarah Mainwaring,
Scott Price

Music by The Necks
Understudies

Chris Abrahams, Piano; Tony Buck, Drums; Lloyd Swanton, Bass
Simon Laherty, Sonia Teuben, Brian Tilley

Set Design & Construction

Mark Cuthbertson

Lighting Designer / Technical Direction

Andrew Livingston, bluebottle

Animated Design

Rhian Hinkley, lowercase

Sound Design

Hugh Covill

Costume Design

Shio Otani

Script Consultant

Melissa Reeves

Production Manager

Eduard Ingles, bluebottle

Stage Manager

Berni Sweeney, bluebottle

Sound Operator

Lachlan Carrick

Support Worker

Leanne Stein

Assistant Stage Manager

Diana Hume

Wardrobe Assistant

Michelle Riessut

With thanks to Rachel High, Sarah Groningen, Adam Berry, Brian Tilley, Genevieve Morris and Phillip Ivan Pietruschka who worked on the creative development for FOOD COURT.

THEATRE OF SPEED 08

Every Wednesday, January – December 08 Stott Theatre, Old Courthouse Building, Geelong

THEATRE OF SPEED is an ensemble of young performers with intellectual disabilities who live in the Geelong area. They work at Back to Back every Wednesday, where they focus on developing performance skills before and embark on the development of their co-devised theatrical work. In 2008 **THEATRE OF SPEED** was nominated for the City of Greater Geelong's Impetus Geelong Youth Awards.

Theatre of Speed Members

**Samantha Bade, Phoebe Baker, Tom Banks, Angus Bannister,
Laura Berrisford, Adam Berry, Joan Black, Robert Croft,
Sarah Keating, James Lewis, Polly Munday, Tamika Simpson
Jilli Romanis**

Support Worker

TEXT with David Symons

For one term of Wednesdays **THEATRE OF SPEED** actors spoke a lot of words written by other people. They acted scenes from plays and movies - love scenes, action scenes, comic scenes, dramatic scenes. They played Rocky, Thelma, Louise, The Godfather, teenagers in love, upset mums, cops, jealous sisters, soldiers, mates. They all played male roles and female roles, hard roles and soft roles. They learnt some lines, read other lines, were often fed lines and sometimes improvised lines. TOS actors got emotionally involved in their scenes. TOS actors got emotionally involved watching the scenes. TOS actors liked saying things, the yelling scenes, the swearing, the love scenes, other actors in scenes, the cop scenes, the action scenes, every scene. TOS actors didn't like the yelling scenes, people cheating in games, people talking in the audience during a scene, teasing, the love scenes. TOS audiences responded strongly to love scenes, scenes of clear conflict, and scenes of great energy (like Thelma and Louise having to get away quickly!).

SNOW WHITE with Jo Lange & James Pratt

Simon: "I liked my speech as the Prince and kissing Snow White."

Phoebe: "I loved being Snow White."

Joan: "I loved being the Queen. I am very happy"

For last term of 2008, Jo and James used the story of Snow White as a starting point for their work with **THEATRE OF SPEED**. The first six weeks were spent with Jo, improvising around such provocations as beauty and ugliness, or good and bad. The group showed great commitment to the characters in the story and enjoyed the improvisations with princes, princess, kings and queens. When James came in to work there was already much material in place and it was time to look at the narrative flow and to begin to set the structure of the pieces. Working on detailed aspects of ensemble and individual's performances, they fine tuned transitions from scene to scene. Recorded music was brought in to accompany the scenes and on the last session a showing of the work was performed to friends and family.

THE DEMOCRATIC SET (Geelong)

2 April – 17 September 08, Stott Theatre, Old Courthouse Building, Geelong

THE DEMOCRATIC SET is a residency model for creating short films and performances, to explore the belief that all people are, in principle, equal and should enjoy social, political and economic rights and opportunities. THE DEMOCRATIC SET uses a custom-made film set, a neutral room with two opposing doors).

Over Terms 2 and 3 of 2008, THEATRE OF SPEED worked with seven contemporary choreographers who each had 1–4 sessions with the participants to create, choreograph and shoot a short film using the set as a starting point for generating material. Two lighting designers, one theatre director, one film director and one crew of cardboard couturiers also worked with the group.

The choreographers were given a series of limitations: they must work within the “democratic” film set and were discouraged from using any design elements.

Artists were both frustrated by and really enjoyed these limitations. Several blasphemed the design element instruction, which had a positive impact on the experimental energy in the group. The “democratic” film set allowed artists to utilise a process that created strong outcomes very quickly. Artists endeavoured to create unique outcomes.

COLLABORATORS

Concept & Set Design
Project Manager / Director
Filmmaker / Editor
Set Design & construction
Lighting Designers
Choreographers

Bruce Gladwin
Marcia Ferguson
Rhian Hinkley, lowercase
Mark Cuthbertson
Ben Cobham & Andy Livingston, bluebottle
Luke George, Michelle Heaven, Dan Witton, Kelly Alexander,
Helen Herbertson, Rebecca Hilton, Jo Lloyd
Box Wars
Rhian Hinkley, Chris Brown

FILM SCREENINGS

THEATRE OF SPEED vs BOZ N HOK / D9

4–14 September 08, Screening of THEATRE OF SPEED VS BOZ 'N HOK, Xcontact Festival, Split, Croatia

20 April 08, Screening of D9, Wood Green International Short Film Festival (Experimental Section), Wood Green, London, UK

SUMMER SCHOOL 2008

22–23 November 08, Old Courthouse Building, Geelong

SUMMER SCHOOL is an annual event of workshops and training run by Back to Back Theatre for people of all abilities. People with disabilities, artists, community workers, experienced and inexperienced performers, and anyone with an interest in theatre or working in the arts come for a weekend of workshops.

PARTICIPANTS Mark Davies, Nicole Jongebloed, Bill McCullough, Neil Pigdon, Polly Munday, Jenny Bowden, Allan Bonning, Craig Murray, Jane Hopkins, Rita Halabarec, Scott Price, Sonia Teuben, Sarah Mainwaring, Brian Tilley, Mark Deans, Nicki Holland, Simon Laherty, Jillian Pearce, Peter Abby, Jacinda O'Sullivan, Angus Bannister, Ria Strong, Claire Bracken

GUEST ARTISTS Margaret Cameron, David Wells, Emily Barrie, Jo Lange, Natalie Cursio, James Pratt and Jim Russell

SUPPORT Stacey Baldwin, Jill Romanis, Leanne Stein

WORKSHOPS in 2008 were:

READY AIM FIRE – Margaret Cameron

A workshop in performance practice and performance making.

PERFORMING ARTS WORKSHOP – David Wells

A workshop with an emphasis on performing, being creative and having fun through singing, playing percussion and dancing.

DESIGN & PERFORMANCE – Emily Barrie

Discover the use of visual design in theatre. Play with colour, texture, props, costume, and explore how we can transform an empty space to support a theme.

MUSIC & PERFORMANCE – Jo Lange

How can we make performance with sound, rhythm and song? Make theatre with music!

BUILDING MOVEMENT, MOVING STORIES – Natalie Cursio

A workshop focusing on bodily action and the development of physical and dramatic scenarios.

THEMES & WRITING – James Pratt

How can you write your own play? This workshop discovers a theme from the group, and shows you ways to develop it into a performance.



ADELAIDE RESIDENCY WITH RESTLESS, TUTTI ENSEMBLE & NO STRINGS ATTACHED

2 November – 10 November 08, at Restless, 234a Sturt St, Adelaide

Back to Back was invited to conduct a Residency with performers from three Adelaide disability performance companies: Restless Dance Theatre, No Strings Attached and Tutti Ensemble.

The Residency was held over 8 days and included a Performance Making Intensive, two specialist workshops, two functions, a showing and a forum.

The Performance Making Intensive involved 3 or 4 participants from each company, about 12 participants all up. Many of them had worked with each other's companies, but had not worked intensively together in this way. For many it was a fantastic opportunity to develop new skills in an inter-arts environment – spoken text, theatre, and movement.

Bruce posited a thematic of a car heist, from TOUR GUIDE, a work Back to Back is developing with communities in Linz, Austria, for 2009. This work framed the residency as a Creative Development. Bruce utilised video footage of crime scenes involving car chases, stake outs and criminal activity; games

involving mirrored movement, secrets and interviews (to generate text); and 'architectural devising', where the inside and outside of the space were utilised for real time and place improvisations.

The work was dominated early on by an interest in gender-oriented difference and attraction. This may have evolved by accident, as the selected video footage moved quickly from crime scenes to scenes between a couple. Nevertheless, the group found the sexual thematic compelling, and continued to interpret and explore the material through this lens.

The showing was attended by about 50 people, family, friends and community workers, who, in question time, were chiefly interested in whether the participants enjoyed working across forms. The participants were very positive about this aspect of the work, and all said they wished they could continue to work with Back to Back.

Artistic directors and support workers from each company attended the Intensive. They enjoyed working as performers, and enjoyed being surprised by participants' revelations during the work.

Participants loved working with Back to Back and many of them expressed the wish to keep working this way.

COLLABORATORS

Residency Directors
Ensemble
Host Directors

Bruce Gladwin & Marcia Ferguson
Scott Price, Brian Tilley
Ingrid Voorendt, Artistic Director, Restless Dance Company;
PJ Rose, Artistic Director, No Strings Attached;
Pat Rix, Artistic Director, Tutti Ensemble

Participants

Lorcan Hopper, Ana Retallack, Andrew Pandos, Duncan Luke, Ryan Rowland,
Natalie Binks-Williams, Donna Schliwa, Aimee Crathern, Caroline Hardy,
Joel Hartgen and Emma Taylor

Support Workers

Stephen Noonan & Juha Vanhakartano

ARCHIVE

Back to Back Theatre has generated a large amount of material in addition to theatrical performances. This includes written material (programs, reviews, publications, features etc), pictorial material, film and video, posters, scripts, and original sound compositions as well as ephemera (fliers, invitations, T-shirts). This material provides both a valuable record of Back to Back's work and the history and significance of regionally generated creative work over the past 22 years in Victoria.

In 2008, Back to Back nearly finished sorting our Collection up to the present time. In 2009 we will apply for funding to undertake a Preservation Assessment to work out the best way to preserve and house the Collection. Eventually we intend to make our archive available through our website.

The National Library of Australia is committed to preserving electronic publications of lasting cultural value and has selected Back to Back for preservation on PANDORA, Australia's Web Archive. The site will regularly update and archive www.backtobacktheatre.com online.

QUALITY ASSURANCE & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Back to Back is an Australian Business Enterprise with funding from the Department of Family & Community Services & Indigenous Affairs to support the ensemble in their work as professional actors. Back to Back became a Quality Assured Organisation in 2004 in accordance with the Commonwealth Disability Services Standards.

Along with Quality Assurance comes a commitment to Continuous Improvement. Back to Back seeks to improve its service to the actors in the ensemble across all work areas and practices. This includes supporting the actors to participate in decision and policy making, maintaining high professional standards in all areas of work including productions, workshops, promotional material, ensuring all staff have appropriate training and presenting a positive image of people with intellectual disabilities as artists, creators and performers.

Continuous improvements in 2008 included: passing our compliance audit with flying colours, receiving the highest possible grading; passing our surveillance audit and working our policies and procedures manual.

OLD COURTHOUSE BUILDING RE-DEVELOPMENT & THE GEELONG ARTS PRECINCT

In 2008, Back to Back has continued to be actively involved in the Geelong Arts Precinct Leadership Group and its programming sub-group. In part as a result of the work of this Group, the State Government awarded several million dollars to the City of Greater Geelong for the re-development of the Old Courthouse Building where we are housed. The re-development will take place in 2010 – 2011 and is the first stage of the proposed re-development of the Geelong Arts Precinct that includes expansion of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre and Geelong Gallery, construction of a new library and historic records centre, and improvements to the surrounding public spaces. We extend our thanks to the City of Greater Geelong for their support of Back to Back Theatre as a lead tenant in the Old Courthouse Building.

SPARK Mentorship

Mish Grigor was mentored in performance-making combining theatre, live art and installation by Bruce Gladwin. SPARK is the Australia Council's national mentoring program for young artists supported by the Dance, Theatre and Community Partnerships Sections. It is managed by Youth Arts Queensland and is part of the Australian Government's Young and Emerging Artists Initiative.

RESEARCH & RESEARCHERS

In 2008, the following documents were produced or published:

1. "Performances in Alternative Spaces" Philippa Burt, Masters in Performance at Goldsmiths University of London. Dissertation DR71016A Spring Semester 2008
2. "Inclusion of People with Disabilities in the Arts" Dr Huong Le and Anastasia Russell-Head, Arts Management Deakin University
3. "Pure Products Go Crazy - An Open Letter to Lloyd Newson", Matt Hargrave, Senior Lecturer in Drama, University of Northumbria Newcastle Upon Tyne and AHRC Collaborative PhD Student University of Sheffield (unpublished)

BACK TO BACK THEATRE 1988–2008

BACK TO BACK THEATRE PRODUCTIONS 1988 – 2008

- 2008 FOOD COURT**
2008 Melbourne International Arts Festival, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne
- 2008 SMALL METAL OBJECTS**
Singapore National Arts Festival, Vivo City, Singapore
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
On the Boards, Olympic Sculpture Garden, Seattle, Washington, USA
Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, University Mall, Burlington, Vermont, USA
PuSH International Performing Arts Festival, Vancouver Library, Vancouver, Canada
Harbourfront Centre, Eaton Centre, Toronto, Canada
Under the Radar Festival / Public Theater, Staten Island Ferry Terminal, New York, USA
- 2007 SMALL METAL OBJECTS**
osmosis 07 Festival, Barbican, Stratford Station, East London
Dublin Theatre Festival, Mayor Square, Dublin, Ireland
Zurcher Theater Spektakel, Landiwiese, Zurich, Switzerland
Noorderzon [Festival], Noorderplantsoen, Groningen, The Netherlands
Kobenhavns Internationale Teater [Festival], Radhuspladsen (Town Hall Square), Copenhagen, Denmark
Paris Quartier d'ete [festival], Place des Innocents, Forum des Halles, Paris, France
Theaterformen Festival, Kropcke, Hanover, Germany
Ten Days on the Island, Salamanca Square, Hobart
The Capitol, Bendigo Market Place, Bendigo
Mildura Wentworth Arts Festival, Mildura Centro, Mildura
Arthouse, Federation Square, Melbourne
Brisbane Powerhouse, Queen St Mall, Brisbane
Perth International Arts Festival, Forrest Place, Perth
Sydney Festival, Customs House Square, Sydney
- 2006 SMALL METAL OBJECTS**
7th Australian Performing Arts Market, Adelaide Railway Station
- 2005 SMALL METAL OBJECTS**
Melbourne International Arts Festival, Flinders Street Station, Melbourne
- 2004 COW**
Sydney Opera House, Studio, Sydney
- 2003 COW**
London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), Battersea Arts Centre
Long Night of the Churches [Festival], Markuskirche, Hannover, Germany
- SOFT**
Zuercher Theater Spektakel, Zurich, Switzerland, 2003 Laokoon Festival, Hamburg, Germany
- PORNSTAR**
Midsumma Festival, Black Box Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne
Art of Difference, Gasworks Arts Park, Port Melbourne
- 2002 SOFT**
2002 Melbourne International Arts Festival, Shed 4, North Wharf Road, Docklands, Melbourne
- WORKSHOP RESIDENCY**
Muse Company SUMMER SCHOOL, Tokyo
- COW**
6th Conference & International Festival of Theatre for Disabled Artists, Almagro, Spain
- OOGFARM**
2002 Shepparton Arts Festival
- 2001 MENTAL**
Hot House Theatre, Wodonga
- 2000 DOG FARM**
La Mama, Melbourne
Geelong Fringe Festival, Old Courthouse Building, Geelong
- MENTAL**
Sydney 2000 Summer Paralympic Arts Festival, Seymour Theatre Centre, Sydney

- 1999 MENTAL**
Athenaeum Theatre II, Melbourne
- DRAG RACERS IN LOVE**
with Nelson Park School, Geelong Performing Arts Centre
- 1998 BOOM TOWN**
With Snuff Puppets, Kardinia Park Football Arena Geelong
- MINDS EYE**
Adelaide Fringe Festival, Scott Theatre, Adelaide
- 1997 PETER PAN**
With Arena Theatre, George Fairfax Studio, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne
Geelong Performing Arts Centre
- MR SEPTEMBER**
Old Courthouse Building, Geelong
- 1996 MINDS EYE**
With Handspan Visual Theatre, Lonsdale St Power Station, Melbourne
- ROAD MOVIE**
With Melbourne Workers Theatre, Lonsdale Street Power Station, Melbourne
- 1995 BACK TO BACK IN SHORTS**
A series of short works presented at the Irene Mitchell Studio, St Martin's Theatre, Melbourne
- 1994 FREAK SHOW**
With Circus Oz, Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong; Napier St Theatre, Melbourne
- 1993 VOICES OF DESIRE**
Blakiston Theatre Performing Arts Centre Geelong; Polyglot Theatre Melbourne, Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney; tours to Albury Wodonga, Canberra
- 1992 THE ADVENTURES OF BOBBI DAZZLER**
Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong; Polyglot Puppet Theatre, Melbourne
- WOODENHEAD**
Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong; Arena Theatre, South Melbourne; Belconnen Community Theatre Canberra; and Bay Street Theatre Glebe, Sydney and tours in regional Victoria and Central Western NSW
- 1991 I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN LARA ANYMORE**
Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong
- YELL BLUE MURDER**
Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong and Athenaeum II, Melbourne
- 1990 THE PEG MACHINE**
Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong; Tours to TAS, QLD, NSW, ACT, VIC and SA
- EVERYTHING AND THE MERMAID**
Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre; Arena Theatre, South Melbourne
- 1989 CINDERELLA, THE FAT COW DEPARTS**
Ashby Hall, Geelong
- STINKING HOUSES**
Blakiston Theatre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre; Victorian and ACT Tours
- 1988 BIG BAG**
Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong; Arena Theatre, South Melbourne

COMMUNITY PRODUCTIONS, RESIDENCIES & EVENTS 1999 – 2008

- 2008 ADELAIDE RESIDENCY**
with Restless Dance, No Strings Attached and the Tutti Frutti Ensemble, Adelaide
- 2008 DEMOCRATIC SET**
created by THEATRE OF SPEED
- 2008 LIGHT LETTERS**
showing with community members from Cloverdale Community Centre, Dorothy Thompson Day Centre, Norlane West Primary, Nelson Park School
- 2007 DMI: DISABILITY MAINTENANCE INSTRUMENT**
performed by THEATRE OF SPEED, Stott Theatre, Old Courthouse Building, Geelong
- 2006 POD 6 - WARRNAMBOOL**
with Break of Day Players
- BOOMTOWNERS**
with THEATRE OF SPEED and Snuff Puppets, 2006 Commonwealth Games Live Site, Geelong
- POD 7 – GEELONG**
Performed by THEATRE OF SPEED, Geelong West Town Hall
- POD 8 – HOBART**
Amalgamation Festival, Salamanca Theatre, Hobart
- 2005 MINOTAUR**
Performed by THEATRE OF SPEED, Old Courthouse Building Geelong
- POD 4 – BALLARAT**
With Brrrr Theatre, Camp Street Theatre, Ballarat
- POD 5 – COLAC**
With Ants Pantz Arts, Trinity College, Colac
- 2004 POD 3 – HORSHAM**
Awakenings Festival, Horsham Town Hal
- 2003 INSIDE THE ANGEL HOUSE**
Performed by THEATRE OF SPEED, Old Courthouse Building, Geelong
- 2002 WORKSHOP RESIDENCY,**
Muse Company SUMMER SCHOOL, Tokyo
- 2001 FISHMAN**
Performed by St Laurence Theatre Workshop, Geelong Performing Arts Centre
- 2000 ARNOLD**
Performed by St Laurence Theatre Workshop, 2000 Geelong Fringe Festival, Courthouse Project, Geelong
- 1999 DRAG RACERS IN LOVE**
With Nelson Park School, Geelong Performing Arts Centre
- PUSH PUSH**
With Karingal participants, 1999 Momenta Arts Geelong, Courthouse Project, Geelong
- THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE WEDDING**
With Karingal participants, Courthouse Project, Geelong



Media & Audience Comments **SMALL METAL OBJECTS**

"The thing about SMALL METAL OBJECTS is that it's great theatre. Great in the sense that things aren't so much anymore. It is simple and true and smart (so very smart) and changes the way one looks at the world – literally (days after seeing it in New York, I played a little game on the subway platform: what if I look at the world the way I did during SMALL METAL OBJECTS – like everyone was a potential performer, as is if every gesture and turn had value and simple beauty – it's a good game, because everything does and everyone is.) It is heartbreaking and mind-blowing..."

"The performances are remarkable - again simple, true and profound. There are so many possible solutions in this show for many of the problems of theatre".

"I'm a little put off by the focus of press around this show, since the issue is in no way that it's remarkable that people "perceived to have intellectual disabilities" could make a show this good – the issue is that it's remarkable that anyone could make a show this good".

"I have no stake in this show, I just think people should see it because I think they will like it and because it is good." Audience member, New York Season of SMALL METAL OBJECTS

"This is hardly the first site-specific show to deliver dialogue and music...via headphones. But its sense of alienation and intimacy in a public space, and low key championing of friendship over commerce, make it special indeed" - Misha Berson, Seattle Times, Seattle May 08

"This small story in the middle of the New York chaos has a poetic stillness that is quite moving and often even magical" Jason Zinoman, The New York Times.com, New York January 08

"Truly the most wondrous part of this theatrical event, is watching the commuters watch you... it was slightly distracting at times, but only added to this fascinating social experiment... this is theater. Wonderful theater that should be experienced by anyone and everyone"

Katie Courtien, Under the Radar Blog Spot, New York January 08

"...It's utterly compelling and suspenseful because of how close the action is. We may know what's going on, but the pedestrians – accidental extras - don't, and that gives the play a frisson of unpredictability...For a moment we have stopped our busy lives, looked around, and really listened. And that's the most beautiful thing of all" Aaron Riccio, Theatre Talk's New Theater Corps, New York, January 08

"This is one of the most sought-after pieces in the world. The audience watches it wearing headphones right out amongst the public, while the public watches them. On some levels, it's a simple narrative of a deal that goes wrong between four characters. But it's much more remarkable" The Province, Vancouver, January 08

"The experience is powerful in its simplicity and we realise that what seems at first to be a 'conventional drama of two invisible men' as the program note suggests, is also a profound and intelligent exploration of power, expectation and dependency"

Eleanor Hadley Kershaw, RealTime Arts, Australia, January 08

"Hop to it mate, if you want to catch this little beaut" Peter Birnie, Vancouver Sun, Vancouver, February 08

"This is what great art can do. It can re-organise your bones, re-wire your brain and perform open-heart surgery all at the same time...we get to re-imagine how the conflicting cultures of our world might fit together a little easier... It's a very moving exercise in the art of the possible and it left me with a surprisingly untainted sense of hope"

Alex Ferguson, RealTime Arts, Australia (Vancouver performance), Feb/Mar 08

"As I leave the mall, I challenge myself to acknowledge my own discrimination, face my fears and speak to the next person I perceive to be "other" as though they were as "normal" as I think I am" Times Argus, Burlington, May 08

"SMALL METAL OBJECTS innovates without seeming avant-garde for avant-garde's sake. As enjoyable as it is thought-provoking, this is the type of show that you roll around in your head for days – or discuss it with friends, blending your own private moments with public ones"

Jeff Shaw Blog, Minneapolis, June 08

"The universe of SMALL METAL OBJECTS is so intimate, so embedded in the private interior worlds of other people that it makes us uncomfortable. Good theatre ought to achieve that"

Ng Yi-Sheng Blog, Singapore, June 08

"The play is a tiny, perfect treatise on the nature of change: how there is no point pretending we can change certain things we may not like and how there is a quiet, inexplicable wisdom in accepting them. Looking out at the milling crowds, seeing their passing interest and confusion in what we audience members were doing there, I felt the play acquire a scale its simple dialogue could not hint at. All humanity is here – if only temporarily" Matthew Lyon, The Flying Inkpot, June 08

Media & Audience Comments **FOOD COURT**

"If the Back to Back Theatre Company did not exist, it's doubtful anyone would have the imagination to invent its unrivalled success" Martin Ball, The Age, 16 July 08

"Food Court is dark and often harrowing. It is unsettling, awkward, powerful theatre. I cannot make sense of it in any traditional way: it has altered my perceptions of "good" and "bad". It picked me up, carried me along, and dumped me in the depths of a faraway forest. I found it hard to fall asleep that night." Avi Lipski, Australian Stage, 11 October 08

"It is a challenging and confronting show that plumbs the depths of human abjection and alienation, yet ultimately affirms a faith in humanity through its gesture to a redemptive ending, as well as the achievement of production itself." Martin Ball, The Age, 11 October 2008

"...So dark, so completing and so well presented in every way with the improvised accompaniment from The Necks driving everything relentlessly forward." yarraboy blog, 14 October 08

"It's no exaggeration to say that show left me emotionally shattered. And it felt plain wrong to scramble off immediately to see something else, like a rabid consumer tossing one disposable experience aside for the next sensation." Alison Croggin, Theatre Notes, 15 October 08

"Every now and then a show comes along and reminds you that theatre is a burning glass, that it can be an art that focuses experience into an emotional thermic lance which sears through the intellect into the tissue of deep feeling, right where it hurts."

Alison Croggin, Theatre Notes, 16 October 2008

"If I could think of more superlatives, I'd list them. Food Court is the revelation of my festival so far." Alison Croggin, Theatre Notes, 16 October 2008

"There are no parachutes in Back to Back's Food Court. Bruce Gladwin and his team of co-creators have produced a formidably terrorizing piece of theatre that also achieves astonishing beauty... leaving us both punctured and inspired." Carl Nilsson - Polias, Realtime 88

"Food Court is a triumph. It's the most emotionally overwhelming theatre I've seen since Ariane Mnouchkine's Le Dernier Caravanserail: a work of devastating honesty and, ultimately, extraordinary beauty that confirms Back to Back as a key player in contemporary theatre."

Alison Croggin The Australian, 17 October 08



Audience Feedback **FOOD COURT**

"Brilliant piece of theatre – challenges one's understanding of the term intellectual disability"

"It was an amazing piece of theatre. I think Back to Back is one of the most important theatre companies in Australia"

"Probably one of the most strong, compelling, disturbing and engrossing theatre experiences I've seen!"

"I want to say how pleased I am to have experienced this performance. I found it very confronting, sad and revealing. I was so impressed with the lighting effects also"

"I was alone so I was aware of the discomfort of a man sitting next to me (who was intellectually disabled). He was so upset by the performance he walked out. This enforced to me that the performance represented the reality felt by those with a disability. Shocked, but in a good way!"

"I saw 'Back to Back' on Saturday night for the first time. I am still inside the experience"

"Thank you all for the courage, insight, wisdom and risk of your work. I am deeply moved by such work. The performance provokes so many questions, possibilities and taboos ... I feel deeply grateful that someone is making work like this"

"To stretch the perimeter of our perceptions and our thinking to recognize the complexity in all human beings is magnificent and you do this"

"The work felt so emotionally mature and I don't get to see that quality in Australia in either theatre or dance and it is a profound disappointment to me"

"Congratulations to all who worked on FOOD COURT – the best thing I have seen by Back to Back. I was transported, entranced, seduced, shattered and hypnotized. It was cinema, soundtrack and theatre. Layers and layers of dark beauty"

"When the show began I wondered if I would be more open or perhaps forgiving of what I was about to see knowing there were artists with disabilities involved with the work. This absolutely evaporated as I watched the show. It transcended any buying in to this. Thank you"



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