



Artistic Report 2006

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Management Report

Urban Theatre Projects celebrated its 25th year in 2006 – quite a milestone for a small theatre company. During that time, the company has moved homes numerous times, experienced several direction and leadership structures and undertaken an incredibly diverse range of projects.

While each era is driven by different sets of artists and varies in its direction, aesthetic and form, at the core of the company's philosophy is the desire to remain responsive to social and political thoughts, and art making practices of the day, drawing on unique forms of community engagement to create stories and images of contemporary life.

Maintaining a strong awareness and respect for the accumulated histories of UTP has never affected its reinvigoration or reinvention and it is in this vein that 2006 saw the company develop a strong vision for the coming years, with many exciting new directions.

UTP undertook an incredibly ambitious program in 2006, encompassing a wide range of activities, including:

- *Back Home* – premiere season as part of the 2006 Sydney Festival
- *Canterbury Road* – an initial research and development process for a new work, later renamed *The Last Highway*
- *Back Home* – tour to The Dreaming international Indigenous arts festival, held in Woodford, Queensland
- *The Fellas* – a tailored professional development workshop for nine Indigenous and Pacific Island artists
- *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* – a 3-venue western Sydney tour to Campbelltown, Parramatta and Bankstown, as well as presentation at the International Oral History Conference
- 25th Birthday Party – an event held for associates of Death Defying Theatre and Urban Theatre Projects
- *The Folding Wife* – a creative development process for a new work, scheduled to premiere in 2007
- *Stories of Love & Hate* – a research and development process for a new work by Roslyn Oades

In January, *Back Home* was presented as part of 2006 Sydney Festival to overwhelming audience and critical acclaim. The show was sold out for its 8 performances and established a strong momentum that would continue throughout the year.

Through its inclusion in Sydney Festival, *Back Home* significantly contributed to an expansion of the company's profile nationally and internationally. This recognition was particularly apparent to staff attending the 7th Australian Performing Arts Market in Adelaide, where strong interest was expressed in the company and its work, and during meetings with venues and presenters as part of a month-long research trip to the United Kingdom in July. Representation at APAM and the trip to the UK have laid the groundwork for significant future tour and exchange opportunities.

In recent years, UTP has particularly concentrated on consolidating long-term development cycles for the creation of new work and invested in developing the resources and networks to tour works in the future. While we had not expected to be touring work until after 2006 or 2007, the company has already recorded modest achievements with a tour of *Back Home* to The Dreaming festival in Woodford, Queensland, and *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* to Campbelltown Arts Centre and Riverside Theatres, Parramatta.

During the year, UTP was also successful in developing a collaboration with Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, Canada, which will see an international tour of *Back Home* to Toronto's inaugural Luminato festival in 2007, combined with a research and development process for a new work. Playing Australia also supported a proposal by Performing Lines to tour *Back Home* to 11 venues around Australia in the second half of 2007.

The success of *Back Home* also validated the company's conviction in investing in three discrete phases for the development of new work – Research & Development, Creative Development, and Rehearsal & Production. This template characterises programming for the next few years and 2006 saw stage one research completed for two new projects: *Canterbury Road* (later renamed *The Last Highway*); and *Stories of Love & Hate*, a new work by *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* director Roslyn Oades. Both projects will be further developed in 2007 and premiere in 2008.

Initially supported through the provision of a residency at UTP in 2005, the company confirmed its commitment to a production of Paschal Berry's new work *The Folding Wife*, hosting a 3-week creative development for the artists, including Datu Arellano from the Manila-based Anino Shadowplay Collective.

Another major event in the year was the company's 25th birthday party. Held in November, the aim of the event was to bring as many of UTP's past associates together as possible. This was quite an undertaking. The net was cast far and wide in an effort to contact as many people as possible who had a past association with either Death Defying Theatre (DDT) or UTP. At the same time, UTS Shopfront student Vanessa Aiello completed an archiving project that, for the first time, saw the company's records categorised and conserved, along with a thorough procedural plan for ongoing archiving.

To celebrate the 25th, we also commissioned essays from co-founder Paul Brown and long-serving company manager Harley Stumm. These were published in a booklet with another essay by Ian Maxwell, which saw the launch of our Critical Dialogue writing project. This project involves the commissioning of a series of essays written in dialogue between artists and theorists, examining the relationship between artistic practice, critical thinking and contemporary culture. It is an ongoing project that will continue to see new writing published on our web site.

The other major writing project for the year was a new Business Plan developed as part of the company's triennial funding application to the Australia Council. This three-year plan comprehensively maps the company's management and artistic vision for 2007 to 2009, including a range of new directions and programs.

There were two departures and three arrivals in the UTP family during 2006. Administrator Jessie Deane left the company in May to become general manager of the Womens Circus in Melbourne, and was subsequently replaced by Fabiana Serafim who joins the company after working with London-based producers Artsadmin. Artistic director Alicia Talbot has taken a temporary break from the company, enjoying the arrival of her new baby boy Jasper. Deborah Pollard was appointed interim artistic director for 12 months, commencing in September.

Financial Management

While the total income for 2005 was \$607,400, this figure included auspiced grants of \$97,858. Compared to the adjusted income figure of \$509,542 in 2005, income fell by 3% in 2006 to \$494,065. This fall is due mainly to the fact that *Back Home* was the company's major production for 2005/06 and the majority of income and expenditure was recorded during development and rehearsals in 2005. UTP did not auspice any third party grants in 2006.

Excluding auspiced funds for 2005, expenditure increased by just over 1% to \$507,133 in 2006, compared to \$499,958 the year before.

The company recorded significant variations across several accounts in 2006, compared to 2005, reflecting its focus on research and creative development during the year, along with presentation of existing works and touring.

Most notable income variations included receipts from government grants, which totalled \$370,910 in 2006, compared to \$457,902 in 2005. In 2005 the company received a large amount of cash and in-kind support from Blacktown City Council (\$51,300) as a contribution to the development of *Back Home*. The 2005 program also included several grants from Arts NSW's Western Sydney Program totalling \$66,602, compared to \$30,065 from that program in 2006.

Meanwhile, Performance Income increased from \$21,753 in 2005, to \$80,307 in 2006. Box office receipts increased from just under \$3,000 in 2005 to \$23,352 in 2006, mainly attributable to the sold out Sydney Festival season of *Back Home*. Performance fees increased from \$19,000 in 2005 to \$56,955 in 2006, taking into account receipts for tours of *Back Home* to The Dreaming festival, and for seasons of *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* at Riverside Theatres, Campbelltown Arts Centre and the International Oral History Conference.

Variances in expenditure include a reduction in Advertising expenditure from \$38,096 in 2005 to \$28,451 in 2006, and a significant decrease in Salaries and Wages from \$360,556 in 2005 to \$301,566 in 2006. This decrease is mainly due to the large cost of production wages expended in 2005 during the development of *Back Home*. No development periods of that scale were undertaken in 2006, while touring projects required limited re-rehearsal and personnel.

Travel and Accommodation expenditure increased from \$19,229 in 2005 to \$52,710 in 2006. These accounts include Living Allowances, Airfares, Vehicle Costs and Freight and have significantly increased in 2006 due to touring the company was engaged in. Living allowances increased by \$10,000 in 2006, while vehicle costs included \$8,000 to hire buses that transported *Back Home* audience members. Nearly \$14,000 was expended in airfares, vehicle hire and accommodation for a month-long trip to Europe in August. Other tours to The Dreaming festival and a western Sydney tour incurred additional expense, while the company also undertook an international exchange, bringing an artist from the Philippines to Sydney for a 3-week creative development project in November.

During the year, UTP's board of directors made two decisions to underwrite additional activities to those originally programmed for the year. It was agreed to underwrite the tour to The Dreaming festival with \$13,000, to allow re-rehearsal of the show that could assess its suitability for touring to venues in the future. Much of this investment was recovered through a surplus on the *Back Home* season budget and other small project savings. Based on those surpluses returning the budget to a break-even position, the board then resolved to underwrite expenditure of reserves totalling \$14,000 to resource an event and publication celebrating the company's 25th anniversary.

While several thousand dollars were saved from various projects in an effort to reduce the projected end of year deficit, audit adjustments to Depreciation and Annual Leave provisions largely negated these efforts and the company recorded an end of year deficit of \$13,068. This compares to a surplus of \$9,584 in 2005. As a result, UTP's net assets decreased from \$113,699 in 2005 to \$100,631 in 2006.

We believe this level of reserves to be quite satisfactory for a small theatre company and will now focus on achieving moderate surpluses in coming years.

The company continued to replace deteriorating assets with new capital purchases in 2006. After depreciation, Non-current Assets decreased by less than 1% in 2006, from a value of \$17,346 in 2005 to \$16,243.

Entering 2007, the company has secured an increase in its core funding through a new Multi-year Funding Agreement with the Australia Council for the Arts. Annual support from that agency's Theatre Board has risen from \$160,000 to \$180,000. In 2007, UTP will apply for a new triennial funding agreement with Arts NSW. Meanwhile, several significant grants and partnerships have already been established to support the range of activities programmed for 2007.

Summary of 2006 Artistic Program

	Title	Nature of project	Presenter	Partners	Venue	Shows
<i>Projects</i>						
1	<i>Back Home</i>	Premiere Season, Sydney Festival	Urban Theatre Projects	Various	Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre, Blacktown	8
2	<i>Back Home</i>	Tour	The Dreaming festival	The Dreaming Festival	The Dig, Woodford	2
3	Fast Cars & Tractor Engines	Performance	International Oral History Conference	University of Technology, Sydney	UTS	1
4	Fast Cars & Tractor Engines	Tour	Campbelltown Arts Centre, Riverside Theatres & Urban Theatre Projects	Campbelltown Arts Centre, Riverside Theatres & Urban Theatre Projects	Campbelltown Arts Centre, Riverside Theatres & Bankstown Town Hall Theatre	15 in total: Campbelltown (5) Riverside (6) Bankstown (4)
<i>Development Projects</i>						
5	<i>Canterbury Rd</i>	Research & Development	Urban Theatre Projects		UTP Premises	
6	<i>The Fellas</i>	Research & Development Workshop Program	Urban Theatre Projects		UTP Premises	1 public showing
7	<i>Overseas Trip to the UK and France</i>	Research & Development, Market Development, Networking	Urban Theatre Projects		12 cities throughout the UK and France	
8	<i>Stories of Love & Hate</i>	Research & Development	Urban Theatre Projects	Bankstown Youth Development Service	Bankstown LGA & Sutherland Shore	
9	<i>The Folding Wife</i>	Creative Development	Urban Theatre Projects	Blacktown Arts Centre	UTP Premises	1 public showing

Works created	1 major work
Creative Development	1 development
Research & Development	4 developments
Seasons presented	1 major, 2 tours, 1 contract performance
Performances	26
Showings	2
Workshops	1 (The Fellas)

Program of Activities

Projects 1 & 2 *Back Home*

Back Home was our major work in 2006, premiering in January as part of Sydney Festival. The show was created over two stages in 2005, a four-week creative development and a six-week rehearsal stage, culminating in two free community showings. The work was made in residence in the Mt Druitt area and developed in consultation with local community members.

Timeline

Development

Research & Development	22-26 November 2004
Auditions	19 March & 4 April, 2005
Creative Development	4 -29 July, 2005
Development & Rehearsal	24 October – 30 November, 2005
Community Showings	1-3 December, 2005

Performance Season

Remount, Rehearsal	9 – 18 January, 2006
Sydney Festival Season	19 – 28 January, 2006

The Dreaming Festival	10 – 12 June, 2006
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Venue

Performance Season	Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre
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Key Artists

Director	Alicia Talbot
Performers / Devisors	Aaron Fa'Aoso, NOMISE, Leo Tanoi and Shannon Williams
Community Liaison Advisor	Lily Shearer
Sound Artist	Liberty Kerr
Set Design	Sam James
Lighting Design	Neil Simpson
Dramaturg	Deborah Pollard
Movement Consultant	Lee Wilson
Traditional Dance Consultants	Djahn Doolan and Les Daniels

Technical Production

Production Manager	Nicholas Day
Stage Manager	Geraldine Brown
Production Assistant	Darren Olsen

Bus Tour

Director	Lily Shearer
Devisors	Aunty Edna and Uncle Alan Watson - Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation; Uncles Wes Marne and Greg Simms – Dhullai Wiriwa Aboriginal Elders Council; Ted Hart – The Shed; Gordon Simon – Probation & Parole Officer (Aboriginal); Douglas Wright – Aboriginal Community; and Pesa Tualai – Samoan Community
Tour Guides	Ted Hart, Wes Marne, Lily Shearer, Greg Simms, Pesa Tualai and Douglas Wright
Video Artist	Sam James

Consultants

Phil Awang, Tom Beale, David Beale, Mark Bell, Craig Bently, Abraham Butto, Jamal Daoud, Ronald Davison, Ian Dixon, Dennis Dunn, Raymond Ferguson, Daryl Hamilton, Steven Hampton, Joe Haroa, Daniel Hookey, Sandra Kelty, Jacob Kitchener, Wes Marne, Ray Martin, Pena Masaga, Craig Matthews, Daniel Matthews,

Glen Murray, Lionel Murray, Desmond O'Byran, Darren Olsen, Mark Pitt, Lester Ritchie, Archie Sheppard, Greg Simms, Geoff Talavave, Pesa Taulalai, Yvonne To'a, Michael Towney, Eneliko (Henry) Tuliatu, Peter Turnbull, Paina Uelesg, Kelsen Wacando, James Welsh, Lee West, Darren White and Douglas Wright

Partners

Back Home was supported by Sydney Festival, Blacktown City Council, Blacktown Arts Centre, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, The Myer Foundation, Holy Family Centre, The Shed, NSW Coreective Services (Probation & Parole), NSW Department of Housing, Delfin Lendlease (Ropes Crossing), Gadigal Information Services and Koori Radio.

Project Description

It is fiction but Back Home's deep and extraordinary links to reality create a brutal, evocative and life-changing event.

Sydney Morning Herald, 23 January 2006

Bristling with explosive physicality, *Back Home* is a deeply emotional story that takes us through the lives of men coming to terms with their past and facing up to their future.

Set in the backyard of a house, the play reunites four friends in a night intended to celebrate old times. It seems the bonds of mateship have stood the test of time even though the past few years have seen them walk different paths. However, as the night unravels, a litany of shattered dreams and broken promises bubble to the surface.

Back Home enters the volatile world of men's business, as four men from different cultural backgrounds (Samoan, Indigenous, Palestinian, Torres Strait Islander) reckon with issues of friendship, manhood, culture and reconciliation.

... a night of wild and courageous unraveling. The yearning for connection, love and fulfillment felt by these men and their expressions of grief and rage offer a powerful and provocative statement about the interconnectedness of male relationships, racial interrelationships and the embedded, cultural silences of this country.

RealTime 71, Feb/Mar 2006

Back Home was created working in-residence in Sydney's western suburbs. It is a synthesis of artistic investigation, a unique devising process, and subject matter that is not only meaningful to the individuals and communities to which the work is directly inspired by, but taps into broader concerns about leadership, community, spirituality and the journey of men within society. It is distinctively Australian theatre that offers an insight to the dreaming and despair of individuals.

Background

Back Home is the third work in *The Cement Garage* (1999) and *The Longest Night* (2002) series directed by Alicia Talbot. These works have followed the lives of fictional characters that first met while living on the streets in western Sydney. The works are made by a professional team of artists working in collaboration and consultation with community members who are positioned as experts within the devising process. *Back Home* furthers this artistic investigation and explores contemporary questions surrounding dignity, knowledge and urban rites of masculinity.

Bone-crunching authenticity... Performances are excellent... a deeply emotional experience... sharply confronting and vital.

The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 April 2002 – for *The Longest Night*

In writing about *The Cement Garage* in 2000, reviewer Stephen Dunne described this style of work as a 'fictionalised reality', invented stories grounded in everyday reality, intersecting the realness of place with the fiction of art.

Part of the creative drive behind making a third work was to create a theatrical piece that was fast paced and explosive like *The Longest Night*, but had greater depth and maturity. Alicia was interested in making a new performance work about men living in Western Sydney, dealing with ideas of knowledge and becoming, leadership and honour. Some of the central questions driving *Back Home* were: What is it to be a successful

man and leader? How do you navigate expectations of self, family and community? Using these as starting points, the show branched out into many other areas, such as identity and displacement, loyalty and reconciliation.

In November 2004, during the one-week research and development phase, Alicia and Shannon re-examined the impetus for *Back Home*. This research and development phase led to discussions with the NSW Department of Housing and Blacktown City Council to investigate the feasibility of creating the work in residence in the Mt Druitt area and in partnership with the Holy Family Centre, Emerton.

During the R&D stage, NOMISE (NOMISE TV, *Plaza Real* and *Jammin' in the Middle E*) was invited to join the cast of *Back Home* and the company made a decision to hold open auditions seeking to cast two other male roles.

Throughout the creative development and rehearsal periods the artistic team developed scenes through extensive discussions and long-running improvisations. Similar to the previous works, the team would rehearse and present this material to community consultants on a weekly basis. The consultants would critically discuss the material and offer dramaturgical feedback and script suggestions, which in turn would cause us to rework each scene and the overall structure.

Performance Style

Back Home draws on a performance style and process of creative investigation that emphasises reality. The work was created in residence at Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre and the team worked in a suburban yard. While the work can be adapted to an in-theatre presentation, the performance carries a strong residue of being created in an outdoor site. Aesthetically, the work is filled with multiple images, fast physical sequences and an ever-changing sound scape.

Back Home blends comedy and edgy humour, which exposes us to the frailty of bruised egos and playful joking. It draws on popular culture, performance and physical theatre conventions, fusing these forms into a performance style that conveys a realness not often experienced in theatre. The physicality of the piece is inspired by traditional and contemporary Indigenous dance, sporting forms and raw physical aggression.

"It was an excellent piece of theatre/life - so much so that I am still strangely unsettled - strangely, because I deal with these matters all the time and I thought I had insulated myself somewhat. Obviously UTP managed to keep it real."

Colleen Sutherland, Project Manager, NSW Probation & Parole

The realness and honesty of the work has been carefully crafted through the devising process. *Back Home* employed a consultative process that involved community consultants attending rehearsals on a weekly basis, and responding to material and scenes generated through extensive discussions and long-running improvisations. The consultants were considered experts in the process and their critical and dramaturgical feedback greatly impacted on the believability and authenticity of the work. In addition, dramaturg Deborah Pollard and movement consultant Lee Wilson provided expert opinions, which kept the work expanding and developing.

As the performance deals with complex issues of culture and racial tension, Lily Shearer's role as cultural advisor and community liaison also ensured that material was developed with the permission of local and community elders, and represents the concerns of a specific community with integrity and insight.

A key factor of the work's success was its lengthy development period: an initial research and development phase, followed by a four-week creative development, a six-week rehearsal period, and a final production stage. This development period greatly contributed to the work's dramaturgical sophistication and cohesion of form.

Design

Throughout the creative development process, designer Sam James built and constructed the façade of a house in the backyard of Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre. This design had already been developed and partially constructed prior to the creative development. However, as Sam was working on site, the blueprint of the house could also respond to specifications of the site and Sam would slightly alter the design in response to the material created by the performers. Most days the artistic team would spend working in the

backyard while Sam, production manager David Roberts and production assistant (local volunteer) Darren Olsen would construct the house. For the next stage of rehearsals, this set was constructed from different materials and specifically designed to withstand the outdoor rehearsal schedule and for adaptability to both outdoor and indoor venues.

In addition to design, Sam was the video artist for the project. During the creative development, his main focus was set design and it was not until the last week that he began to experiment with video images. This was to be more fully realised in the next stage of development.

In the rehearsal stage, Sam focussed on video production. Initially the set was designed to have images projected on it throughout the show. However, due to scheduling we were not able to try these images out until four weeks into the process. While the projections of the local area were stunning and cleverly crafted by Sam, the use of video in the overall piece no longer seemed as important as initially conceived. This was partially due to the evolving style and aesthetics of the piece that explored a gritty reality. The use of projections altered this sense of realism and gave the piece a heightened theatricalism. It was decided not to go ahead with projections on the façade of the house. Instead, Sam focussed on building video montages that were featured as part of the bus tour, conducted by elders for the 2006 season.

Community Consultation Process

Community consultation is a vital part of the creative process. Through UTP's partnership with NSW Department of Corrective Services - Probation & Parole and The Shed, an initiative of University of Western Sydney and Holy Family Centre, Lily Shearer consulted with workers to involve appropriate local community members to participate in the consultation process. Workers included Gordon Simon, Weber Roberts, Ish and Phyllis, from NSW Probation and Parole and Teddy Hart from The Shed, Holy Family Centre. From these contacts Lily Shearer was able to engage eight to ten local community members each Wednesday to participate in the consultation process.

Utilising The Shed as a central meeting place, Lily Shearer would organise transport for the community men to be taken to Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre. *Back Home* community consultants were considered as experts within the devising process. At weekly consultations they were invited to formally observe rehearsal and offer critical and dramaturgical feedback to material created by the artistic team. They were not asked to disclose their personal stories to then be characterised on stage by actors, but rather invited to share their opinions and observations about the world as they see it. The consultants were paid a fee for their contribution. In addition, there was an open door rehearsal policy. This means that individuals who were especially interested in the work were able to drop in any time and inform the development of the work on a more ongoing basis.

"This creative process was not only valuable to the work being developed but also the ripple effect it had on community men in recognising their own personal journeys, by associating themselves with certain characters types and/or behaviours. It opened their eyes to what cycles they had been caught in, where they were at now in their lives, the resilience they had and paths they needed to journey on, to keep the cycles broken. The men themselves identified this as an opportunity to enable self-reflection and raising self-awareness to enhance their lives to participate and contribute more positively to the local community. Some of the men also encouraged their partners and siblings to attend these consultations with them, as observers, which promoted a holistic family healing process."

Lily Shearer, Community Advisor and Liaison

Consultations were also attended by some of the local community service providers, such as other mainstream workers in Probation & Parole, Grief & Loss, Drug & Alcohol counsellors, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in health and police services and Mental Health Workers. Although they attended in the capacity of observers rather than contributors to the creative process, their feedback was invaluable. As they remarked to Lily Shearer, it also gave the workers more of an insight to their respected clients needs.

Statistics - Stage 1 Creative Development

- There were four primary consultation days - Wednesday 6, 13, 20, & 27 July 2005.
- A total of 43 paid consultants participated in the Stage I consultation process, including local and community elders, NSW Probation and Parole clients and men who attend The Shed, Holy Family Centre, Emerton.
- A total of 14 workers and family members observed the consultation process. The workers came from a number of local services including NSW Probation and Parole, Blacktown Hospital (Aboriginal Liaison Officer and

Mental Health Nurse), Daruk Aboriginal Medical Service, Mt Druitt Police and Aboriginal Liaison Officer, and Ja Biah Bail Hostel.

- A total of 23 paid consultants were clients of NSW Probation and Parole.
- A total of 34 were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds.
- The consultants represented a number of language groups and nations including Ngemba, Weilwan, Wiradjuri, Bigambul, Gamilaroi, Gundungurra, Badu Island, Darug, Biripi and Danley Island.
- A total of 3 consultants were from a Palestinian background.
- A total of 2 consultants were from a Samoan background.
- A total of 55 people attended the creative development showing.

Statistics – Stage 2 Rehearsal Process

The rehearsal stage from late October to early December 2006 was again received positively by community men, who looked forward to the Wednesday gatherings at Oakhurst Neighbourhood Centre. The Samoan community also became more involved in this second stage and this led to a number of positive community outcomes.

- There were four primary consultation days - Wednesday 2, 9, 16, & 23 November 2005.
- A total of 33 paid consultants participated in the Stage II consultation process, including local and community elders, NSW Probation and Parole clients, local residents and men who attend The Shed, Holy Family Centre, Emerton.
- A total of 6 workers and family members observed the consultation process.
- A total of 4 paid consultants were clients of NSW Probation and Parole
- A total of 23 were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds.
- The consultants represented a number of language groups and nations including Ngemba, Bungalong, Daingatti, Wigira, Wangkmara, Thungutti, Weilwan, Bigambul, Gamilaroi and Gundungurra.
- A total of 9 consultants were from a Samoan background.
- A total of 177 people attended the two nights of community showings in December 2005

Back Home's consultancy process allowed an opportunity for the Aboriginal and Samoan communities to engage in a safe and culturally respectful environment to explore and present issues to the broader communities through the medium of theatre. This has also eventuated into regular meetings/forums with both Aboriginal and Samoan communities to discuss these continued issues and together find appropriate solutions to a much needed community problem. These meetings are continuing to take place at Holy Family Centre with Elders from both communities, who have also invited Mt Druitt Police to attend and listen. Lily Shearer has also reported that the Elders from both communities are hoping that other Pacific Island groups such as the Tongans and Cook Islanders will join in these forums to enhance a more harmonious community, safe and respectful of all its members.

Some comments passed on to Community Liaison Advisor Lily Shearer following the community showing in December 2005.

"It freaked me out because living away from country moving to the city, I hadn't witnessed this type of behaviour for a long time. It also reminded me of my own personal experience living with domestic/family violence, the fear of the alcohol & drug misuse, fighting etc...So now being a single mum, it's good to not live with that and reiterated that I have the choice not to endure the trauma of these situations."

Bunjalung/Dhungutti woman (mother of five teenagers and grandmother of two)

"It's great hey daughter, finally sharing our community issues in such a fantastic story that's not hurting anyone, even the actors...It's about time."

Bigambul Community Elder

"That's how they go on, I see it all the time in the community. It's so real, as I hang out in a similar cultural group."

19 yr old community lad of Bunjalung/Anawan descent

"Very raw and powerful show reflects community cultural relationship to the Torres Strait issues are very close to the bone."

Community Elder of Gundungara/Yuin Descent

"This is what all our young fellas need to see. Maybe they will learn other ways of dealing with violence and how they should be communicating."

Aborigine community youth worker

Bus Tour

The Sydney Festival season of *Back Home* required audiences catch buses from Riverside Theatres, Parramatta. This served several purposes: the performance venue was not located close to public transport, which would mean audience members requiring personal transport, or quite an arduous journey to the venue and perhaps a significant number of latecomers; we did not want to disturb the Oakhurst neighbourhood with intense traffic conditions; and it presented an opportunity for genuine local engagement with our audience through a guided bus journey by local Elders and community leaders.

Community Liaison Advisor Lily Shearer was eager to connect the wealth of knowledge that existed within the local community, and requested the assistance of local Elders and community leaders to assist in determining the route of the buses, and appropriate stories that could be shared with the audience. Over several meetings, the devisors met to travel and discuss the route.

The group reconciled significant sites on the route with a wealth of important historical and contemporary stories, which they agreed were important to share with the wider non-Aboriginal community. The included events passed on through oral tradition or recorded by researchers and academics. They included stories that linked positive male role models from the community from 1788 to the present day and, although *Back Home* is a men's business story, the group felt it of the utmost importance and culturally appropriate to include survival stories of local Darug women.

A final "script" was developed by Lily Shearer and is included in the festival season's program notes, titled *Travelling Back – Welcome to Darug Land*. Two tour guides on each of two buses recounted and interpreted these stories in their individual style of storytelling, providing audiences with a unique and intimate insight into the powerful history of the land they were entering.

Video artist Sam James created a visual accompaniment for the storytelling, with footage of the journey and sites being passed, synchronised with the buses' journey.

The long bus ride from Parramatta takes us over gently concreted hills, past sweeping shopping plazas and fast-food outlets, and beneath the towering pillars of new motorways.

This is the traditional land of the Dharug people and our guide, Uncle Wes Marne, although not a Dharug man himself, has lived here for 34 years. The country he describes on the trip is green, full of bora grounds, meeting places and battlefields.

"It must have been wonderful country back in the old days," he says. His enthusiasm and respect are infectious.

The Australian, 23 January 2006

Attendance Statistics

Sydney Festival

Dates: 19 – 28 January 2006

8 public performances

TOTAL AUDIENCE OF 1018

Sold out two weeks in advance of opening.

Capacity of 1000 – people stood on benches behind the audience bank.

During the Sydney Festival season, the company allocated 10 seats each night to local Elders and community members.

The Dreaming

Dates: 10 – 12 June, 2006

3 public performances – 1 not completed due to weather conditions, 1 cancelled due to performer injury
TOTAL ATTENDANCE OF 300

Audience Survey Results

For the Sydney Festival season of *Back Home* UTP conducted audience surveys, which were completed by patrons on the return trip to Parramatta. The response rate was 81%. Most (**85.7%**) spectators were attending a UTP performance for the first time.

Over half (**63.8%**) the spectators were attending *Back Home* because of its inclusion in the Sydney Festival guide. Interestingly enough, another fifth (**20.4%**) were attending through word of mouth.

Though **16.8%** spectators did not state a reason for attending the performance, those who did in the most part stated the subject matter (**32.7%**), because it had been recommended to them by someone (**20.2%**), because of the advertisement (**8.9%**), because of UTP's reputation (**8.2%**), because they read an article or a review about it (**8.2%**), or because they knew someone in the show (**5%**).

An overwhelming majority (**88.6%**) of spectators had been to more than 2 performances in the last 12 months, (**55.8%** 5 times or more, and **32.8%** 2-4 times).

On average most spectators (**49.9%**) loved or (**38.5%**) liked the performance. **9.5%** were ambivalent about it (mostly about the coach tour). Only **2.3%** disliked or hated it.

12.10% of spectators didn't state what they liked of the performance but of those who did, the most stated quality was the realism and honesty of the performance (**22.4%**), closely followed by the performance of the actors (**21.8%**). The subject-matter and the cultural issues rated quite low (**7.6%**) on the scale of spectators' reasons.

More than half the spectators were female (**65%**). They were mostly in the 25 to 34 years bracket (**66.6%**).

79.7% of spectators were from Sydney (including **3.2%** from Blacktown and surrounding suburbs), **13.4%** from the rest of NSW and ACT, less than 1 (**0.8%**) were from interstate. **5.1%** were from overseas (mostly from North America, the rest from Europe and UK).

27.1% of spectators had never been to Blacktown before.

The majority of spectators were Australian born (**70.8%**) from a non-Indigenous background (**97.1%**), and largely an English-speaking background (**85.5%**).

More than three quarters of spectators (**76.5%**) were in employment (**63.4%** full-time or part-time). A majority of the spectators held tertiary qualifications (**77.8%**). Though almost **9%** didn't address the question of salary, it is clear that most spectators were, on average, on relatively high salaries (**22.5%** \$40,000-\$59,999; **18.8%** \$60,000-\$79,999; **15.7%** \$20,000-\$39,999; **9.5%** \$80,000-\$99,999; **9.2%** over \$100,000). Only **15.4%** were on salaries under \$20,000 per annum.

Responses to the work

The company has been completely overwhelmed by the positive critical and audience response to *Back Home*. The office received emails for several weeks from audience members, peers and project partners, and is still receiving positive feedback.

In his wrap-up of Sydney Festival on ABC Radio, Artistic Director Fergus Linehan said that his experience at *Back Home* was a highlight of the Festival. He later wrote:

"First and foremost this is a deeply moving, very funny and gripping evening. ... a brilliantly wrought and beautifully performed story. The evening is grounded in ideas of change - generational change, economic change and personal change. Personally it has been extremely exciting to watch this work emerge under the directorial eye of Alicia Talbot, a guiding hand of intelligence, care and patience. In all I saw the work in three different stages and in each case it had become clearer and more powerful. I along with my colleagues believe this to be one of the most accomplished and powerful works of the 2006 Sydney

Festival. It is unlike anything else I have seen since my arrival here and I keenly await the company's next work."

Fergus Linehan, Festival Director, Sydney Festival

A peer from Melbourne wrote:

"I was with a group from Melbourne, in Sydney for the Festival, and for all of us it was the highlight of our week. ... you push everything to the limit– actors, audiences, location. You create theatre of total immersion for me. Within half an hour I was rapt in the lives, loves and conflict of these characters– feeling pain both mental and physical, anguish, anxiety and sadness. The fights were terrifying, the dancing sublime. I sat with a young Koori family (three young boys). In the first half they "got" jokes and language I struggled with. They laughed hysterically. In the second half they held on to their seats, riveted to the drama. At the end we all leapt to our feet– let off a very tight leash– and yelled. Yours is the kind of theatre that keeps me in this business. Theatre that is so seminal it crosses cultural, class and generational barriers. Congratulations!"

Liz Jones, Artistic Director, La Mama

A local religious leader wrote:

"Urban Theatre found the balance of powerful symbolic celebration of the ugliness and beauty with aspirations of the community, which is not always by choice but rather by exclusion. I spoke at mass the following Sunday of Back Home being a prophetic show, disturbing tells of something going on in the community that we need to listen to. It was a story of the other, which took us to the cutting edge and asked us questions of relationships. Urban challenges can often go to the too hard basket but Urban Theatre spoke openly and honestly through symbolic action."

Fr Paul Hannah

The Dreaming Festival

Touring Party

Director:	Alicia Talbot
Performers / Devisors:	Aaron Fa'Aoso, NOMISE, Leo Tanoi and Shannon Williams
Stage Manager/Cultural Advisor:	Lily Shearer
Sound Artist:	Liberty Kerr
Production Manager:	Patrick Buckle
Community Elders:	Uncle Wes Marne & Uncle Greg Simms

Timeline

Rehearsals:	29 May – 2 June, 2006
Performance:	10 – 12 June, 2006

Venue

Rehearsals:	The Armory, Sydney Olympic Park
Performance:	The Dig, Woodford Folk Festival Site, Queensland

Project Description

This was the company's first real test for touring *Back Home* and it was decided to invest reserve funds into the project so that we could rehearse for one week in a venue at Sydney Olympic Park, so that while remounting the work we could also test the feasibility of presenting the work in venues.

Despite initial hesitation to remount the work in a venue, the remount was very successful and proved that the work could retain its power indoors with some simple staging and set modifications. This was important for the show's future touring potential, with producers Performing Lines in the final stages of negotiating a number of seasons with presenters of indoor and outdoor venues around Australia.

The company had already determined that presenting the work outdoors would still require some rehearsal time on site, and this proved essential though not effective at The Dreaming. The company's technical equipment and support request was not fully satisfied until several days after arriving at the site. Furthermore, one of the performers' agents had double-booked him with a project in Brisbane, which,

combined with bad weather, disrupted the entire process and resulted in the show not having had a technical or dress rehearsal prior to opening.

Bad weather continued to affect the season, with the opening delayed by over an hour due to intermittent storms. Unfortunately, after only 30 minutes into the show more rain set in and for the safety of performers and production staff, the show was stopped.

The second performance was performed in clear, but cold, conditions to a very large audience, who responded with great enthusiasm throughout the show. The opportunity to perform the show to a primarily indigenous audience was very encouraging and enjoyable for the performers. Unfortunately, during a very physical segment of the show, Leo Tanoi suffered a calf injury that would lead to cancellation of the third and final show.

As part of the tour to The Dreaming, the company was also supported by Blacktown City Council to enable Uncle Wes Marne and Uncle Greg Simms to attend as representatives of Darug land, where the work was created. Uncle Wes and Uncle Greg had formed a strong relationship with the company, and it was an honour to have them represent the show. During each afternoon, they would demonstrate traditional craft work and tell stories.

As UTP coordinated all aspects of the engagement, it was a very good opportunity to establish systems and procedures required for touring work and teams of artists. While hopefully providing a good template for future opportunities, it also highlighted how intensive and time-consuming this process is. Administrative staff were placed under quite a degree of pressure at a busy time of year, and had not expected the level of personal support and management members of the team would require.

Overall, this was a unique but very instructive project for the company. Experiencing challenges across all aspects of the tour (technical, contractual, weather, injury, etc), while perhaps providing one of the more extreme experiences of touring, contributed to a wealth of growth in our understanding of the potential risks, expectations and limitations of touring. Supported by an excellent touring team, these challenges were met and dealt with efficiently and professionally. It also provided a review of the technical requirements for touring *Back Home*, which were refined and developed into a thorough Technical Production and Logistics Kit by production manager Patrick Buckle.

Project 3 & 4 *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines Tour*

Presentation and tour of the company's extant work, created in 2005.

Timeline & Venues

International Oral History Conference:	14 July, 2006
Campbelltown Arts Centre:	27 – 30 September, 2006 (5 performances)
Riverside Theatres, Parramatta:	3 – 7 October, 2006 (6 performances)
Bankstown Town Hall:	10 – 14 October, 2006 (4 performances)

Key Artists

Director:	Roslyn Oades
Performers:	Mohammed Ahmad, Katia Molino and Anthony Wong
Concept:	Tim Carroll and Roslyn Oades
Dramaturg:	Andrew Ma
Sound Artist:	Oonagh Sherrard
Video Artist:	Fadle El-Harris
Production Manager:	Damian Leonard

Interviewees: Jeffery, Ali, Mohammed and Fay Ahmad; Ibrahim and Freda Bazzi; Alex Day; Frank and Cath Don; Robert and Zena Elmasri; Greta and Ken Graydon; Sadia and Saarah Jappie; Joyce King; Ninh Nguyen; Peter Polites; Hien Tran; Constable Col Urwin; Helen Westwood; Margaret and Shannon Williams; Cecily Wray; Hildegard Zywko and Linda Zywko-Hicks. An additional five interviewees wish to remain anonymous.

Synopsis

It starts loudly, with a stolen fast car, drag racing down Parramatta Road at 4.20am, going 100, 110, 120 miles per hour. It concludes gently, in a tiny tractor engine-powered boat escaping from Vietnam with a desperate human cargo, struggling to make it to Singapore and safety. To make it to Bankstown...

David Williams *RealTime* 70, Dec/Jan 2005

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines begins with a story about fast cars and ends with the story of a tractor engine. In between are stories of fighting, courage and survival, as ordinary people share extraordinary stories about the fight of their life. Some of these stories are literally about dodging punches and bullets, while others are domestic fights against change or abuse. Some are youthful confessions of first love versus protective parents. All the stories are inspiring, if not at times confronting, as cultures and ideologies collide.

The performance consists of eight interwoven stories. Mohammed, his brother Ali and their father talk of stealing cars, girlfriends and going all the way for the people they love. Margaret, an Aboriginal woman, grew up in north Queensland and remembers being ambushed by white girls on her way home from school. And then there's Hilda with her passion for fast cars and money, and Ninh who escaped Vietnam on a boat powered by a tractor engine.

These stories are continually surprising which makes for compulsive listening. The unpredictable and idiosyncratic vocal rhythms, pitch, and timings of the interviewees produce a magical transformation in the bodies of the performers, who occupy a space somewhere between acting, 'being', and possession. This is probably the best performance I've seen all year and deserves to be embraced by a wider audience.

David Williams *RealTime* 70, Dec/Jan 2005

Fast Cars & Tractor Engines is a verbatim-style theatre piece employing a unique performance technique whereby three actors wearing headphones parrot word-for-word real-life interviews, which took place with residents of Bankstown. The idea for *Fast Cars* was inspired by the Bankstown Oral History Project, coordinated by Tim Carroll of Bankstown Youth Development Services (BYDS) in 2000.

Director Roslyn Oades' work is based on oral history stories collected by Tim Carroll from the Bankstown Youth Development Service. But this is not a piece about Bankstown or the diverse inner west. This is local narrative that transcends geography, presenting the universality of human experience and slapping down the lie of unbridgeable cultural separation. It's great fun, and deeply thoughtful, worthy of a subsequent season and a wide and long tour.

Stephen Dunne, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sept 9, 2005

The first incarnation of *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* was created and performed by emerging artists Mohammed Ahmad, Steve Karouche and Zayaan Jappie and appeared as part of the launch of the Bankstown Heritage and Oral History Project. It later appeared as a fifteen-minute piece in Urban Theatre Projects' 2002 *Short and Sharp* season. The project was then redeveloped into a full-length theatre production, premiering at Bankstown RSL in September 2005.

Project Description

Following discussions with Performing Lines regarding their representation of the UTP performance *Back Home*, the company also received advice and assistance regarding the tourability of a *Fast Cars*. Performing Lines discussed the potential for touring the show with several presenters who had expressed interest in the work, though ultimately only two venue could make a commitment to seasons of the show. The venues were both western Sydney based and UTP made an undertaking to present the work again in Bankstown to provide the artistic team with a longer engagement and continue to present work in its local government area. The show had sold out in Bankstown one-year prior.

UTP was also contacted by organisers of the International Oral History Conference, to be held at University of Technology, Sydney. They had heard about the project and its relationship to oral history interview techniques.

Remounting and touring *Fast Cars* offered several excellent opportunities to further develop the work's touring and technical practicalities. Firstly, some modifications were made to the original set, making it less smaller and lighter.

Technical modifications were also made to the audioscript that performers use as part of the verbatim-style technique. The audio script, film footage and soundscape all run from one DVD, operated by the performers. This was an opportunity for the director and film artist to refine some of their original ideas for the footage, tighten up some timing elements between audioscript and film, and chapter the audioscript to make it easier for the performers to restart the DVD should any technical problem occur with the player.

Two weeks prior to the western Sydney tour, UTP was also informed that original cast member Vico Thai had been offered a major role in a new TV series. The company encouraged Vico to take the opportunity and was fortunate to discover Anthony Wong was in Sydney. Anthony is an experienced theatre, film and TV actor currently living in Los Angeles. After seeing a DVD of the show, Anthony was eager to participate and exceeded all expectations for his ability to adopt the unique performance technique.

This was also an excellent learning opportunity for emerging director Roslyn Oades. *Fast Cars* was Roslyn's directorial debut and the opportunity to remount and recast the show at first seemed quite daunting. Supported by UTP's interim artistic director Deborah Pollard and experienced production manager Damian Leonard though, Roslyn thrived in the challenge. This project proved the company's ability to remount and manage touring shows, benefiting from our experience with *Back Home* earlier in the year and the compact nature of the smaller-scale show.

The show proved very successful for touring, working well within the intimate venues at Campbelltown and Parramatta. It also proved the potential for a sub-regional touring circuit within western Sydney as a means of audience development, and networking and cooperation between venues in the region.

In Bankstown, UTP presented the show in a larger than desired space, the Dinner Theatre at Bankstown Town Hall. This was the only option left to the company after Bankstown RSL increased hire fees for the Sir Joseph Banks Room to over \$3,000. The company had hired that room annually for over 4 years at a cost of several hundred dollars, increasing to \$2,000 in 2005. Performing the show at the Town Hall placed the company out of the intimate welcoming environment that it prefers to host events and highlighted the need for access to facilities in the Bankstown area. The company is currently in consultation with Bankstown City Council regarding the development of a new arts centre, including multi-purpose facilities to accommodate UTP.

The project extended UTP's profile within western Sydney, attracting feature articles and positive reviews in mainstream press.

"Bankstown's brilliant Urban Theatre Projects presents this chunky soup of real-life drama, pathos and humour with slick professionalism."

The Daily Telegraph

"This is Urban Theatre Projects at its best."

The Sydney Morning Herald

"...Fast Cars is consistently funny, moving and perceptive. See it."

The Sun-Herald

Project 5 *Canterbury Road (renamed The Last Highway)*

Research and development for a new work devised by a professional team of artists working in consultation with community members. The work will take place over three stages of development and will be presented on a major road or industrial site in Western Sydney.

Timeline

Research and Development: 16 – 28 April 2006

Venue

Research and Development

UTP Premises & western Sydney

Key Artists

Director

Alicia Talbot

Movement & Performance Consultant

Lee Wilson

Designer

Mirabelle Wouters

Project Description

Key artists spent two weeks in research and development to investigate the conceptual terrain and design aesthetic for the project. Several field trips were made at night through western Sydney to identify potential sites for the work, but also look at existing sites to inspire the design.

The company began liaising with potential community partners and investigating funding opportunities, including meetings with SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Project) and the coordinator of HIV services for Western Sydney. Extensive conversations were also held with Colleen Sutherland from Probation and Parole (a partner from *Back Home*).

Synopsis

The Last Highway is a new work exploring danger, beliefs and the idea of contested territory. The work takes place in a service station as six characters come into contact with one another during the course of the night. A service station worker, a taxi driver, a doner kebab van worker, a couple of female street based sex workers and a stranger all end up in the service station. The work will be devised and presented in a service station on one of the major roads or industrial estates in the Bankstown area.

Drawing on perceived stereotypes an intercultural cast will reflect some of the perceptions of late night and shift workers – a South Asian service station worker, an African taxi driver, a middle eastern kebab caravan owner, and Anglo and Indigenous street workers. The work aims to explore the complexities of each characters life and their code of beliefs. Late night shift work is notoriously dangerous and each of the characters could be perceived as an outsider or outlaw. What are the codes of belief that sustain each person? How does each person get through the night, and what is their guiding philosophy?

Similar to the design of *Back Home* the service station will be a constructed façade. Audiences will be seated facing the highway, allowing the performative action to take place within the greater landscape of the highway. Through the use of real-time action and staging, the performance will explore movement scores and imagery of everyday interactions, positioning the audience as an onlooker.

Background

The project was initially inspired by the increased presence of sex workers on the Western Sydney Highways and the ensuing moral panic from local political leaders and residents. Consequently the workers were moved to a less visible area of greater isolation and personal risk. This trend has become increasingly familiar in the current climate of increased morality and conservative politics.

The recent events of the Cronulla riot also polarised and shocked the nation – each person has their own response to the event, and *The Last Highway* will investigate the notion of territory, land ownership and entitlement. Drawing on the service station as a microcosm of broader Australia, who has the right to be on the land? Who is entitled to occupy territory? What are some of the harmonies and disharmonies that arise from cultural perceptions and misunderstandings.

Project 6

The Fellas

The Fellas was a 3-week research and development workshop for Indigenous, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander performance makers to explore new ways of making performance and collaborating.

Key Artists

Facilitator

Lee Wilson

Consultant Facilitator

Wesley Enoch

Participants Cramer Cain, Leo Tanoi, Simon Hapea, Leon Burchill, Ian Callen, Gavin Ivey, Tito Schmidt, Isaac Parsons

Project Description

The Fellas was a rare opportunity to research ideas in a creative and stimulating environment without the pressure of an outcome, deadline, or product at the end. The focus was to research ways of working and creating performance material that may differ to known methods, and to do it working in a group situation where artists could feed off one another in a non-competitive environment, an environment allowing freedom to make mistakes, to be bold and fail spectacularly.

The workshop focused on personal goals as theatre makers, examination of existing ideas, and asking questions about how these ideas could be approached.

The workshop offered a range of starting points for performance ideas: whether it is a performance piece, monologue, scene, duologue, movement piece or other. A number of creative stimuli and provocations were offered to focus, challenge, support and bring depth to performance ideas.

This workshop provided an insight into various methods of creating material, enhancing existing material, and ways of contextualising performance ideas with a historical and socio-political foundation. It took a practical approach, working on the floor with many facets of performance: utilizing text, movement, improvisation, writing, and choreography.

The Fellas participants were predominantly actor-trained and unused to the responsibilities required in the making of theatre – that is, the discipline of completing a task, and all the quick decision-making necessary to meet the various deadlines involved in a devising process. Making theatre as opposed to finding a script and then fleshing it out, has a whole lot of conceptual requirements that basic acting training does not equip you for. One of the aims of the workshop was to equip the participants with the discipline to finish a task. Being able to conceive and then work out how to achieve a result, how to rehearse, get up and move the piece, was difficult for the participants.

The other important aspect of the workshop was to conceive and create a solo piece and to conceive and direct a piece for a fellow participant. Working out what you want to say and how you are going to do it is not an easy task for anyone – the resulting performances were rich in form and content.

It became apparent that storytelling allowed the performer to avoid going there emotionally. This was also hindered by the use of mime. Mime seemed to allow the performer to suggest all kinds of things without actually embodying an idea.

Sharing devising methods and tools for creating contemporary theatre with participants was obviously a radical departure for them. The fellas all have many skills, rich life experiences and cultural knowledge and skills to draw on as makers of contemporary theatre.

Challenges/Successes

The group decided that the workshop should culminate in a showing to an invited audience. The performance featured individual moments and group pieces, though it also presented different aesthetics and styles of theatre. All the performers remained on stage and became actors in each other's pieces. It was raw and exciting.

Wesley Enoch joined the group twice a week and brought a different energy to the group. Comedy, writing, having fun and contemplating where you want to be as an artist and where you want to go, what you want to achieve. Thinking about the future. Four participants went to see Wesley's *Capricornia* for B-sharp at the Seymour Centre. They dissected the performance and Wesley spoke about the making of the production and the difficulties of that process.

I am still not sure what I feel about this workshop. The Fellas workshop gave me a lot to think about. Being the only white fella in the room and the leader of the workshop. Also as the participants had a traditional theatre background, I had the sense that I may have been forcing things a bit getting them to think in a devising way and also challenging their actorly habits.

Sometimes it was perceived that this contemporary non-narrative approach was seen as being culturally white, as for the black fellas, they said that story telling is what they were all about.

The showing certainly hung over the workshop with an added pressure that was going against the premise of the workshop. The time it takes to rehearse and put a showing together takes away from the learning and experiential, experimental nature of the workshop. It brings a whole lot of issues about what is good material and what's not good material. So I would say that the showing was a hindrance to the goals of the workshop.

When we ate lunch outside UTP in the plaza it was interesting to witness the heat that eight black fellas (and 1 white fella) would draw just by sitting in a group. The police came and asked questions when we weren't doing anything but eating lunch. Some young local men came and tried to pick a fight.

It would be good if something could continue from this workshop, be it a short performance night, or another workshop. Be good to generate something concrete from the workshop rather than just a one off. But an indigenous person should facilitate it.

Lee Wilson, Facilitator

I found challenging my own perception of what good or effective/affective acting is, to be very rewarding. It has given me a broader perspective to work from and allowed me to open & incorporate new styles/ approaches into my own practice. I also found the experience of being in a cross-discipline indigenous men workshop to be very rewarding.

Simon Hapea, Participant

It was rewarding to know I actually 'got there'. I tried something very different to the way I would normally approach it and found it personally satisfying to reach the 'target' using a different method altogether. Methods and exercises that were used during the 3 weeks, but methods I would normally NOT use or ever be aware of! I have no doubt in my mind that the workshops has helped all of us gain techniques/ methods that while can be foreign to others, will prove a real bonus for us personally. This will easily plan a big part for the future practice.

Cramer Cain, Participant

I found the workshop to be a great challenge to the areas were it can most times be personal. I've always wanted to work with an ensemble of indigenous men, which was a rear experience.

Leon Burchill, Participant

Projects 7

Research & Market Development trip to Europe

Over the past two years, UTP has embarked on a strategic program of defining its vision in relation to national and international touring and exchange. Significant research has been conducted into the development processes required to create tourable work, and into the markets we feel have strong resonance with our work. In recent years UTP has invested core funds into creating high quality documentation and marketing materials, and in July and August 2006 undertook a 1-month research and exchange trip to Europe, further developing relationships that the company had built at successive Australian Performing Arts Markets (APAM).

APAM 2006 was a huge success for UTP. From over 20 formal meetings with presenters and producers we received significant interest in the company and its work, and invitations to investigate future collaborations.

In July and August artistic director Alicia Talbot and general manager Simon Wellington spent three weeks in the UK meeting festival directors, presenters, producers and funding bodies. Central to the trip was a four-day visit to Newcastle-Gateshead, where Stella Hall is director of Newcastle Gateshead Initiative. Stella asked the company to undertake preliminary meetings and research for the preparation of a proposal to create a new work in Newcastle.

Prior to departing for the UK, the company was also contacted by Tina Rasmussen from Toronto-based Harbourfront Centre regarding the possibility of developing a Toronto-specific performance based on the same conceptual premise and process used to create *Back Home*. Alicia and Simon met Tina when she was

departing France after attending a festival there, discussing options for creating a new work in Toronto as well as presenting *Back Home* there as part of a new international festival.

While the company has been invited to participate in several international exchange opportunities in recent years, we have had limited capacity to undertake such projects. These invitations demonstrate the international relevance of the company's art-making practices and their adaptability to new contexts.

During the trip, Alicia and Simon met with a wide range of individuals and organisations and attended several key events, including:

- Harbourfront Centre's Tina Rasmussen in Paris to discuss a collaboration and tour to Toronto for 2007
- Avignon Theatre Festival
- London meetings with producers ArtsAdmin and London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), as well as several independent artists
- Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff
- Arnolfini, Bristol
- Fierce Festival, Birmingham
- Birmingham Rep
- Alison Gagen from the Arts Council, Birmingham
- Leicester Haymarket Theatre
- Contact Theatre and Quarantine, Manchester
- Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, intensive research and meetings in Newcastle
- Tramways Arts Centre, Glasgow
- Edinburgh Festival and Fringe
- Presentation of a paper prepared by Alicia Talbot and Celina McEwen at the Arts in Society Conference, Edinburgh Festival with Edinburgh University

This trip provided valuable insight into the range of presenters and producers operating in the UK, work being created by independent artists and arts organizations, and also developments in contemporary arts practice and cultural planning taking place there.

For the first time, the company was able to meet with international colleagues in their own environments and context, and gain a greater understanding of the range of factors affecting the creation and touring of work overseas.

While the company was investigating opportunities for touring and collaboration, the trip was approached as first and foremost an opportunity for dialogue and exchange between the company and its international colleagues. There were limited expectations in terms of immediate outcomes, which contributed greatly to creating a comfortable atmosphere for the sharing of ideas and experience. Valuable networks and relationships were developed and strengthened that are expected to continue into the foreseeable future and hopefully provide opportunities for the company or the family of artists that it supports to engage in exchange and dialogue.

Projects 8 *Stories of Love & Hate*

Research & Development for a new work being made in response to the Cronulla Riots by the team that created Fast Cars & Tractor Engines.

Timeline

Research and Development December 2006

Venue

UTP Premises
Bankstown and Sutherland local government areas

Key Artists

Director Roslyn Oades
Research/Community Liaison Tim Carroll

Project Description

Over three weeks in November and December 2006, Roslyn Oades and Tim Carroll met with a range of organisations and individuals within the Bankstown and Sutherland Shire local government areas to discuss the project and seek support and networks to continue developing the work.

Roslyn also commenced interviews with people from a diverse range of ages and backgrounds in both regions, which will be continued during the 2007 creative development phase during which the audio script is created.

Developed in response to the 2005 Cronulla riots, *Stories of Love & Hate* is an interdisciplinary performance that draws upon sound installation, experimental performance techniques, dramaturgy and community collaboration. The production's source material, audio and performance scores are derived from an extensive interview process with community members from the Sutherland Shire and Bankstown areas. This work will further explore models of community engagement and build upon the potential of a verbatim-style audio script established in Roslyn Oades' previous work *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines* (UTP, 2005).

The project will investigate the notion of hate as a consequence of feeling that the things we love are under threat – to explore hate through a discussion on love. The aim is to better comprehend the fear and self-preservation at the base of this communal implosion.

Continuing the trajectory established in *Fast Cars & Tractor Engines*, *Stories of Love & Hate* is theatre without paper, plot or linear narrative. The performance will combine recorded interviews and an innovative performance technique to create a compelling examination of community tensions.

Challenges/Successes

The importance of long development cycles was again highlighted during this research phase, which coincided with the first anniversary of the riots. While the team accessed valuable networks and support, a great deal of tension and apprehension surrounding the event was also revealed. Many young people in Bankstown were eager to discuss their perspective, however, there was considerable reluctance to engage with the issue in the Sutherland Shire. This prompted Roslyn to review her process of identifying and engaging with community members and adopt a range of strategies.

Through a combination of journalistic-style research and persistently following up community contacts and leads, Roslyn was able to establish a wider pool of relationships, eventually conducting 22 interviews involving XX people. This provided rich source material from which to continue building the audioscript during creative development scheduled for 2007.

Another issue the company encountered was confusion, particularly within Sutherland Shire, regarding the number of projects being undertaken that dealt with the Cronulla Riots. Several other community-based arts projects had been undertaken or commenced through government funded strategic initiative, particularly the Australia Council's Community Engagement Strategy, that UTP or other arts organizations were not aware of.

As a result, UTP contacted all groups involved and arranged a meeting to discuss projects, as well as exchange ideas and contacts. This was incredibly informative and beneficial, particularly in terms of learning of each others' mutual challenges and experiences and gaining valuable insights into engagement strategies and supportive networks.

Future Development

A creative development phase, followed by a showing, will be conducted in 2007, with production scheduled to take place in 2008.

Projects 9

The Folding Wife

A three-week creative development for a new theatre work called The Folding Wife.

Artistic Team

Writer: Paschal Daantos Berry
Director: Deborah Pollard
Performer: Valerie Berry
Multi-media artists: Datu Arellano, representing Anino Shadowplay Collective

Timeline

13 November - 1 December, 2006

Venue

Hackett House, Bankstown

Project Description

The Folding Wife is a theatre performance integrating rhythmic poetic text with the unique visual language of Manila-based Anino Shadowplay Collective. The performance explores the external and internal landscape that propels people to scatter across the face of the earth and the consequences it has for personal and cultural identity. Written by Sydney-based writer Paschal Daantos Berry, *The Folding Wife*, tells the story of three generations of Filipina women, their experiences of living through different eras of colonial and post-colonial rule, and the search for a new life in an imagined land.

UTP first supported this project in 2005, through wages for writer Paschal and performer Valerie to workshop Paschal's draft script. This was further explored through an Asialink residency that saw both Paschal and Valerie travel to Manila, where they worked with artists from Anino Shadowplay Collective.

The focus of the creative development was two-fold:

- 1) Development of the script with a focus on dramaturgy, structure and character development; and
- 2) Create a process and working language that encouraged a strong integration of all of the art-forms, i.e. text, performance and multimedia

The original draft script of *The Folding Wife* was written in a style similar to 'epic poetry'. The artistic team workshopped the script by exploring a variety of staging possibilities and discussed a number of potential scripting frameworks. During this time the text was also broken into non-sequential narrative chapters, freeing up the possibilities for different modes of storytelling, performance and interpretations through visual mediums.

This process enabled the writer to rethink structure and extend conceptual frameworks. Paschal became interested in the notion of selective memory and how this could be played out through broken narratives and visuals. This less linear approach to writing gave all the artists the freedom to explore different interpretations of the text through the various artistic mediums. The work took on a joint authorship, the writer remained present in the rehearsal room throughout the process and the script altered depending on the ideas explored by the creative team. At the end of the process the script had been re-drafted and was ready for the next stage of production.

During the development process the team quickly established a strong aesthetic for the performance based on the playful aesthetic of Anino Shadowplay Collective and the contemporary performance aesthetic of Deborah Pollard.

The artistic success of the development was largely due to the unique talents of the collaborating artists and the length of the development process. A longer creative development time enabled the artists to focus on the integration of the script with the visual mediums of performance and multi-media. As a consequence the artists already had a strong sense of a shared aesthetic to take into the production process.

An international collaboration with a Manila-based artist was also an exciting opportunity for the artists to exchange ideas and benefit from creative play that is informed by a completely different cultural background.

Given the Filipino thematic explored in *The Folding Wife*, Datu Arellano was able to share contemporary cultural insights and aesthetics that informed aspects of the scripting and staging of the work. This was very

valuable to the whole creative team and in particular the Filipino-Australians, Valerie and Paschal, who immigrated to Australia when they were children.

Complimentary to this was the ability of the Australian team to impart knowledge of Australian culture to our Filipino guest. The development included researching a number of classic Australian films and paintings as well as a field trip to drought-stricken Lismore and surrounding bushland. These aesthetics would inform the multiple visual languages to be developed for the performance.

Other Activities: *25th Birthday*

An archival project, publication and event celebrating the company's 25th birthday.

Project Team

Project Coordinator: Deborah Pollard
Archivist: Vanessa Aiello (UTS Shopfront student)

Event Team

Design: Carlos Gomes
AV displays: Johnny Tran
Catering: Soraya Asmar
Production management: Simon Wise
MC: Claudia Chidiac
Speeches: Alissar Chidiac, Alicia Talbot, Tony Stewart MP, Cr Tania Mihailuk
DJ: Leo Tanoi
Performances: POST (Natalie Rose, Zoe Coombes-Marr and Mish Grigor) and Shannon Williams

Publication Team

Editor: Melissa Butcher
Writers: Paul Brown, Ian Maxwell and Harley Stumm
Designer: Gabriel Porras

Timeline

Archival Project: August to November, 2006
Event & Publication Preparation: July to November, 2006
25th Birthday Event: 10 November, 2006

Venue

UTP Premises, Hackett House, Bankstown

Project Description

To celebrate this significant milestone and reflect upon the company's important contribution to contemporary performance and community cultural development over the past 25 years, UTP undertook several significant activities including an archival project, the commissioning of three essays, and an event for past and present UTP peers and associates.

Like many organizations in this field and of this size, UTP has never been in a position to invest significant resources into the conservation of sophisticated archives. In recent years Dr Ian Maxwell has been in ongoing dialogue with the company regarding the publication of a book that maps its process and relationships to contemporary social and political movements. Application for an IRC research grant to fund an archival and digitisation project, which would inform development of the publication, was unsuccessful in 2005.

With this in mind, UTP contacted UTS Shopfront for assistance in archiving significant documents, audio visual, and promotional materials. The project was accepted by the Shopfront secondment program and student Vanessa Aiello commenced at UTP in August 2006. By November she had created a compact and sophisticated archive within the UTP offices, within manuals detailing how UTP staff can continue to maintain the cataloguing system.

This process, combined with interviews with important UTP associates, also contributed to the process of compiling an authoritative history of the company's activities, and people involved in them. A comprehensive search via phone, email, word of mouth, and advertising compiled a thorough list and in October just under 1,000 invites were sent out to past associates of Urban Theatre Projects/Death Defying Theatre.

At the same time, UTP commission co-founder Paul Brown, academic Ian Maxwell, and former general manager Harley Stumm to write articles or essays reflecting on significant periods of the company's development. These essays were published as a small booklet and on the company's web site.

On Friday 10 November, these and many other efforts culminated in an event. Speeches, performances, video and photographic presentations reflected on and celebrated the company's contribution to the field over the past 25 years.

This was an excellent series of activities for the company to undertake, enabling us to reconnect with the many artists, administrators and other stakeholders who have contributed to the company's ongoing evolution and success.

Other Activities: *Critical Dialogue*

A series of essays written in dialogue between artists and theorists that examine the relationship between artistic practice, critical thinking and contemporary culture.

Editor: Melissa Butcher
Writer: Dr Ian Maxwell

Project Description

Throughout UTP's history, there has been an ongoing dialogue between artists, academics and theorists. This relationship is mobile and alters with each new project and while many of the company's works have been documented through critical writing, this will often occur on an ad hoc basis. We wish to formalise some of these relationships through commissioning artists and writers to enter into a dialogue and reflect on recent projects and current trends.

The first essay in our series of Critical Dialogue essays was launched as part of our 25th birthday celebrations. Written and edited by Ian Maxwell, *The middle years: Death Defying Theatre transformed* combines critical analysis with a dialogue between Ian and previous DDT/UTP artistic directors Fiona Winning and John Baylis. The essay represents key issues that have emerged from the practice of DDT/UTP.

New contributions will continue to be published on the company's web site, featuring writing from: Melissa Butcher, Alissar Chidiac, Devleena Ghosh, Deborah Pollard and Paschal Berry, and Celina McEwen.