



2011 Artistic Report

Prepared by Alicia Talbot and Michelle Kotevski

With contributions by Annelies Crowe, Erica Campayne, Rosie Dennis, Alan Lao,
Roslyn Oades, Bibi Serafim, Ahilan Ratnamohan, Effie Nkrumah, Annie Winter &
Daisy Wouters

Executive Summary

Urban Theatre Projects' current Business Plan 2009-2011 focuses on four key goals:

- Make distinctive new performance works that are nationally and internationally significant, and extend the company's role as a leader of artistic excellence.
- Support the development of artists, partnerships and infrastructure for contemporary performance in western Sydney to extend art form practice and contribute to the creation of new Australian works.
- Expand market awareness and increase audience growth locally, nationally and internationally.
- Ensure that the company is adequately resourced and operates efficiently and effectively with high standards of governance and accountability.

Key achievements during the year were:

- Premiering *Ama and Chan* in the new Bankstown Arts Centre.
- Collaboration with London International Festival of Theatre on a new work in residence.
- Research and development on 7 new works.
- Rehearsals for the company's fourth Sydney Festival show, *Buried City*.
- Attendance at IETM in Krakow.
- Surpassing the benchmark of having 20% of turnover in reserve through accumulated surpluses.
- The profit for the financial year was \$39,132 (up from \$21,854 in 2010).

Summary of Artistic Activities for 2011

Urban Theatre Projects (UTP) undertook a wide range of activities in 2011 in the research, development and presentation of theatre and performance works, including:

- *Ama and Chan* premiered at the new Bankstown Arts Centre, written by Effie Nkrumah, Alan Lao and Drew Fairley;
- *Stories of Love and Hate* by Roslyn Oades was presented by the Sydney Theatre Company for a 2 week season;
- Ahilan Ratnamohan's *Michael Essien I want to play as you* underwent a creative development and showing in Antwerp, Belgium;
- *Posts in the Paddock* underwent a further creative development stage - supported by UTP;
- Alicia Talbot spent four weeks in residence at London International Festival of Theatre to undertake a further development period for the creation of a new work in East London.
- Three drafts of a script were produced and rehearsals began for new co-production (Belvoir, Sydney Festival) *Buried City* (formerly *The Quarry*).
- The company attended the IETM Meeting in Krakow in October 2011 as part of its international market development strategy.
- Three groups of artists undertook development on 3 new work concepts through the new Intersection Developments program.
- Presented a Master class by Rosie Dennis, football-dance workshops for young people by Ahilan Ratnamohan and a Master class in Headphone Verbatim Theatre by Roslyn Oades in Port Adelaide.

On the 28th of March 2011, UTP relocated from Hackett House to the redeveloped Bankstown Arts Centre, 5 Olympic Parade Bankstown NSW 2200.

Ama and Chan opened to a full house on Wednesday the 4 May 2011. This show also marked the first performance in the new Bankstown Arts Centre Theatre. *Ama and Chan* played over two weeks with a total of 14 performances.

In March 2011 writer/director Drew Fairley and a highly skilled team of artists and technical professionals brought *Ama and Chan* to life. Musician and performer Reza Achman, Video Designer Kate Richards, Lighting Designer and Production Manager Neil Simpson, Set Designer Arthur Koutoulas, and Performer/Technical Manager Frank Mainoo completed the team. UTP's Artistic Director Alicia Talbot supported the work as dramaturge.

In June 2011 Rosealee Pearson joined the company for the Indigenous Technical Theatre Production Placement – an initiative lead by UTP and delivered in collaboration with Belvoir. Rosealee undertook a program developing skills, expertise and experience across the programs of both companies.

Through October and November of 2011, Ahilan Ratnamohan and Daisy Wouters undertook a creative development for a new Urban Theatre Projects dance-theatre work *Michael Essien I want to play as you...* The development took place in Antwerp, Belgium and was supported by Cultuur Centrum Luchtbal, who provided in-kind rehearsal space, technical assistance and catering, as well as local NGO African Cultural Group VZW who provided community support.

Throughout 2011 Artistic Director Alicia Talbot and collaborator Rosie Dennis made two research trips to Canberra in preparation for the development of a new work for commissioned by Canberra 100, 2013. *Catalogue of Dreams* explores ideas of the longing and dreams, playing between the worlds of real and the surreal, of the everyday and the magical. This new performance work is made in dialogue with young people and children who have experiences of falling in and out of the system.

For 6 weeks from October 2011, Ahilan Ratnamohan and Daisy Wouters undertook a creative development for a new dance-theatre work *Michael Essien I want to play as you...* The development took place in Antwerp, Belgium and was supported by Cultuur Centrum Luchtbal as well as local NGO African Cultural Group VZW. Executive Producer Michelle Kotevski joined Ahilan and Daisy in Antwerp in the first week of the creative development. Working with a group of 8 African footballers 4 days per week for 6 weeks, Ahilan led a devised physical theatre process which attempted to harness the players' physical prowess and expertise in football to create performance material. Daisy worked as the project Coordinator and liaison. On the 16th and 18th of November the group performed two showings of 35 minutes of material to artistic peers and local community.

In September 2011 Alicia Talbot, Michelle Kotevski and Rosealee Pearson returned to London for a 4-week community consultation and creative development for *Is*

this London? a new UTP work commissioned for the London International Festival of Theatre.

Soft Blue Sky is a new work in development by ARIA-nominated singer/songwriter Perry Keyes. In 2011 Perry, in collaboration with Johnny Barker and Alicia Talbot undertook a research and development for a new theatre work. *Soft Blue Sky* centres itself around the theme of post-industrial urban migration and its effects on the lives of the people that are caught up in the social dislocation that occurs when communities - whole and in part - are broken up and shifted away to outlying suburbs.

Intersection Developments, a program of developing new theatre and performance works was initiated in 2011. The program sought to support the conceptual development of 4 new works by eight young and emerging western Sydney based artists. In 2011, three of these works undertook a development process.

Posts in the Paddock was a collaboration between My Darling Patricia (MDP) with Indigenous artists Nadeena Dixon and Rhonda Governor-Dixon. Through visual and physical performance, the project explored the story of Jimmy Governor regional NSW, following the route of Jimmy Governor. An UTP Intersection residency seeded this project in 2009. In 2011 MDP undertook a final development, including the design and build of the set and visual imagery. The build was supported by UTP. *Posts in the Paddock* premiered on 10 November 2011 at CarriageWorks presented by MDP, Marguerite Pepper Production ND Performance Space.

The CEO's and artist Ahilan Ratnamohan attended the IETM Plenary Meeting in Krakow in October to further the company's international market development plan.

TRAILERS

Ama and Chan <http://vimeo.com/38953409>

Michael Essien I want to play as you
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnA1AX2cSU4>

Buried City <http://vimeo.com/37357949>

Ama and Chan

A new comedy work by two emerging Western Sydney artists Effie Nkrumah and Alan Lao. This work premiered at the newly opened Bankstown Arts Centre.

Key Artists

Performer/Devisor	Effie Nkrumah
Performer/Devisor	Alan Lao
Director	Drew Fairley
Dramaturge	Alicia Talbot
Musician	Reza Achman
Performer/technician	Frank Mainoo
Designer	Arthur Koutoulas
Lighting Designer & Production Manager	Neil Simpson
Video Designer	Kate Richards
Executive Producer	Michelle Kotevski

<u>Venue</u>	Bankstown Arts Centre 5 Olympic Parade Bankstown
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Timeline

Research	September 2010
Script Development	November 2010 & 14 -18 March 2011
Rehearsal	March 28 – 29 April 2011
Season	2 May - 21 May 2011

Community Consultants

James Mitsios, Dativah Murungi, Michael Tran, Susan Makena, Teresia Mwangi, Elizabeth Gezaheng, Jian Min Chen, Qi Sun, Sam Lam, Ifran Mohamed, James Wang, Veronica Liu

Public Season

Ama and Chan combines the brisk reality of live TV and the situation comedy with social media and opened to a full house on Wednesday the 4 May 2011. This show also marked the first performance in the new Bankstown Arts Centre Theatre.

Ama and Chan played over two weeks with a total of 14 performances.

Urban Theatre Projects latest theatrical offering is a saucy and irreverent departure from their usual fare, created by two utterly unique and charismatic performers Effie Nkrumah and Alan Lao. The chemistry and banter is great, the cultural body slams are brilliant – fun – local –completely un PC.

Augusta Supple

Nkrumah and Lao are agile performers and they build an infectious rapport with their audience.

Jason Blake, SMH

The audience is brought into the theatre by *Ama and Chan*. During this 'meet and greet' *Ama and Chan* get to know their audience and keep the energy high with improvised jokes and marital spats for the audience's enjoyment. Once in the

theatre, the audience is caught up in the frenzy of the homemade TV Studio. Cameras, lights and scenery are being set up and a live musician on roller skates keeps the audience in high spirits. A social media recount of Ama and Chan's love life and marriage is played on a large screen and *Ama and Chan* warm the audience up like they are about to see Australia's Got Talent.

Ama and Chan's empty apartment/kitchen is swiftly transformed into a TV studio and the audience becomes part of a live cooking show where food is prepared before their eyes. A closed circuit TV shows the cooking show, as it would be seen on TV. Ama and Chan bicker and whip up a couple of savvy fusion dishes.

A soon as the lights dim, we are revved up by funky beats, accompanying the colourful onslaught of a multi-media pastiche - Google Maps, Facebook, YouTube, flick and scream establishing all there is to know about the where and who of this odd couple.

Augusta Supple

In the back stage left corner, a single hanging globe illuminates a musician whose tribal drum beats set the pace of the show. Two large moveable screens provide the backdrops for the home kitchen and the cooking show, and also allows for a video projection sequence, which gives the audience the history of Ama and Chan's relationship and their travels to Australia.

Chan: *Hello, we just want to talk before we start the show, because we the celebrity now, and from time to time we like to talk to the lower people.*

Ama: *Yes, at one point we were just like you nobody –*

Chan: *nobody*

Ama: *And now we are like us somebody –*

Chan: *somebody*

Ama: *There is a reason we are here and you are there, it's a system.*

Chan: *Is the natural selection, you guys over there.*

Ama: *Yes, I like to call it hierarchy, we are high and you are*

Chan: *Iraqi.*

Ama: *No Chan, rachy.*

Food is an integral component of *Ama and Chan*. There is an operational cooking bench on stage with two working hotplates that allow Ama and Chan to demonstrate, live to the audience, their Afro-Asian Fusion cuisine, complete with extreme chilli fumes.

Thanks for the show tonight. Haven't laughed so much in ages, anywhere! A great concept, beautifully realised. Congratulations! x

UTP Facebook Fan response

Background to project

Ama and Chan are two larger than life personas created by young and emerging western Sydney artists Effie Nkrumah and Alan Lao.

Ama and Chan were born during our time studying performance at UWS in 2006...The two opposing cultures combined with the character's strong opinions about life in Australia and their accents proved to be the perfect mix and allowed people to free their minds and laugh about things that although controversial and non-pc, most of our friends think or say when they can.we came to realise that theatre was probably the best springboard for these two characters who thrive on audience interaction and strong improvisation, so we applied for the Urban Theatre Projects Intersection residency in 2009.

Effie Nkrumah

In July and August 2010, Effie and Alan were UTP's Intersection artists in residence.

The creative development of *Ama and Chan* occurred over two stages. In July and August 2010, Alan and Effie undertook a research and development period that was overseen by Alicia Talbot and Lina Kastoumis. The performers found this period to be challenging, as in the past the performers had been used to an organic process of material coming along over a long period of time. In this residency, the artists realised that there was an allocated period of time to create the material.

All of a sudden, we felt we had to structure each day and be creating mounds of material, when really we could have slowed down a little and focussed on the areas that would become a stronger foundation for our show.

Effie Nkrumah

The performers both identified that this period was most successful in the solidification of how Ama and Chan met, and the circumstances around the beginning of their relationship. At the end of the initial residency, there was recognition that Alan and Effie would benefit from a focused and intensive period with a director. Comedy writer and director Drew Fairley worked with Alan and Effie over an additional three-week period in November and December 2010 and the bones of a new work emerged. In conversation with Effie, Alan and Drew Alicia assembled a creative team around Alan and Effie to realise the work.

In March 2011 writer/director Drew Fairley and a highly skilled team of artists and technical professionals brought *Ama and Chan* to life. The aim was to create a well-supported environment, which was ideas driven and encouraged risk taking and rigour. Musician and performer Reza Achman, Video Designer Kate Richards, Lighting Designer and Production Manager Neil Simpson, Set Designer Arthur Koutoulas, and Performer/Technical Manager Frank Mainoo completed the team. UTP's Artistic Director Alicia Talbot supported the work as dramaturge.

This project allows us to share aspects of our culture often neglected by the mainstream media. We see this as a necessary thing to do to cater for the audiences who are not being catered for.

Alan Lao and Effie Nkrumah

Community Consultation Process

Ama and Chan was developed utilising UTP Artistic Director Alicia Talbot's trademark public dialogue process. Members of the Chinese and African

communities were invited as experts within the devising process, attending rehearsals to contribute dramaturgical advice.

The community consult was a very interesting process; it really benefited us as writers and performers. The consult gave us an insight into people's reactions to the characters and writing. This was the process, which led to Chan taking more of a dominant and confident energy. The community consults also acted as a trial audience to see if certain jokes/ material worked. Also the consult gave us the material for issues/topics to discuss in the show.

Alan Lao

Organisations that assisted and were involved included African Women Australia Inc, BYDS and the Australian Chinese Descendants Mutual Association as well as a number of individuals who assisted to shape the piece.

Outcomes and Benefits

I learnt that as an artist, you must be 100 percent engaged in the process you are involved in; this applies especially when working with other artists and also when working within a time limit. I have definitely developed my attention to detail, and my awareness of each person in the space. The importance of research and rehearsal became imprinted in me, as well as understanding why preparation both in terms of logistics and also in terms of my body – warming up, staying healthy and energised – is so important. I noticed that as a person I work well under pressure, but as a performer who is working with others, I need to prepare more, and definitely share the load more. This became very evident to me as I looked back at the process on a whole from research and development stage through to the performance season itself.

Effie Nkrumah

Through experiencing the full process from development to public season, the artists observed the investment required to achieve the best quality of work possible. The tenacity and persistence required of an artist was something that was not fully realised until the latter end of the public season.

In terms of writing, Drew really helped us improve. I learnt not to change the dialogue of a funny scene purely from reviewing it too many times. Also we refined our process for generating dialogue...Drew got us to workshop every scene and refine the dialogue from the improvisation to enable us to flesh out anything we missed in the improvisation.

Alan Lao

I think that as writers, we can now add a certain level of detail to our scripting - we understand now how our characters' differences are less to do with their looks and accents and more to do with how they communicate with each other and the world. I now know that (creating material) is not difficult for us, but the capturing and re-creating of it becomes the issue.

Effie Nkrumah

The collaborative environment of *Ama and Chan* was the first instance that Alan and Effie did not have total control over the creative component of the show. Although challenging at first to hand over this creative control to a team of professionals, the performers found out that this environment enabled them to

concentrate on the performance whilst still being able to have input into the other aspects of the show. Having an experienced director in the room allowed Alan and Effie to improve their stagecraft, both with performance and writing.

We gained experience creating a show from scratch, even though we did not end up with the show we initially planned, we ended with a show that everyone enjoyed. We'll know for next time, the amount of energy, commitment and tenacity required for a residency.

Alan Lao

Investment in Young Artists from the West

UTP has a proven track record in supporting young and emerging artists to develop their aesthetic and voice within a well-supported artistic and producing environment. Alan and Effie are an example of this commitment to artists from the west. The investment is aimed at creating a career trajectory that goes beyond their work with UTP and creating connections in the industry that can guide them on this journey to professional arts practitioners.

Through the work with UTP both Alan and Effie were able to hone their skills as performers and artists and under the guidance of mentors like Drew Fairley and Alicia Talbot, improved dramatically during this time. From her work in *Ama and Chan*, Effie was cast in UTP's next major work *Buried City*.

Social Media and Digital Content

Surrounding the lead up to the show the company started a social media campaign to create awareness of the show and its protagonists. Ama and Chan posted video blogs on YouTube and created individual Facebook pages to express their outspoken views on the world. This created a hype around the show that UTP had not had explored before and was very successful in extending the personas from outside the context of the show. Through the survey results, it was found that word of mouth was the most cited way audiences heard about the show, with Facebook coming in second. This heightens the importance and relevance for a digital marketing strategy to be at the forefront of UTP's work in the future.

The couple's show takes advantage of the digital sphere and its much-touted capacity for breaking down cultural barriers and opening up more inclusive and representative spaces... A catfish-esque montage of images from Google Maps, iPhone text messages and online airport booking sites opens the production, serving as its prologue and providing us with the characters back-stories. The networked world also played an important role in the productions marketing strategy, with audiences invited to befriend Ama and Chan on Facebook and follow their hilarious video blogs in the lead-up to the season.

Matthew Clayfield Real Time

The use of technology incorporated within the traditional story telling mediums added another level to the production and was successful in telling the characters back-stories.

Audience Response

Time and time again, Urban Theatre Projects has explored who becomes marginalised, how and why... Through their many productions we have come to

know many modes of resilience; modest contingent, defiant, temporary, permanent and sometimes triumphant but rarely in the way we expect... Certainly this is the case here. Where one might expect an angry, even militant approach, Ama and Chan's critique is instead subtle and good humoured, worn on the sleeve of the production only lightly, as though it could, like lint, be brushed away without a second thought.

Matthew Clayfield Real Time

Urban Theatre Projects rarely produce comedy pieces. It was unexpected for our audiences and completely different from the work the company has created in the recent past. It was a different approach to reflecting stories of contemporary life and was successful in broaching hard territory thematically whilst presenting it in an accessible and humorous way.

At the conclusion of each show, in the foyer of the Bankstown Arts Centre, audience members were invited to complete a survey to gauge their response to the work and demographic information.

Main findings

The audience survey response rate was 40%. Most of the respondents (73%) were between 18 and 44 years of age. 50% of the respondents were from the western suburbs of Sydney (including 19% from the Bankstown LGA) while 26% were from Sydney and its inner suburbs, a significant decrease from *The Football Diaries* (46% from Sydney). 71% of the *Ama and Chan* audience surveyed were women.

Ama and Chan brought 171 people to a UTP performance for the first time and 17% of audience members had never been to Bankstown before. UTP's regular audience (those who have attended 3 or more UTP performances) represented 19% of the survey sample.

Over two thirds of respondents (68%) were born in Australia. The rest were born mostly in non-English speaking countries (26%). Notably, 6% of respondents were born in Ghana, which represents a significant population in the survey data. This is most likely due to the Ghanaian cultural background of one of the performer Effie Nkrumah. 52% of respondents spoke a language other than English at home.

The majority (68%) of respondents heard about *Ama and Chan* through word of mouth. Over a quarter of the respondents (26%) also heard about *Ama and Chan* through Facebook.

The majority of respondents (42%) identified humour as the aspect they most liked about *Ama and Chan*. Almost a quarter of respondents (14%) also mentioned the creative and original approach to exploring cultural diversity and cross-cultural relationships.

Media Coverage

UTP engaged publicist Sarah Wilson to undertake a media campaign to promote the work to potential audiences and to generate positive media segments about the local region, the young artists and the company.

Results

Through Sarah Wilson's extensive media campaign we were able to gain coverage over a wide range of sources. The coverage in local print media was excellent and showed a tangible enthusiasm to support both the local venue and in particular the local talent on showcase. Most coverage also picked up on the 'novelty' of having ethnic minorities on the stage. The show also gained good coverage across mainstream press and some coverage in the ethnic press. The coverage ranged across local and national print and online editorial and reviews as well as interviews with the performers on radio.

The process of doing these interviews and dealing with media requirements was another development opportunity for both Effie and Alan. Neither had been exposed to a rigorous media campaign before, and they were able to execute some very successful interviews.

The total advertising value generated by print media segments for *Ama and Chan* was \$25,165. The total Public Relations (PR) value of the print media segments was \$75,495. This free PR was not only fantastic for the show and for Urban Theatre Projects, but also for the new Bankstown Arts Centre. Its coverage gave excellent exposure of the new space to readers both in Western Sydney and across general metropolitan Sydney.

Buried City

Buried City was created in partnership with Belvoir and Sydney Festival and premiered in January 2012 in the upstairs theatre at Belvoir. *Buried City* was first developed through a commission from Harbourfront Centre, Toronto.

Key Artists

Conceived & Directed	Alicia Talbot
Writer	Raimondo Cortese
Performers and Co-Devisors	Valerie Berry, Perry Keyes, Russell Keifel, Effie Nkrumah, Hazem Shammam & Meyne Wyatt
Set & Costume Design	Mirabelle Wouters
Singer/songwriter	Perry Keyes
Composer & Sound Designer	Paul Prestipino
Movement Consultant	Kathy Cogill
Lighting Designer	Neil Simpson & Sean Bacon
Assistant Director & Stage Manager	Frank Mainoo
Assistant Stage Manager	Rosealee Pearson
Research Consultants	Eamon Flack, Colin Moody and Ngoc Fan
Production Manager	Sharna Galvin
Production Consultant	Neil Fisher
Executive Producer	Michelle Kotevski

Venue

Research	Belvoir rehearsal room, Bankstown Arts Centre & Turbine Hall, Cockatoo Island
Rehearsal	Bankstown Arts Centre
Season	Belvoir Theatre (upstairs)

Timeline

Research	July & December 2010
Script Development	February –October 2011
Rehearsal	14 November 2011 – 31 December 2011
Season	6 January – 5 February 2012

Community Partners

CFMEU especially their retired members, Gadigal Media, Sydney Alliance, Tribal Warrior, Workplace Tragedy Survivors Group

Community Consultants

Bob Arrow , Vince Ashton, Paul Baker, David Barrow, Johnny Bosevski, John Burns, John Clough, Steve Costigan, Pat Fiske, Pat Fortlock, Elizabeth Gezahegne, Ismail Hadife, Barry Hempsworth, John Koch, Wendy Lark , Uncle Wes Marne, Graeme McLeod, Ifrah Mohamed, Jack Munday, Dativah Murungi , Trent Nolan, Alfira O’Sullivan, Joe Owens, Raquel Pelleri, Vern Philpott, Aishiyah Prahastono, Nick Rawson, Karim Reda, Fadi Razzak, Brett Scully, Bernie Shearer, Mick Tubbs, Dick Whitehead.

Public Season (January 2012)

...a powerful work about the importance of watching out for people who in the chaos of the contemporary world seem to have fallen by the wayside but still have their passions.

The Australian

It's so rare to see a show like Buried City these days - dynamic, fresh, emotionally demanding, irreverent, politically engaging, with extraordinary performances, with something powerful to say about where we're at and we're heading. It wasn't entertainment, a nice night out - it was gut wrenching, disturbing, provocative, exhilarating stuff - and i think can set a new bench mark about what theatre can achieve, especially, when so much theatre, and people, are so politically disengaged.

Audience Feedback

This Buried City is not so much the changing face of urban modernity, more the repressed emotional landscape of people articulating their deepest hurts.

Daily Telegraph

Set in a mess of scaffolding and building debris, *Buried City* explores ideas of economic and societal change, layers of history, momentum and loss. These themes are grounded in the highly personal exchanges of six very different people who drift through the night in a kind of limbo – grappling with a sense of displacement, inaction and the impact of change.

The show begins at a work site late at night - there’s a young female security guard who doesn’t really want to be there and an itinerant night patrolman who has all but given up, his old union mate who’s been drinking most of the afternoon, and a young worker who has no where else to go. Into the site comes a 30’s something mate with a woman he’s just picked up at a club. They are there to give the old

bloke a lift and should leave straight away – but of course, they don't.

Played in real time, the interactions between each of these people lead to a series of misunderstandings, of fragmented conversations and attempts to connect with each other. In one sense, nothing happens – but in this half assembled, stark world – people's dignity, anger and emotional fragility is exposed.

It is very easy to get pulled into their hopeless world — perhaps not hopeless, they do at least get to air their grievances, and there are tiny gestures of human warmth and comfort between the characters, mostly in the body language, amplified by the context, but up-beat it is not — and the play is close to the Sydney outside, whose problems often feel intractable with outside intervention unlikely and people too fearful to change it from within.

Andrew Miller, The Berkshire Review

Written by Raimondo Cortese, *Buried City* is stripped of its conventional theatrical content and woven within a raw aesthetic of detailed physical action that works in relationship to the spoken text. Audiences described the work as a moving painting - there's no back-story and almost no personal information provided about any of the characters, no classic plot to speak of and yet the night is high emotional stakes.

Designed by Mirabelle Wouters, the set transfigured the space at Belvoir – scaffolding inside and out with the loading dock door open to the outside world of the 'real' Belvoir Street. Lighting and video from Neil Simpson and Sean Bacon embedded the action in a dark and almost alive visual environment.

Paul Prestipino manipulated sound from the street outside creating a sense of immediacy and heightening the outside world. This live manipulated sound scape sat alongside the acoustic songs composed and performed by aria nominated Perry Keyes who as an extraordinary leap of faith performed his urban ballads as a character from inside the work.

Like the scaffolding itself *Buried City* is a kind of emotional stasis - a moment in time where we acknowledge change and sense of something passing alongside the vibrancy of a new generation, and within that there is an accumulated sadness – with no conclusion but a raw and explosive dance by the youngest character – a dance that conveys loss and angst simultaneously with a strong sense of survival and forward momentum. The buried city of the piece is the complex emotional territory we struggle with – the hidden thoughts and voices that are given little room for expression within the constructed social world of contemporary urban identity.

...a night of emotional turmoil and brutality, the acting is raw, and the interactions between the lost characters captivate the audience.

Alternative Media Group

Please tell your administrators, directors and performers how much we (all three of us) enjoyed Buried City tonight and how we'd like to see other works of this kind at Belvoir - collaborative work, trying new ways to engage the audience about ideas we have sympathy for. Many thanks.

Inspiration for the Work

Buried City was originally conceived through an invitation from Tina Rasmussen to make a new theatre work for Harbourfront Centre, Canada. In 2007 Alicia Talbot spent five weeks in Toronto looking at a city in rapid structural and social change - the city skyline appeared to literally alter everyday with condominiums rising along the waterfront, built by contract labour and made possible by a largely foreign workforce. Alicia thought of making a work in a dug out quarry – turned earth, scaffolding, and a temporary site van occupied by contract workers and security guards.

In 2009, Belvoir and Urban Theatre Projects began to talk about what we could make in partnership – together what kind of story could we tell? And the ideas that were so pressing in Toronto began to be reconsidered in the context of Sydney – both cities built on indigenous land and both cities, like so many others - grappling with change but still hard to comprehend.

Belvoir teamed director Alicia Talbot with writer Raimondo Cortese and they began an exciting new collaboration. Raimondo and Alicia worked to blend their theatrical approaches and the entire creative process of *Buried City* was lead by a strong pursuit of ideas, of new collaborations and creative risk. It marked a number of departures from both Alicia's and Raimondo's previous work and was a fantastic learning opportunity to work in partnership with Belvoir to realise this piece and present it in a theatre context.

...Buried City is a true triumph not only of artistic experimentation with form, but a triumph of political and social significance to Australians – Alexander Buzo would be proud.

Augusta Supple

Writer Raimondo Cortese describes the work as rather like a living film set with no close-ups. Alicia has long been interested in the way audiences view the work, in opening up the work to give the audience a bigger role in reading what they see, drawing their own conclusions, and ultimately, seeing the work as a set of questions.

UTP positions itself, very successfully, at the cutting edge of Australian theatre and this work leaves no real room for doubt about it.

Curtain Call

Buried City was a classic Festival piece and utterly polarised audiences, especially within a subscriber context. UTP is still receiving handwritten letters, emails and cards – most of them good. Many people loved and many people liked it, and some people walked out. Similar to previous works audiences and critics describe the work as honest, gritty, and raw, evoking questions and images that sit with them for some time.

We know nothing of their histories, and we don't learn much more during the performance. There is no dramatic story. Audiences who want these things might be a bit put off by this provocative piece of theatre.

Talbot, Cortese and the entire artistic team evoke a feeling likely to become more familiar to many of us as the mining boom continues—a strange sense, not unlike like the post-party blues, that everyone else is having a slightly better time of it.

RealTime

In keeping with its raw characters and themes, this is a raw production. It pulls no punches. It makes no excuses.

Carol Wimmer Stage Whispers

Research

We undertook a number of short research phases for the project in 2010. This included round table discussions with the key artistic team of writer Raimondo Cortese, designer Mirabelle Wouters, performer and songwriter Perry Keyes and dramaturg Eamon Flack. We began to develop a shared understanding of the work, its aesthetic style and form. We storyboarded a number of images and small scenes.

The team also worked for a week at Belvoir collaborating with performer /devisors Colin Moody, Effie Nkrumah, Ngoc Fan, Hazem Shammah. We continued to talk around the form and content in the work. We created a series of personas/characters and storyboarded image tables and short scenes.

We also conducted site visits to a quarry in Riley st, Surry Hills and spent a day working in the Turbine Hall on Cockatoo Island. UTP, Belvoir and Sydney Festival staff also spent the afternoon on the Tribal Warrior with guest artists Raimondo Cortese and Perry Keyes.

At the completion of the research phase, Raimondo was commissioned by UTP and Belvoir to write a script for Buried City

What strikes me about Alicia Talbot's work is that it is not about presenting a metaphor on stage, or at least it's not about seeing theatre as a metaphor that transforms the performance into a poetic representation. It feels much fresher, much more contemporary - in that what is aimed for is the presentation of a new form of theatre based on ritual everydayness - after painstaking observation and detailed research - a new language is created - one that doesn't resemble the structures and forms of plays and theatre events we are used to, but finds a new organised way of theatricalising human behaviour sourced directly from lived experience (in this case a particular social milieu) that is then ritualised on the floor.

Raimondo Cortese

Public Dialogue – Community Consultation Process

A key aspect of Alicia's work has been an ongoing engagement with what she refers to as public dialogue - an intensive dialogue process with individuals, organisations and cultural thinkers who have professional and/or lived experience of the subject matter, and work as advisors throughout the process.

This discussions and relationships start before the process commences and continues beyond opening night. For *Buried City*, we worked with the CFMEU, and especially their retired members (many of men and women who fought to save Sydney in the infamous green bans) workplace tragedy survivors, Sydney Alliance, Gadigal Media, Tribal Warrior and the African Women's Network.

As an aboriginal person, our culture was based on acting and story telling – stories to be told – dance, handed down...First met Alicia and she told me what she was on about thought I had something to offer... been involved in other plays. Enjoy doing it, part of my calling. I like that its about the ordinary people...I think these stories should be told.

Uncle Wes Marne

Buried City employed a process that Alicia Talbot has developed through previous works, where community consultants are positioned as experts within the devising process. This consultative process involves community consultants and industry professionals attending rehearsals, and responding to material and scenes generated through extensive discussions and long-running improvisations. The sessions were not recorded electronically - notes were taken by Annie Winter and distributed as comprehensive transcripts for cast, crew and the consultants. The consultants' critical and dramaturgical feedback greatly impacts on the believability of the work and brokers a relationship between opinions and observations of real, lived experience and artistic enquiry.

BA: Excellent dialogue, good length, although Russell and Haz go on a bit long

WM: When I see two men arguing about immigrants, I'd put an Aboriginal man in there to tell them to walk in his shoes...

ED: Val and Effie are real, but there is still so much swearing!

WM: When people are sober, they are quiet. When they are drunk, you can't shut them up!

VA: This argument is timeless. Its not too aggressive, they are just pissing in the wind

BA: That was a good way to end, with everybody just leaving

P: This week was like a movie – it all happened at once

JB: Its easier to watch than it is to listen to...you hear what you want to hear, and see what you want to see.

Excerpt from *Buried City* consultation November 2011

The *Buried City* consultancy process began in 2010 with Alicia and Michelle making contact with the CFMEU and community organisations. Annie Winter joined the *Buried City* team as Community Liaison in June 2010. Alicia and Annie continued to

meet with representatives, industry professionals and community members including;

- Vince Ashton – retired rigger with extensive construction experience and long association with Australian circus
- Graeme McLeod – retired ship’s carpenter
- John Clough – retired carpenter from Wales
- Vern Philpott – Canadian Merchant Seaman/boiler maker.
- Rohan Tobler from Les Tobler Construction Training (Koori Job Ready)
- Brett Scully – CFMEU (former organiser) security guard and traffic controller
- Steve Costigan – CFMEU (organiser and CFMEU Board of Management)
- Joe Owens, ex Secretary and organiser from the BLF;
- Pat Fiske, a documentary maker who was the first female union member of the BLF
- Pat Fortlock, a WH&S Officer and former crane driver (and who experienced a serious workplace accident)
- Graeme McLeod – retired Ships Carpenter
- Dick Whitehead – most recently the WH&S Consultant for the V-8’s
- Mick Tubbs – President CFMEU Retired Members
- Uncle Wes Marne – Bidgambul man who works as an elder and custodian, living on Darug land in Emerton, Western Sydney.
- Young apprentices and young men training to be job ready
- Three members of the African Women’s Network

Community Protocols

As we were aiming to present *Buried City* in the Redfern/Surry Hills area (outside of Western Sydney) we observed community protocols and sought advice about who we should talk to regarding the project and coming to work in the neighbourhood. Alicia met with Shane Phillips, Mick Mundine and Lily Shearer to let them know of the activity and seek their advice and approval. Annie met with Auntie Millie Ingram from Wyanga Aboriginal Aged Care, Sonny Dallas Law – Cultural Development Officer for Redfern Community Centre, members of the Tribal Warrior crew and other community members from the Redfern Waterloo area, to let them know about the project, its themes and that we were targeting members of their community to be involved in *Buried City*.

Rehearsal Process

There were four primary consultations throughout the rehearsal process where the artistic team performed sections of material followed by a discussion – mediated and facilitated by Alicia.

K: It was good, not what I was expecting

PF: I liked the repartee, the communication is easy.

VA: The Meyne character embodies the time of change of the 60’s and 70’s..the wings of rebellion.

T: Its pretty good. There is lots of swearing.

BS: *Its very believable, the subtle racism, the language digs. I could relate to the level of boredom – working nights.*

VA: *Middle Eastern, Asian, Indigenous, African, Anglo – they seem angry, maybe because they don't understand each other...Is this intentional?*

S: *I like the conflict, I'm waiting for more drama*

Excerpt from *Buried City* consultation November 2011

When I heard about the community discussion, I thought it would be a waste of time. But I have never been part of anything like it. Everyone should do it. It is amazing.

Buried City collaborating artist

Community Showing – January 5' 2012

I was feeling great, this time watching with relax to enjoy. When I saw the audience, were watching with impressive, full of attention and I realized everybody liked the theatre and when the theatre finished everybody explained their appreciation with putting their hands together even longer how much it is a nice, real, good, attracted. And said for myself, oh this is very good I am proud of myself even though I have put a little contribution I feel great when people likes it which is I was part of it.

Community Consultant Elizabeth Davis

A community consultants' showing was held prior to the opening of *Buried City*, and various consultants commented after opening night that they were surprised how much the work had changed in such a short period of time. People felt that their comments and feedback had been heard and they could see that their input had had an effect on the work. Consultants commented that Alicia was highly skilled in her craft and that they felt truly welcomed, acknowledged and genuinely involved in the making of the work.

Had seen the show a couple nights previous but to go to the opening with a full house and such a cross sect of people gave me a real buzz, and great anticipation, as I'd had a small part in getting there. I was disappointed when it ended. Being part of the process was a great assistance in being able to concentrate and understand what was going on the show – like reading the book before seeing the movie.

Community Consultant Bob Arrow

What I had to say was what I felt. I think they listened to me.

Community Consultant Uncle Wes Marne

An artistic expression of my values as a community organiser – community organised for and by community...organic, honest, humorous, cheeky, political, not preachy, diverse, about galvanising power.

Sydney Alliance Organiser David Barrow

I have no reservation about getting mixed up with you again

Community Consultant Vince Ashton

Previous UTP shows have been created on site, including a creative development period, where consultants were encouraged to drop in and be involved in the process of the show being devised at the site where it was to be performed, creating a strong feeling of ownership for the consultants. Urban Theatre Projects has a long history of staging site specific works, and the original concept was to make the piece to be performed in a quarry or disused building site. The logistics of providing a safe space for both performers and audience were prohibitive, Cockatoo Island, Carriageworks, a vacant hole in the ground (Riley St, Surry Hills) and the Railway Workshops (Redfern) were investigated as potential sites as they are particularly relevant in the exploration of the idea that the urban environment is built by sectors of the community who neither get to own or use the products of their labour.

Buried City - Community Consultation Consultant statistics

There were 6 preliminary consultations prior to rehearsal, and 4 primary consultations throughout the process 22 November 2011 - 5 January 2012.

- A total of 74 consultants participated in the consultation process.
- Of these consultants 48% were repeat attendees.
- The organisations represented by consultants included;
 - African Women's Network, CFMEU – Board of Management and their Retired Members Association, Les Tobler Construction Training Centre (Redfern Waterloo Authority), Workplace Tragedy Family Support Group, Sydney Alliance and Australian Phillipino Buisness and Worker's Club.
- A total of 14% identified as Indigenous Australian.
 - The consultants represented a number of language groups and nations including Muruwari, Bidjambul and custodians of Darug land.
- A total of 48% identified diverse cultural backgrounds including;
 - Phillipina, Rwandan, Ethiopian, Macedonian, Malaysian, Korean, Lebanese/Turkish, Welsh, American, Canadian and Indonesian.
- Consultants subscribed to a number of faiths, including but not limited to; Islam, Christian Orthodox, Catholic and Uniting Church
- Consultants travelled from Parramatta, Greenacre, Cronulla, Mt Druitt, Liverpool, Padstow, Marrickville, Maroubra, Auburn, Surry Hills, Annandale, Ashfield and surrounding suburbs to attend consultancies.
- One consultant was aged 89 years
- A total of 17% consultants were aged between or over 70 - 80 years.
- A total of 11% consultants were aged between 31 – 40 years.
- A total of 11% consultants were aged between 21 - 30 years.
- A total of 20% consultants were aged 20 years or under.

Audience Response

As with every UTP process, we conducted a post show Audience Survey during *Buried City*. Usually, UTP surveys audiences every night of the season and elicits a response rate between 40-65% of audiences. Due to the length of the season (over double our usual runs), lack of appropriate resources and the different culture in

the Belvoir venue, we opted to undertake to survey a sample of the audiences over 12 performances of the 32 shows.

367 people out of a possible 3098 responded to the survey. This represents 12% of the audience over the 12 shows and 5% of the overall season audience. This data is therefore not statistically robust to be used for significant analysis, however it does present some interesting information for UTP.

Essentially *Buried City* was seen by an audience that was significantly older and Eastern Suburbs, Inner City-Inner West and North Shore based; with higher levels of personal income and significantly less cultural diversity than UTP audiences over the last 6 years.

The *Buried City* audience was predominantly a new one for UTP. We know 65% of the audience were Belvoir subscribers from ticket sales. Of the survey respondents 78% said they had never seen a UTP show before and 11% of respondents had seen 3 or more UTP shows. It is interesting to note that respondents who had seen a UTP show before were more likely to Love/Like (83%) the show than new audiences (59%).

A greater number of females responded to the audience survey (66%) than males (34%), which correlates to past UTP experiences. Over a quarter of the response group (26%) was between 55-64 years of age, the largest age group represented in the survey. This age group is significantly greater than for the last two UTP shows, where this age group only represented 6% (*Ama & Chan*) and 7% (*The Football Diaries*) respectively. 45% of respondents were between 18 and 44 years of age.

The median age of survey respondents who nominated that they liked *Buried City* was 45-54 years of age. Of those respondents who responded in a positive way by either rating that they loved the show however, the median age of respondents fell to the younger category of 35-44 years of age.

61% of respondents resided in the Sydney areas of the North Shore, Eastern Suburbs, Sydney CBD and Inner west, a significant increased number than for previous UTP shows (26% *Ama & Chan* and 46% *The Football Diaries*). Only 21% of respondents were from Western Sydney (including 8% from the Bankstown LGA) compared with UTP's last show presented in Bankstown *Ama & Chan* where 19% were from Bankstown alone.

Almost three quarters of respondents (74%) were born in Australia, an increased number than in previous UTP shows (61% *The Football Diaries* and 68% *Ama & Chan*). 83% of the respondents were English-only speakers, a greater percentage than UTP's previous survey audiences where 48% (*Ama & Chan*) and 69% (*The Football Diaries*) were English only speakers.

When asked to rate the performance, 42% of respondents liked the show, the most significant response. 20% of respondents loved the show, and were ambivalent about the work. 10% disliked and 7% hated the show. This is compared with other UTP shows where audience surveys turned in a 76% loved (*Ama & Chan*) and 74% (*The Football Diaries*).

Excellent acting by performers was identified by 37% of respondents as the aspect they most liked about *Buried City*. Dimensions of both form and content of the show were nominated, as being liked the most by 16% of respondents. The majority of comments focussed on form (39%), specifically performance skills, staging and set design. Over one tenth of respondents (11%) considered the subject matter and show messages/themes as their most liked show aspect (43). 7% of total respondents selected authenticity of the production as the most liked component (28), followed by 6% character portrayal (25). Dialogue and script were mentioned in 5% of comments (18). 12 respondents made comments about the diversity of characters and casting of performers in the show. 4% of audiences used the word 'raw' to describe their experience and what they liked best of the show.

Stories of Love and Hate - Vitalstatistix

Workshops & Presentation – Presented by Vitalstatistix in association with Urban Theatre Projects.

Key Artists

Presenter Roslyn Oades

Performers Katia Molino, Mohammed Ahmed, Roderick Byrnes.

Timeline 27- 28 of January 2011

Venue Nexus Multicultural Arts Centre, Adelaide

Lecture and Presentation

Part lecture, part performance, director Roslyn Oades revisited the making of *Stories of Love & Hate*, a unique headphone-verbatim performance based on a two-year interview process with people directly affected by the infamous December 2005 Cronulla Riots. This presentation explores how and why theatre-makers represent real Australian stories. Roslyn was joined by three of the original cast members who performed several excerpts from the show.

Headphone-verbatim theatre workshop with Roslyn Oades

A two day workshop with Roslyn Oades - Roslyn utilises an unusual verbatim technique she refers to as headphone-verbatim or audio-scripting, featuring the faithful reproduction of speech patterns. Actors literally adopt the actual words, breaths and speech mannerism of another human being with the aim of preserving the vocal print of a recorded interview. Headphone-verbatim also offers theatre-makers a paperless form of writing, constructing a performance script entirely via a process of sound editing.

Designed for performers and devisors, this practical workshop offered 15 participants the opportunity to explore and experiment with the possibilities of this form, including performing a pre-prepared audio-script.

Stories of Love and Hate Education Program Sydney Theatre Company

First presented by Urban Theatre Projects in association with BYDS in 2008, *Stories of Love and Hate* was re-presented by Sydney Theatre Company as part of their Education Program.

Key Artists

Director/Writer	Roslyn Oades
Performers	Katia Molino, Mohammed Ahmed, Roderick Byrnes, Janie Gibson
Lighting & Production	Neil Simpson
Sound Artist	Bob Scott
Set Design	Clare Britton

Venue

Rehearsal	UTP Rehearsal Room- Bankstown Arts Centre
Season	Wharf 2, Sydney Theatre Company

Timeline

Rehearsal	16- 20 May 2011
Season	24 May – 3 June 2011

Project Description

This exceptional work of verbatim theatre emerged in 2008 inspired by the Cronulla riots of 2005. From a topical perspective, some of the heat has dissipated a little. But Stories remains a sparkling essay on the shifting sands of community feeling. Created and directed by Roslyn Oades, Stories is a gentle, non-judgmental inquiry rather than an analysis. It does not apportion blame, seeking to throw light on our sensitivities and susceptibilities...A resonant piece of theatre with an embedded lesson on the value of listening to each other.

Jason Blake, Sydney Morning Herald

It's uncommonly touching for a documentary piece, it's hard not to be affected by a father's words explaining why he still prepares breakfast for his grown-up son, or not to envy two elderly women describing the ritual of their dawn swim. You find yourself surprised and amused by a group of surfers as they wax their boards waiting to catch the perfect wave "it's like being in a fallopian tube". A bikini wearing 16 year old confesses, "I love the Shire but everything you hear about the shire is true-that's why I love it". A Lebanese Australian guy gives a tour of his Celica with a monster sound system "you can die from the bass". He assures us he's not kidding.

AsoOLii, Anti Essays

Drawing on an infamous local incident *Stories of Love and Hate* interlinks personal stories about the fragile bonds that hold our society together. Director and actor Roslyn Oades set out to try and understand what happened on the beach that summer's day in Cronulla. Using a unique verbatim performance technique called Headphone Verbatim, performers wear headphones and speak along to a carefully edited audio script. The actors channel multiple characters and embody real-life stories, word for word, honouring every cough and quirk, culture and imperfections of human speech with authenticity.

Michael Essien I Want to Play as You

This work underwent a second stage research and development phase in Antwerp, 2011 working towards a public season in 2012.

Key Artists

Lead Artist	Ahilan Ratnamohan
Community Liasion	Daisy Wouters
Executive Producer	Michelle Kotevski
Co-devisors/performers	Aloys Kwaakum, Etuwe Bright Junior, Ibukun Akinfenwa, Jimmy Nwaoze, Nick Kayode, Praise Otito Onuyibi, Sunday Ibrahim.

Timeline

Development October – November 2011

Venue

Cultuur Centrum Luchtbal & Training grounds, Antwerp

Partners

Cultuur Centrum Luchtbal, African Cultural Group VZW

Project Activities

Through October and November of 2011, Ahilan Ratnamohan and Daisy Wouters undertook a creative development for a new Urban Theatre Projects dance-theatre work *Michael Essien I want to play as you...* The development took place in Antwerp, Belgium and was supported by Cultuur Centrum Luchtbal, who provided in-kind rehearsal space, technical assistance and catering, as well as local NGO African Cultural Group VZW who provided community support.

Working with a group of 8 African footballers 4 days per week from 12.30 to 4.30pm, Ahil led a devised physical theatre process that attempted to harness the players' physical prowess and expertise in football to create performance material. Daisy coordinated and supported the workshop program, liaised with partners and supported participants.

The team developed physical and text-based material around the issues of football and migration, particularly in regards to Africa and Europe. The text drew on their own experiences and tried to encapsulate the experience of their community - a group of young African men who meet every morning of the week to train in the hope of furthering a football career in Europe.

This stage of the project was 6 weeks in duration, including an audition week in which a total of 11 players attended and took part in football-dance-theatre workshops, a final selection of 8 being made at the end of the first week.

Throughout the process the group showed material to outside eyes including;

- Hildegard de Vuyst (KVS)
- David Pledger (Australia Council - IETM Director)
- Serge Coulibaly (Les Ballets C de la B & Faso Dance Theatre)

- staff from CC Luchtbal

At the end of the 4th week, the group performed a 'mini-showing' for an invited audience of around 20 people. This was utilized as an opportunity to introduce the players to the challenges of performing in front of an audience.

On the 16th and 18th of November the group performed two showings of 35 minutes of material. Attended by 40 people, the first of these was presented as a community showing, for player's friends and family as well as CC Luchtbal's own artistic community and was attended by Hildegarde de Vuyst. The second was an artistic showing. This was viewed by a group of 10 artistic peers including Hans Van den Broeck and Quentin Legrand from SOIT. The showing was followed by a formal discussion about the work.

An excerpt can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnA1AX2cSU4>

Artist Development

The Essien creative development was essentially my first project as a director, coupled with the fact that it was undertaken with non-performers, it was a massive learning curve for me. But while I may not have felt so experienced in order to take on the various issues which arise in a creative development, I felt very well equipped. So when the process faltered or plateaued or went incredibly well, a bit of time considering the challenges at hand and then thinking of past experiences in devising processes allowed me to address the issue and move forward. In this sense having Daisy as a sounding board was invaluable. At the end of the process I feel so much more confident as an artist.

Ahilan Ratnamohan

In the week preceding the project Ahil attended his first IETM meeting in Krakow with Alicia Talbot Artistic Director and Executive Producer Michelle Kotevski. Combined with the networks already established by UTP and Ahil, this creative development period resulted in an extension of artistic networks for both Ahil and UTP. The upcoming *Essien* development enabled Ahil and UTP to build on relationships and invite people to the process and showing. As Ahil was scheduled to be in Europe for the next two months, it also enabled an opportunity to capitalise on other relationships. Ahil was invited by Like Minds and Rozen Theatre in Amsterdam to participate in a master class by Benji Reid for a group of younger Dutch artists.

In the first week of the project Michelle Kotevski and Daisy met with numerous colleagues in Belgium to further develop the knowledge of the project amongst artistic peers. Meetings included Hildegard de Vuyst (KVS) Quentin Legrand (SOIT) Klaus Ludwig and Karen Joosten (Caravan), Pol Hayvaert and Kirstoff Bloom (CAMPO).

Outcomes

*Thousands of us come to Europe to play football.
Some of us make it.
Some of us fail in our trials,*

*Some of us don't even get the chance to prove ourselves at a club,
Some of us end up without visas, staying in Europe.
To survive the cruel reality of Europe, new groups and even new families form.
Even if we it isn't with a Jupiler League team, we all believe we have to keep
training.
Every morning we meet at the Park to train. Sometimes there are more than
50 of us. You might not see us... or know us. But we are training every
morning, all over Europe, all over the world.*

Excerpt from the script in development, written by performer
Aloys Kwaakum with Ahilan Ratnamohan

In creating this material, 8 young African men were instrumental in a creative and artistic process. In terms of the unique practice Ahil is attempting to build (football-dance-theatre) the initial uncertainty from peers over what this might entail was overcome particularly after the showings. People who watched the showings were able to see and respond to the artistic value of the form and able to separate it from a sort of display of tricks.

*The energy of these 8 guys it's really amazing, and their stage presence...
when they look into our eyes, it's almost too much.*

Hildegard de Vuyst, KVS & Les Ballets C de la B

The artistic showing resulted in a strong interest in the project from various levels of the City of Antwerp. This has translated in a commissioning of the full work for presentation by CC Luchtbal, CC Berchem and Antwerp the European Capital of Sport.

*One of the core successes of the project was that from the first day of
development we were able to attract and secure the commitment of the
footballers. This was initially considered to be one of the biggest challenges,
but as the days and weeks went on an unbelievable commitment from the
players was witnessed, not once was a player absent apart from days which
had been agreed upon earlier.*

Ahilan Ratnamohan

Ahil attributes this success to the previous 18 months of research, visits and relationship building across artistic, legal, Belgian, French and African organisations and communities. The way the ensemble responded to the exercises and tasks and the amount of material that they were able to generate during the development was another success. This was aspect that Ahil expected to be challenging.

*I was nervous about asking these guys to suddenly get up and perform. But
the group was so open and never shied away from anything they were asked
to do.*

*Having mentioned the group's incredible commitment, it should be mentioned
that focus was at times tricky. Sustaining their focus for the full 3.5-hour
session and, without a production manager, getting them back on the floor
after breaks was sometimes trying.*

Ahilan Ratnamohan

Future of Work

In November 2013 Ahil and Daisy will return to Antwerp for a further development, rehearsal and premiere of the work. Co-commissioned by CC Luchtbal, CC Berchem, UTP and Antwerp European Capital of Sport, *Michael Essien I Want to Play As You...* is slated to open on 1 February 2013 for a two-week season.

The project has drawn interest from Danish company Mute Comp. Physical Theatre. Discussions with the company's manager Ulla Katrine Friis have shown her desire to program the work in a mini-festival of performance addressing the issue of trafficking, which is planned to take place in October 2013 and would be linked to the EU Anti-Trafficking Day (Oct 18th 2013).

Dansescenen in Copenhagen Denmark is currently in discussion with Ahil regarding a residency. The idea is that Ahil will undertake a research and development for a new piece, conducting a series of workshops working with local freestylers, street-footballers and ground-movers to research the possibilities of creating a future football-dance piece with an ensemble of Danish, and possibly other Scandinavian, footballers. Ahil will look at the possibilities for creating movement sequences in duo, trios and more. The group will work through improvisations and tasks to devise material, which looks at the poetic potential of football in movement.

During IETM UTP and Ahil connected with many artists from Belgium through targeted meetings and informal opportunities, which has enabled a continuation of creative conversations and critical dialogue with Belgian peers.

Intersection Developments

UTP has a demonstrated track record in supporting young and emerging artists to develop their own aesthetic and voice within a well-supported artistic and producing environment. This manifested itself in 2011 as Intersection Developments, a program of developing new theatre and performance works.

Intersection Artists

Mohammed Ahmad, Helen Dallas, Janie Gibson, Frank Mainoo, Effie Nkrumah Peter Polities, Ahilan Ratnamohan and Georgie Read

Facilitators/Consultants

Paschal Berry, Stefo Natsuo, Bernadette Walong-Sene, Lee Wilson

Producer Annelies Crowe

Venue Bankstown Arts Centre & a vacant shop in Liberty Plaza Bankstown

Project Activities

The Intersection program was a program for artists to develop their concepts for new theatre and performance works. Rather than focus on only one work for a development and presentation, UTP worked with 3 teams of artists across 2011. Each team was supported through a three-week conceptual development phase and were matched with a range of virtuosic creative consultants including cultural thinkers, directors, script editors and dramaturges. Through this process and a

range of peer showings, UTP looked to engage in discussions with interested co-producing and presentation partners looking at further creative development and presentation opportunities for each work in 2012 and 2013.

Through all of these developments the artists learnt about the basis of collaboration and working across form and discipline, whilst grappling with the artistic questions and the explorations this process rose.

Works selected for 2011 were;

Medea in the Suburbs

Key Artists: Peter Polites and Helen Dallas

Peter Polities worked with experienced Mt Druitt performer Helen Dallas to develop a new work drawing on dramatic monologues and dialogues that directly references Passolunghi's and Euripides' Medea. In early 2011, UTP and Blacktown Arts Centre supported an initial research and development in which Peter and Helen aimed to develop material through improvisation, interviews and discussion. Peter and Helen began the research and development phase with a residency supported by Blacktown Arts Centre in January, which was invaluable for the pair to be able to work in close proximity to the proposed setting of the work.

Whilst at UTP Peter made discoveries about the type of artist he wants to be and the ideal environment for him to create work. Peter also made huge discoveries around the process of creating new work by learning new skills to create a story line and creating narrative arc. Whilst working through artistic difficulties, Peter has taken away from this development, greater skills on devising, creating work from provocations and an ability to create work in a consistent way.

At a public showing of the work in progress in June 2011, potential partners Riverside Theatres Parramatta and Blacktown Arts Centre were in attendance and expressed interest in being involved in the presentation phase of the work.

During this development I have learnt there is a specific way I like to work and a narrative I wish to tell. I have now learnt the skills and ways I need to work to extract this narrative. Without getting bogged down in talking over the issues I just need to go away and create material.

Peter Polites

Browner than Black

Key Artists: Frank Mainoo and Ahil Ratnamohan

Set in a suburban spice shop in Western Sydney *Browner Than Black* is a site-specific contemporary performance work. During this development, Frank and Ahil explored interactions between South Asians and Africans during the colonial era in contrast to those that take place today in contemporary Australian society. This collaboration attempts to address and reframe distant and conflicting historical contexts of 'blackness' to arrive at contemporary urban understandings of black and brown Diasporas in Australia.

The development took place from the 1 -23 September. During the development, Frank and Ahil worked on the floor, devising material through physical, text and drumming based improvisations whilst inviting in Paschal Berry and Lee Wilson as mentors on the creative development. This development built on material already created and explored during In-View (a UTP artists run initiative facilitated by Lina Kastoumis in 2010).

The artists were able to use this period of development to explore a new methodology of working. Setting up in a shopfront in Bankstown allowed the artists to de-centre their practice, focusing more on the intimate experience of live performance art, rather than a narrative based work.

During the development of the work, relationships were garnered between the artists and STC, Belvoir, Blacktown Arts Centre and Paramasala festival. From these relationships, potential presenting partner Paramasala have show interest in the artists doing a residency as part of the festival in 2012 and STC has invited one of the artists to do a residency with them later in 2012.

On Friday the 23rd of September, Frank and Ahil invited a small number of industry professionals and peers into the spice shop they had created and conducted a small presentation of the work that had been created during the 3-week development. This showing explored material that confronts and involves the audience. The material moved from traditional drumming and musical provocations to the audience, to pop culture references. The material challenged the media and TV showcase of a white society and provoked the audience to question their stance on race and power structures in Australia. Part performance and part lecture, the presentation represented the blueprint for a final performance work.

We understand as artists our duty is to provoke thought, feelings and emotions regarding issues relating to our society. This development was a chance to test a provocative idea with an audience. The strong reaction of the audience has definitely already informed us regarding how we tackle such an issue in the future and how to further shape the work.

Frank Mainoo and Ahilan Ratnamohan

The artists are looking to continue to the next stage of development in March.

What are our Stories and how are they Told?

Key Artists: Mohammed Ahmad, Janie Gibson, Effie Nkrumah and Peter Polites

This inspiring group of emerging artists was formed through regular contact on projects with UTP and Bankstown Youth Development Service (BYDS). Drawn from a diverse range of art forms including performing, writing, traditional and contemporary dancing and singing, this ensemble of emerging artists set out to initiate a new collaboration through a period of research and development.

During this research and development, the group had heated and passionate discussions around class, race, artistic structures and hierarchy's. These discussions were both inspiring and difficult and spawned many ideas about form and structure for the group. As this group were in such early stages of

development, this time allowed the group to really grapple with questions relating to personal cultural history and contemporary Australian cultural practice. Without the pressures of performance, this week of development allowed the artists to explore and argue with their positions and responsibilities in contemporary Australian practice and spend time talking about and engaging with each of their political histories. The ideas for the work began to centre around the themes of class, race, tradition, ritual, privilege, access, and the aesthetic and structure of theatre making in Australia.

The group decided to work with two mentors, during their ten-day development. Bernadette Walong-Sene worked with the group in the area of dance. The group also invited Stefo Natsuo in to work with them on direction assistance with the performance of text and in structuring performance material.

At the small showing of invited peers, the artists showed material that had spawned from these conversations. Some of the material that was shared at this showing explored masculine performance and relationships between geography and identity in Australia and also ritual and the merging of time, culture and place in our modern world and how this affects our art making. Although the group decided to part ways on this particular project, the artists have been able to form new practice and context for their place in the sector.

The process has inspired me and pushed me in a way that I honestly haven't been before, it has made me see the range, depth and amount of work I can make through the subjects we have touched on - because they are universal themes - with a wealth of information, experience and history to be explored.
Effie Nkrumah

Out of the swimming pool and into the sea

Key Artist: Georgie Read

Georgie Read was unable to complete her project due to circumstances outside of both Georgie's and the company's control.

Is This London?

A development stage for a new work commissioned by LIFT.

Key Artists

Lead artist	Alicia Talbot
Executive Producer	Michelle Kotevski
Technical placement & community liaison	Rosealee Pearson

Collaborating artists

Dramaturge	Ola Animashawn
Devisor & writer	Simon Vinnicombe
Devisor & performer	Adura Onashile
Devisor & performance maker	Tania El Khoury
Devisor & writer	Gbolahan Lekan Obisesan
Devisor & performer	Rad Kaim
Devisor & performer	Noma Dumezweni
Lecturer in Drama, Aberystwyth University	Dr Andrew Filmer

LIFT team

Participation Producer & <i>Is this London</i> Producer	Erica Campayne
Assistant Producer & artist liaison and researching sites	Jonathan Davis
LIFT Artistic Director & CEO	Mark Ball

Project Activities

LIFT has commissioned UTP to create a new site-specific work in London about the working poor. *Is this London?* will be a new theatre work based in a site in and around the East London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham. The work examines the experiences and reactions of those who are considered the working poor, this new production investigates questions around dignity, cultural silence and optimism in the hidden recesses of a global city.

I found the overall process pretty tough. It's hard to hear about people suffering in the city you've lived in for all of your life. I felt responsible and more than a little ashamed. Some of the days were tough to assimilate but the whole experience was great. I was very nervous about the idea of a public dialogue process. The great fear I had was that we as theatre practitioners were being seen to 'use' people's lives to create art in some way. I felt that the conversation was constructed in such a way that it was people sharing ideas, thoughts and opinions and it always remained a 'conversation'.

I was part of something really special. It was unforgettable in fact.

Simon Vinnicombe, Devisor & Writer

In October 2010, Artistic Director Alicia Talbot and Executive Producer Michelle Kotevski undertook Stage 1 of the creative development of the show. This involved a three-week research trip to London meeting with academics, community, health and welfare organisations and artists from a range of disciplines.

From 7 September to 5 October 2011 UTP returned to London in order to assemble the key creative team and confirm the performance site and begin storyboarding the work through the public dialogue process involving the creative team and community consultants.

I couldn't legislate for the harshness and the grim realities of the experts' experiences. It was good, painful and provocative to be confronted with people living on the edge and being forced to examine my engagement with that fact... I liked the idea of the show having the power to challenge a general level of ignorance and complacency - to get people thinking, questioning and acting - positively.

It certainly resonated with my desire to encourage artists to have something to say and to know exactly what that is - to get off the liberal democratic fence and really say what they think, with passion, guts, verve, insight and clarity - this is a process inherently designed for such a purpose I think.

Ola Animashawn, Royal Court Dramaturg

This questioning continued into the artistic nature of the piece. In various ways everyone was asked how would you like this story to be told. This part of the process was a challenge for everybody but it was essential in instilling a sense of responsibility in telling a story that was true to the dialogue everybody was engaged in. The beginning of the process was heartbreaking, to hear how those stories could become art/theatre was both heartbreaking but also, ultimately empowering. I feel this story is an essential one and I can't imagine it being told in any other way than the one that Urban Theatre's process promises.

In terms of my own practice, I was fascinated by the process of story boarding through the creation of images generated through questions, themes and ideas. It also enables me to witness a process that was truly collaborative.

Aura Onashile, Devisor and Performer

Public Dialogue

Over the past decade Artistic Director Alicia Talbot has developed a unique processes and devising method, where individuals and industry professionals from outside of the arts are positioned as experts within the devising process. Traditionally consultants are paid a fee for their contribution however many participants had no documents (people considered illegal) and were not able to paid a wage by LIFT. In this case consultants were paid expenses.

As a result of the visit in October 2010 Alicia was keen to work with community consultants from African and Caribbean; Eastern European and Latino backgrounds as the first stage research unearth that they where the main cultural groups delivering low paid work. Over 9 days community consultants and artists were resident in the LIFT meeting room ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art) as they discussed the issues at the heart of this work and started to create visual scenes of the work.

My experience of working with you has been great, I was mainly touched by your professionalism, non judgmental conduct while dealing with people living with HIV. According to the clients' feedback, they really appreciated being listen to and mainly being given the space to express themselves about hardship and life in London because they most of the time feel judged, stereotyped for getting benefits while in reality they have no choice; most of them want to work and contribute to the society but they are prevented to do so by the system.

Jane Tungana, Positive East

LIFT conducted research regarding cultural organizations working with people from these groups and Alicia led consultation meetings with each organisations and 3 or 4 people in their own space. In some cases this was organised with by existing services – such as by Jane Tungana, Positive East. Other meetings were brokered with translators (Federation of Poles) and were more immediate. With the translators and advice introduction we spoke with people who were waiting on the pavement for work (a well known informal pick up point) and invited them to meet with us. The Living Wage Campaign, East London Citizens introduced us to Juan Carlos, who in turn introduced us to Latino cleaners/campaign organisers. Due to their work, we meet consultants between their shifts of work at SOAS (School of Oriental and Asian Studies) University of London.

I believe that you were very professional while talking to Polish citizens. You managed to create a safe environment for them to open and talk about very unpleasant and very personal experiences. I really liked the fact that you didn't push them to talk more about extreme situations as journalists usually do. They had an opportunity to express their feelings and opinions in non-judgemental environment. Moreover, I think that they left our office with the feeling that at least for a moment they had a voice and that they were really heard.

I have met so many people who were exploited and I have heard so many sad stories, and it feels like hearing the same story over and over again. That's why I am really looking forward to seeing your show because it will be a chance to see it through your eyes.

Katarzyna Zagrodniczek, Volunteer, Federation of Poles

The participants from Federation of Poles and Positive East also attended rehearsal processes at the LIFT office engaging with dialogue with the artists directly and moving the conversation on from personal trauma to creating artistic images for the work.

I think your project is very interesting and important in that it will shed some light on the lives of people who too often are invisible, and your project does this through a medium other than ours, namely protests and media campaigns.

Jason Abraham Lee, SOAS

Community Consultation Statistics

There were 11 consultation days during October 2011

- A total of 15 consultants participated in the Stage 2 consultation process
- Of these consultants 54% were repeat attendees

- One consultant was Nigerian
- One consultant was Jamaican
- One consultant was Zimbabwean
- One consultant was Lithuanian
- One consultant was Peruvian
- One consultants nationality was unknown
- A total of 5 consultants were Polish
- A total of 4 consultants were Ecuadorian

- A total of 2 consultants were aged between or over 55 - 70 years.
- A total of 7 consultants were aged between 45 – 55 years.
- A total of 3 consultants were aged between 35- 45 years.
- A total of 2 consultants were aged 20 - 30 years.
- One consultants age was unknown

Gender

- A total of 12 consultants were male
- A total of 3 consultants were female

Years in the UK

- One consultant had spent 0 – 5 years in the UK
- A total of 6 consultants had spent 5 – 10 years in the UK
- A total of 3 consultants had spent 10 – 15 years in the UK
- One consultant had spent 15 – 20 years in the UK

Additional Activities

During the research phase meetings to take place with a number of artistic, government and community organisations to develop support for the project, including;

Lucy Morrison	Clean Break Theatre Company
Vivien Allimonos	Australian High Commission
Dan Jones	Sound artist
Kate McGarth	Fuel
Phillip Kier	LIFT Board member
Colin Biggs	Austrade
Prof. Jane Wills	Cultural thinker and Board member of London Citizens Dept Geography, Queen Mary University
Rhys Moore	London Citizens
Wendy Martin	Southbank Centre
Lauren Mullings	Canary Wharf Arts and Events Team
John Burton	Westfield Stratford
Jane Tungana	African Communities Worker, Positive East, Tower Hamlets
Katarzyna Zagrodniczek	Federation of Poles, Hammersmith

Site Research

Jon Davis, Assistant Producer LIFT suggested a range of sites in east London for the event. Sites visited with UTP were:

1. Trinity Buoy Wharf
2. Diner at North Greenwich bus and underground station
3. Wood Wharf at Canary Wharf
4. Loading Dock on Spring Gardens
5. Moss Site in Canning Town
6. Ballymore
7. Westfield Stratford loading dock
8. Southbank Centre loading dock

Sites visited after UTP's departure:

1. Rat City (Waterloo Roundabout tunnels)
2. Courtyard Platform, Oxo Tower Wharf

Proof of Concept – Alternative touring model

Is This London? promotes a unique Australian theatre making methodology and language to the United Kingdom (UK) for the first time. Growing international interest in UTP's work is specifically about a demand for the delivery of a range of artistic, social and strategic outcomes through the application of the company's Intellectual Property (IP) and methodology. It is a rarefied skill set, expertise and process by which we create new and high quality contemporary theatre experiences.

The LIFT project provides the Proof of Concept opportunity in Western Europe to present Australian IP, allowing UTP to;

- Develop export based on clever IP and knowledge management;
- Access new revenue streams;
- Carve out a secure place in this niche international market for UTP's work.
- Spearhead a 'greener' form of market participation for the Australian sector.

The project allows UTP to make contact with and service a range of British stakeholders, audiences and cultural infrastructure that are not accessed by existing Australian cultural products and relationships. The methodology for creating this production sees the company work in-situ in London to develop and extend significant artistic, community and business partnerships.

Two Weeks in London

Dr Andrew Filmer

The following was written by Dr Andrew Filmer Lecturer in Drama Aberystwyth University who observed and participated in the research process for a two-week period.

Sitting in on two weeks of the creative development for *Is This London?*, Urban Theatre Project's commission for LIFT, the question in the title of the project seemed to become more insistent and more important as the conversations undertaken uncovered more about the lived realities of London's low paid migrant workforce. As Alicia Talbot gathered guest artists and community consultants during the two weeks, the former including writers, devisors and directors, the latter bricklayers, carpenters, labourers, hairdressers, domestic carers and cleaners, the question kept returning. *Is this London? Is this London in the twenty first century? If this is London in the twenty first century then how can people be living like this?*

I'd come to sit in on the creative development because of an interest in different ways of making site-specific theatre and a desire to see up close Urban Theatre Project's model of community consultation. I'd read about the intensity and quality of the dialogues and collaboration that Urban Theatre Projects facilitates in the making of their work, about the way they engage members of the public as 'consultants' and 'experts', and the way they manage to negotiate the different imperatives of such a collaborative process with that of producing high quality theatre. And I'd also experienced firsthand, albeit a number of years ago, the unsettling power of their productions myself. Finally, I was also curious as to how a company so embedded in the particular geographic and cultural landscapes of Sydney's western suburbs might adapt to the challenge of making work in a city so different from their own.

Based in the offices of LIFT, effectively in the attic of the Institute for Contemporary Art on The Mall, what I witnessed, and inevitably took part in, was an unfolding, rigorous and sustained conversation, shared amongst the various participants who came and went from the room. For the first few days it was a smaller group of guest artists that Alicia had gathered to begin to flesh out some of the ideas central to the work. Struck during her visit in 2010 by the possibilities for anonymity and re-invention that a city the size of London affords Alicia had

been drawn to consider the lived realities faced by the city's low-paid migrant workforce. This is a workforce that London relies on and yet also ignores, a workforce of huge ethnic and cultural diversity that is vital to the city's function as a key 'command and control' point in the global economy, but which earns shockingly low wages. But, it was the optimism and the dignity of this workforce that intrigued Alicia, along with the cultural silences that surround their living and working conditions. "I found the residency last year the hardest I've ever done," she stated, "not because of the poverty, but because of the optimism ... the optimism of London."

As an outsider to London myself what struck me was Alicia's use of her own outsider status – "the value of naivety" as she later put it – to generate open and revealing conversations about prickly subjects that often remain unspoken and unacknowledged. Carefully contextualising and laying out her own opinions, beliefs and experiences she engaged in a sustained process of translation between different individuals' positions, seeking to elicit and understand others' understandings of their experiences of London. As the conversation continued the questions became specific: Who is doing the low paid work? Where are they? Where are they from? What do they have to say to one another? What are the tensions between different migrant groups? What are the dominant perceptions of different migrant groups? Early in the process she made frequent references to the "voices missing" from the room, and her desire to speak *with*, not *about*, anyone, allowing them the opportunity to "set us straight on some of the complexities."

Much of the first week developed as a roundtable between Alicia, her production manager Rosealee Pearson and the guest artists, a conversation interspersed with writing and image making exercises that sought, for instance, to establish what dignity (or its opposite) and cultural silence (or its opposite) might look like. The white walls of the attic room slowly filled with scrawled sentences and phrases, images of loading docks and late night diners, and book, film and television titles. Taking a break from the stuffiness of the attic we spent time outside a loading dock in a lane behind Trafalgar Square and on an open patch of ground at the rear of Canary Wharf. Writing and thinking in response to these sites, the latter deeply resonant of Margaret Thatcher's legacy of labour market deregulation and the emergence of London as a global financial hub, opened up more concrete discussion of possible images, scenarios, and personas for the work.

The shift into the second week saw the introduction of a broader range of expertise into the room as the roundtable discussions expanded to include bricklayers, carpenters, labourers, hairdressers, domestic carers and cleaners from Eastern Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. Initially contacted through groups like Positive East and the Federation of Poles, these 'consultants' were invited back to LIFT to take part in the conversation and to contribute their opinions and experiences. In one sense the process remained the same, with the conversation circulating around experiences of employment and everyday life in London as well as reflections on possible images and scenarios related to the work. But now things were shifting. As much as the consultants added their thoughts and opinions to the range of ideas, images and scenarios that had already been gathered they also subtly challenged some of the premises of the conversation. Pushing back consciously and unconsciously they added their own humour and insight, were emphatic in asserting the reality of situations as they saw them, and

even asked to be asked “better questions”. Now, too, the London-based guest artists found themselves de-centred and de-stabilised as the realities of the ‘shadow city’ that existed around them became more defined. Life in this other London was revealed as closer to the bone than they’d ever suspected to be true.

This was, for me, where the value of what Shannon Jackson has called “theatre’s anachronistic territoriality” became readily apparent. For all the discussions of globalisation and the imagining of global flows of information, capital and labour that take place in the media and academia, here in a small attic room in London the immaterial qualities of that world of flows were being revealed by theatre-makers as resting heavily on the fragile materiality of particular human beings and depending on those beings’ ingenuity, resilience and sheer capacity to survive. While the focus continually returned to the work and its possibilities, and while there was laughter, gentle teasing, fruit, biscuits and cups of tea shared around the table, I also felt a palpable sense of the heaviness of the stories that were aired. The dialogues that had been entered into revealed themselves as unpredictable, presenting surprises and challenges and opening up new territories.

At the heart of much of Urban Theatre Projects’ work to date has been a commitment to what Tom Burvill has called “an aesthetic of place”, in which community is understood through locality. Such an emphasis on place and locality is important because of the potential of particular places and locations to act as arenas of negotiation and change. Walking down a high street, riding on the bus, or sitting in a small attic in London we find ourselves encountering and negotiating difference and otherness in unpredictable and productive ways. In bringing their aesthetic of place and their model of community consultation and dialogue to London, Urban Theatre Projects are beginning to reveal the cultural and economic textures of this global city, and creating a performance work with the potential to productively destabilise both makers and spectators. And all this through insistently posing the deceptively difficult question, ‘Is *This* London?’

Catalogue of Dreams

A new work commissioned by Robyn Archer for Canberra 100.

This work is scheduled to premiere in June 2013.

Key Artists

Co-creator	Alicia Talbot
Co-creator	Rosie Dennis
Executive Producer	Michelle Kotevski

Timeline

Artist talks	March 10
Residency week	21-25 March
Research	2 x 2 June

Project Description

Catalogue of Dreams tells the story of three teenagers who have fallen out of the system; the super cool and confrontational Myalla, her formidable and unpredictable boyfriend Jeremy and their aloof and awkward best friend Amber. The turbulent lives of these three teenagers collide with the tough loving Moya, an older woman who is both friend and foe to the teen trio. The work plays between

the real and the surreal, the everyday and the magical. It's a street-smart, disturbing and ultimately heartbreaking story about dreams being stifled by an unrelenting and seemingly chaotic system of order and control.

Catalogue of Dreams presents a multi-dimensional picture of the lives of young people at risk in the ACT; a picture of social realities that are not purely systemic, but also circumstantial and personal, countering negative stereotypes and building awareness of the experiences of young people who fall out of the system. The final work will be bold and austere in form and design - drawing the audience in with compelling story and ascetic visual images.

Co-creators Rosie Dennis and Alicia Talbot will collaborate with an artistic team of Canberra based artists to create this new work. The artistic team will work in consultation with a range of NGO, Government and institutional partners as well as young people and adults with experiences of various forms of state care.

Background to the Project

Urban Theatre Projects (UTP) completed a week of research in Canberra exploring the social, political and cultural context of out of home care for children and young people in Canberra. Specifically, UTP focused on building an understanding of what is happening in Canberra for some of the young people and adults who are falling in and out of the system.

Prior to the residency, the research began with a desire to focus on the complex systems and bureaucracies that form part of young people's and adults experiences of state care and protection. Rosie and Alicia initially focused on foster care and broadened our enquiry to look at out of home experiences for young people and adults.

A key aspect of this project is the artistic collaboration between Rosie Dennis and Alicia Talbot. Alicia and Rosie have both developed different artistic practices that involve creating new performance works that respond to site, context and dialogue. Rosie describes herself as an artist who weaves stories to create deceptively simple and emotionally evocative performances that have a strong connection with the everyday. Alicia is drawn to community and artistic contexts in which cycles of trauma and healing are explored within a filmic aesthetic, drawing on popular culture and an almost documentary sense of reality within a performance framework.

Canberra Stage 1, 21 – 21 April

Throughout a series of conversations prior to and during the residency Alicia and Rosie began to discuss how to make a work which captured the joy, playfulness and naivety of childhood & adolescence coupled with the loss, manipulation and anger necessitated by navigating a series of bureaucratic systems.

Rosie began to think about the system in terms of: order/disorder numerical equations and mathematical patterns; drawing links/comparisons with scientific classification of species in terms of orders, super-orders, sub-orders, kingdoms and domains etc. Within this she began to tease out the notion of disorder within the 'kingdom'.

Ideas around trust also emerged as a pivotal concept when looking at young people and adults who are falling in and out of the system. Staff from the indigenous community organisation Gugan Gulwan were interested in a story of that focused on two young people, one indigenous and one non-indigenous.

Throughout the week the people repeatedly spoke about the veneer of Canberra, a sense that Canberra was not a real place but an artificial place with a clean facade and a sense of order in which everything has a place. Alasdair Roy (Children and Young People Commissioner) said that adults design for cities for adults, just as adults for adults design systems. He also spoke of the ordered city as being risk adverse. Emerging artist Anthony Arblaster described Canberra as a place in which the soul of the city was not in the centre of the city or immediately apparent but was definitely there and you just had to know where to find it. Caroline Stacey of the Street Theatre observed that Canberra was a city of possibilities, a scientific city that was a springboard for ideas. Caroline spoke of the city, as having a different quality of listening that is different to other cities.

Throughout the week, Rosie and Alicia became increasingly interested in the possibility of exploring ideas around trust and the chaos and disorganisation of order. We also began to visualize a white waiting room that like Canberra itself, is artificial and slightly unreal. The white waiting room becomes a springboard for ideas and escape, a place that can be transformed, escaped from, collapsed.

Next Stage

The next stage of the Canberra residency involves Rosie and Alicia working with a small number of young people in an intensive workshop process to devise and generate material and try out a number of initial ideas. We envision age this will take place in Canberra in 2012. Alicia and Rosie will assemble a Canberra creative team, and will work in consultation with a range of NGO, government and institutional partners, young people and adults with experiences of various forms of state care.

During the residency in Canberra we meet with a number of organisations and individuals to build our knowledge of the area and subject matter, including

- The staff of Gugan Gulwan, Aboriginal Youth Corporation
- Sue Mannion – President Foster Care Association ACT
- Clare Davies, Executive Officer of Create ACT, CREATE Foundation
- Alasdair Roy , Children & Young People Commissioner ACT Human Rights Commission
- Pip Buining Independent Theatre Artist (Former Director of Canberra Youth Theatre)
- Dr Mary Ivec School of Regulation, Justice and Diplomacy ANU
- Jarrah Robbins Policy Development Officer Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Karla Conway, Artistic Director Canberra Youth Theatre
- Director, Bruce Carmichael and Programming Manager Gill Hugonnet Canberra Theatre Centre
- The Hon Daryl Melham MP, Member for Banks and attended a sitting of Parliament House
- Caroline Stacey Artistic Director, Street Theatre
- Peter Schwarz, Youth Outreach Worker, Open Family
- Claire Roennfeldt, Director Youth and Family Services Galilee

- Robyn Archer and programming staff, Canberra 100

IETM

UTP attended the IETM Plenary Meeting in Krakow October 6-9 2011. Since 2009 we've been building our attendance at IETM, participating in the annual Plenary meetings in October. In 2009 our foray into this network began with the attendance of our Executive Producer Michelle Kotevski. In 2010 Michelle and Artistic Director Alicia Talbot attended Glasgow IETM. In 2011 AD Alicia Talbot, EP Michelle Kotevski and young and emerging artist Ahilan Ratnamohan represented the company.

As this was the third meeting for UTP, there was a noticeable increase in our ability to navigate the meeting due to the growing level of recognition and depth of relationships have been developed within the IETM network. We have now refined our understanding of how to do business at IETM. Whilst there is a general 'don't sell' approach, there is ample opportunity to 'sell' ideas, interest and collaboration on the basis of developed artistic, social and political dialogue and mutual understanding. The benefit of this is two-fold:

- Firstly it enriches our company's practices because the focus of discussion is about the work.
- Secondly, because of this focus, European colleagues' knowledge of our work begins to deepen and interest in our work becomes more serious.

Examples of outcomes include:

- Our relationship with Campo Victoria has now developed to a degree where we are discussing the opportunities for collaboration, particularly focusing on the EU Cultural Fund support available for European-Australian collaboration.
- After IETM Michelle Kotevski visited Campo and met with Pol and Kristof and made an invitation to Campo to view the workshop showing of our *Michael Essien I Want to Play as you* in November at Cc Luchtbal in Antwerp.
- Building on our meeting with UK company Quarantine in Glasgow in 2010, both companies were able to have a great dialogue over the course of Krakow IETM regarding our working processes, aesthetic and artistic interests. We are looking at what the two companies could do together, with a focus on bringing Quarantine to Bankstown.
- Our growing relationship with Rozentheatre saw Ahil Ratnamohan invited to participate in a master class with Benji Reid with a cohort of Rozentheatres young and emerging artists on 19 November.

At this IETM there was a greater interest in our two European projects- *Is this London?* for London International Festival and *Michael Essien I want to Play as you* with CC Luchtbal in Antwerp. We were able to start enacting our strategy of securing commitment to attendance at showings and presentations of our work in Europe amongst a targeted group within the network.

Invariably a number of new relationships were established at this meeting. Our new connection with Bush Hartshorn, Artistic Director of Dansescenen in Denmark

has lead to a discussion regarding a tour of our show *The Football Diaries*. Another invaluable benefit of the IETM is our gaining access to the varied European perspectives on Australian work.

What was most striking at this meeting, as a result of having attended three others, was the speed with which the IETM network absorb, process and move in terms of their language and discourse on advocacy for the performing arts. The Europeans appear to have been galvanised by the financial crisis and this has hastened the development of new thinking. Whilst entirely unintended and not the focus, it was of great benefit to be able to spend some time with Australian colleagues at this meeting. At home there are few opportunities to spend time together in an unpressured environment that promotes discussion.

Many peers within the IETM network commented about the unique approach UTP have taken to IETM- specifically referring to how we have expanded our representation at each meeting. The feedback was that this was a mature way to represent the company and allowed for maximum exposure, dialogue and discussion. Having three of us from the company was a very successful strategy, helping to build the profile of the company within the network and build an understanding of the diversity of practices and projects within the company, under the one company purpose.

UTP works to create career pathways for the independent, young and emerging and established artists we work with. Ahilan is an independent artist that has a long-standing and evolving relationship with UTP, however he works with other companies and on solo projects as well (Branch Nebula, Martin del Amo, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Frank Mainoo). In addition to introductions from UTP, Ahil built his own relationships, dialogues and experiences both for his works with UTP and his solo practice. We feel this is a great success that we were able to facilitate his first IETM.

With over 600 or so delegates at IETM, the challenge remains that some times, despite the best efforts of emails, text messages and fleeting catch ups, one runs out of time and opportunity at the meeting to sit down with some companies or individuals we have a strategic interest in speaking with. There remains amongst many European's a 'mental block' about Australian work because of the perceived insurmountable challenge of our geographic remoteness to Europe.

In relation to our export of our process, UTP continues to experience difficulty in discussions with potential European partners who expect a level of financial contribution from us through the Australia Council, given the well-publicised support for Australian attendance at IETM. Given that export of process rather than product currently falls outside of all state and federal arts processes, and Europe is not a high priority for DFAT, UTP continues to have to attempt to progress this agenda with modest contributions from its core.

Living Room Opera

A new work collaborating with older musicians around the experiences of exile.

Key Artists Tania Bosak, Richard Petrovic and Sean Bacon

This activity has been rescheduled to 2012.

Indigenous Technical Theatre Production Placement

Background

In 2009, at the first National Theatre Forum to be held in twenty years, Rachel Maza-Long decried the scarcity of appropriately skilled Indigenous Theatre Designers and Technicians in Australia. At the time Alicia Talbot, Urban Theatre Projects Artistic Director, made a commitment to try to and redress this industry imbalance.

When Urban Theatre Projects approached Belvoir about jointly supporting an Indigenous Technical Production Development initiative, it made immediate sense. Both companies acknowledged that we were in a position to support new professional opportunities for Indigenous Theatre Technical practitioners. We also acknowledged how much we value technical theatre practitioners and how, for a small professional group with a specific skill set, there is such a high and regular demand, across the industry, for their expertise.

The Program

Funded by Arts NSW Urban Theatre Projects and Belvoir set out to jointly provide a 9-month professional development program to one emerging Indigenous practitioner in the area of Technical Theatre production and design. Rosealee Pearson was the successful candidate and Rosealee began the placement in June 2011. Rosealee is a Yolngu woman from Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land.

A work plan and skills development plan was developed with Rosealee for the 9 month placement. The aim of the work plan was for Rosealee to gain experience in a range of contexts, from creative development to touring, working with diverse creative teams and guest artists and to meet her specific skills development requirements and interests. The work plan also focused on the development of key competencies and experience that professional theatre companies expect of technical personnel.

With UTP Rosealee worked on *Buried City* through the rehearsal as an ASM. In London Rosealee worked as a site scout, production planner and community liaison during the development of *Is This London?* Rosie also undertook work in areas of Insurance, OH&S, budget preparations, tour planning and documentation, and undertook First Aid Training.

At Belvoir Rosealee worked in a range of roles on *Windmill Baby and Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*.

In order to accommodate Rosie's aspirations and other opportunities, the organizations agreed to release Rosie for periods of time to tour internationally with *Saltbush: Children's Carpet Cheering* with Insite Arts, and to work with Kurruru Performing Arts in South Australia.

In December 2011 Rosealee made the decision to go back to performing full time. After 7 years as a freelance dancer, she was finally being given touring and new work opportunities. UTP and Belvoir will be considering options for delivering the remainder of the program in late 2012.