

Extended Essay

Theatre Arts

*Company B's development of contemporary Indigenous Australian theatre and its use
of theatre to highlight the issues facing Indigenous Australians*

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Abstract

Indigenous Australian theatre is a reflection of the cultures rich and diverse heritage. The Sydney based theatre company of Company B has produced contemporary Indigenous theatre to be performed at the popular Belvoir Street Theatre since 1990. The exposure that the company has given to the style of theatre has allowed the works, the artists and the genre as a whole to thrive and progress into mainstream Australian theatre. This development has given artists the opportunity to explore through their work the impact the European settlement had on Aboriginal people to a larger and more socially and culturally diverse audience, through this allowed for a greater understanding of issues faced by Indigenous Australia to evolve throughout society. Through this essay I aim to address the research question of:

How has Company B developed contemporary Indigenous Australian theatre since 1990 and how has it used theatre to highlight the issues facing Indigenous Australians today to a wider audience?

Through my study of contemporary Indigenous Australian theatre in the works produced by Company B I sought to explore the development of the genre and the effect this has had on Australian society's overall understanding and acknowledgement of Indigenous culture and history. This was done through research into Indigenous theatre, in particular the Indigenous works produced by Company B, and personal

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correspondence with Company B. Through my research a deep insight into Indigenous theatre and the unique background of individual works of the genre was developed in collaboration with the effect these works have on educating the greater Australian society about current issues faced by Indigenous Australians.

Note that throughout this essay "Aboriginal" and "Indigenous" are used interchangeably. Both terms are generally acceptable throughout Australia, however, it should be noted that such terms are adjectives referring to people rather than nouns in themselves (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 5).

300 words

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How has Company B developed contemporary Indigenous Australian theatre since 1990 and how has it used theatre to highlight the issues facing Indigenous Australians today to a wider audience?

Introduction

"The history of Indigenous performance in Australia is both long and broad, with a traditional record spanning millennia and a growing contemporary practice which intersects urban, rural, expatriate, and sacred sites ... Indigenous theatre is an amalgam of experiences, specific to regions, and to people."

- Wesley Enoch, Indigenous director and playwright
(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 349)

"The time had passed for treating Indigenous arts as a special case, immune from the rigour of artistic judgment and criticism; the Indigenous arts had come into the mainstream and could hold their own in discourse and artistic delivery."

- Rhonda Roberts, artistic director of the 2000 'Festival of Dreaming'
(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 354)

"I think that a lot of Aboriginal Theatre is also about documenting the past and documenting our history, to counter balance the absence of it out there in the public sphere."

- Wesley Enoch
(Casey and Syron 2007, p. 9)

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The quality and variety of Australian Indigenous performance is a reflection of the culture's diverse blend of tribes, languages and geographical environments (Australian Government 2008). The progression of Indigenous performance into contemporary Indigenous theatre is an indication of the acceptance of the culture, along with its values and history, into modern Australian society. However with this development comes the obvious influence of modern Anglo-Australian mainstream theatre on the style and structure of contemporary Indigenous plays. The Aboriginal culture is now faced with the prospect of losing some of their valuable heritage through this contact with a culture of such disparity (Klapproth 2004, p. 22). Nonetheless, contemporary Indigenous theatre as a whole has thrived from its integration of the European style of mainstream Australian theatre, with an increase in the number of Indigenous works being produced and a larger recognition and appreciation for the genre overall¹. (Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 353)

¹ "In recent years, Indigenous theatre has been given a boost... support networks have sprung up, led by a thirst for exposure and knowledge among the Australian people...[displaying] the depth and scope of Indigenous theatre-making and all the possible permutations of relationships - white writers working with Indigenous performers, black writing being performed by white actors, the roughness and charm, the polish and sophistication."

(Kleinert and Neale 2000, pp. 353-4)

The progression of Indigenous contemporary theatre has given the opportunity for cross-cultural relationships to form between individual artists and theatre companies.² The exposure of Indigenous Australia through theatre supports and develops an understanding of a different experience and world view (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 7). In particular, non-Indigenous peoples awareness of the past, present and future effects of the European settlement on Indigenous Australia. This is promoted by both the communication between artists of separate cultures and the support of such art forms such as contemporary Indigenous theatre to further explore the past of Indigenous Australia and the issues the people continue to face in the present, and to eventually work towards total reconciliation.

Company B is a twenty five year old Australian theatre company which produces and performs an array of styles of theatre at the Belvoir St Theatre located in Surry Hills, Sydney (Company B 2005a). Since 1993 the company has produced a minimum of one production a year containing references or acknowledgements of Indigenous Australia, with the majority of these works classified as contemporary Indigenous theatre (Company B 2005b). Through the enthusiasm the company has shown towards Indigenous works, the form of theatre has been able to expand and progress, with new

²The significance of these connections is appreciated when considering previous affiliations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in terms of Indigenous theatre. The first contemporary Indigenous play, *The Cherry Pickers*, written in 1968 by Indigenous activist Kevin Gilbert (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 8), though, because Gilbert refused to have the play to be performed by a non-Indigenous cast, it was not professionally produced until 1994, after the his death (Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 350).

artists given the opportunity to provide fresh ideas and material towards Indigenous theatre further developing the genre. As Company B is not exclusive to one particular style or form of theatre it attracts quite a diverse audience. The content of Indigenous plays and the themes and issues explored are therefore done so in front of a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds, allowing for the insight given into Indigenous culture and history to further progress throughout Australia society. Indigenous writer and performer Richard Walley is quoted as recognising:

" [T]heatre is an area where you can educate as well as entertain. People don't want to be preached at... you can make them cry and make them laugh. "

(Casey and Syron 2007, p. 11)

Company B has thus not only supported the development of contemporary Indigenous theatre though also the education of the audience about the issues faced by Indigenous Australia.

Defining Indigenous Theatre

" It is one thing to exclude those plays, however well researched, that are written by whites about Aborigines and then handed over to theatre directors to cast and produce, but what of those developed processually through intensive collaboration between the two groups? "

- Helen Gilbert, author and lecturer in Drama and Theatre Studies
(Gilbert 1998, p. 51)

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The style of Indigenous Australian theatre is developing rapidly, and as a result becoming increasingly harder to define. The collaboration in theatre between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people creates the difficult task of determining when a work should be considered part of the genre of Indigenous theatre and when a work should be excluded. The production process can involve the involvement of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors, directors, writers, and technicians. Thus the notion of authorship becomes even more complex than in other genres of theatre, as does the ideas of the text, especially given the potential variance of each production of a play (Gilbert 1998, p. 51).

In regards to Company B's past productions (see Appendix), nineteen works are identified as Indigenous theatre because of their "Indigenous content" (Company B 2005b). Within this group the works of Aboriginal playwrights such as Jack Davis, who is considered the most important figure in Indigenous theatre in the 1980s (Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 315) and Dallas Winmar, whose plays are highly biographical and explore the suffering of Indigenous people in the early decades of the 1900s (Company B 2005c, 2005d), are included alongside such works as Alana Valentine's *Parramatta Girls* which contains only two Indigenous characters and one scene addressing the significance of their heritage. There are also works which have been collaboratively formed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, such as *Gulpilil* by David Gulpilil and Reg Cribb (Company B 2005e).

Respected Indigenous playwright and director Wesley Enoch, who has worked several times with Company B, defines Indigenous theatre as performance in a structured

actor-audience relationship created by Indigenous artists with the express wish to reflect political struggle, lifestyle, cultures, and people (Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 349). Enoch explains that every Aboriginal play by definition needs to have cultural material being discussed, dealt with, referred to and enacted (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 9). However the 1993 Company B production of *Radiance* is marked as having Indigenous content, and though it was performed by Aboriginal actors, the play was originally written as a piece where the cast's Aboriginality was not the focus (Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 353). The play includes no reference to the characters heritage or inclusion of the Indigenous culture or history, and is therefore somewhat contradictory to Enoch's definition.

It therefore appears almost impossible to conclude with a suitable definition for Indigenous theatre without discarding productions which have contributed significantly to the development of the genre. Ian Hamm, the Deputy Director of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, points out that artists by their very nature are individuals. They're expressing their own view of the world, their own creativity. Creating a fixed definition for Indigenous theatre therefore would be obstructive to the art form ever progressing (Glow and Johanson 2009, p. 7). Hereafter however, to avoid confusion, the term "Indigenous theatre" will refer to the works of theatre involving reference or involvement of Indigenous Australia and the genre will be explored only through those works produced by Company B and acknowledged by the company as including Indigenous content.

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Development of Contemporary Indigenous Theatre

" This is how I see Indigenous performance: every new work, every artist, each endeavor, is a small stone building on the one before. "

- Wesley Enoch
(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 351)

Traditional to Contemporary

" It is hard to pinpoint the moment when Indigenous theater leapt into being. It follows on from the smooth and dynamic growth of our traditional performance structures. "

- Wesley Enoch
(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 349)

There is an obvious distinction between traditional and contemporary Indigenous performance. "Traditional" is understood as existing pre-colonisation or having being founded on the values of these practices. Traditional performances are regarded as sacred and strongly connected to the Indigenous culture and its values of history and the physical land. "Contemporary" is understood as work that, though it may have developed from or drawn on traditional practice, has been created post-colonisation and within the framework of European dominance (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 8). To appreciate the use of traditional Indigenous performance practices in today's contemporary theatre, the development of traditional to contemporary needs to be recognised, and how this development has contributed towards the preservation of

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Indigenous culture should also be respected. The acknowledgement of the integration of art and performance in traditional Indigenous culture gives way to the understanding of this development.

The traditional Aboriginal perspective is fixed on an understanding of the world around them through narrative. Traditionally, cultural knowledge was passed through generations in the form of a story³ (Klapproth 2004, p. 66).

“ Traditional stories were told through performance practices such as storytelling, song and dance and sand and body art. Often referred to as dreaming or creation stories, they contained knowledge of spiritual, societal, and cultural significance. ”

(Casey and Syron 2007, p. 8)

The incorporation of traditional values and beliefs are also incorporated in modern performances, enhancing the audience's awareness of the cultural significance of the performances (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 8).

The Aboriginal approach to storytelling and the cultural significance of the content and structure of their narratives (Klapproth 2004, p. 69) has naturally passed into the genre

³ “These stories relate in a very important way to what in English has come to be known as The Dreaming ^, the all-embracing system of signification that organizes and gives meaning to the Australian Aboriginal world.” (Klapproth 2004, p. 66)

^ The Dreaming: “a period beyond living memory in which ancestral beings were responsible for the genesis of the spiritual, physical and moral world, and for providing the laws and ceremonies which sustain contemporary existence.” (Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. xvii)

of contemporary Indigenous theatre and, at times, has been adapted to fit a contemporary audience, however the purpose of storytelling has not changed.

" Before [European settlement in] 1788 our peoples had to think survival. Art and culture were inseparable; hunting, family structures, genealogy, Law⁴, geography were reflected in the art, and so they are today. Though the world has changed and the role of performance may have as much to do with political survival, social awareness, and the need for systematic change, the power and role of the artist is to think survival. "

(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 349)

The idea of using Indigenous performance as a way of educating and informing others has thus not changed in the transition between traditional and contemporary, or even pre-colonisation influences, though merely the story that is trying to be told has adapted to the new context and audience. Through theatre companies, such as Company B, supporting the genre, Indigenous Australia is able to better maintain this unique style of performance, thus conserving their culture and traditional customs and furthering the education of non-Indigenous people of their heritage.

The style and structure of traditional performance is not the only aspect which has been transferred into contemporary Aboriginal theatre. Traditional cultural material features heavily in an array of works within genre. This includes the involvement of such

⁴ Law: "the body of spiritual, social and cultural knowledge, and the attendant social and religious prescriptions, derived from The Dreaming." (Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. xvii)

materials as ochre, smoke, motifs such as dots and ceremonial instruments such as didgeridoos. Also the incorporation of traditional Indigenous languages and stories from *The Dreaming* is popular in contemporary Indigenous theatre (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 8).

This integration of cultural material into contemporary work is evident in several of the Indigenous plays produced by Company B. In Company B's 2008 production of Dallas Winmar's *Yibiyung*, The entire first scene is performed in the Indigenous language of Noongar. The predominant English speaking audience of Company B cannot obviously understand the literal meaning of what is being said, though through the actor's movements and expressions the emotion of the story is still conveyed. In a later part of the play this scene is repeated in English and story being told, which drew heavily on the idea of *The Dreaming*, was revealed. However through this initial incorporation of Indigenous language the Aboriginal Australian culture is truly revealed to the audience, increasing their appreciation and understanding of the Indigenous Australian heritage. This incorporation of Indigenous languages within contemporary texts acts in part as a statement of its existence after so many attempts to corrupt and destroy it⁵

⁵ "The importance of language to Indigenous Australians is in relation to its connection to land, social and spiritual beliefs. Language is the core of cultural identity. It links people to land and it protects history. Following European settlement, most Indigenous Australians in direct contact with settlers and missionaries were forbidden to speak their own languages."

(Casey and Syron 2007, p. 12)

(Casey and Syron 2007, p. 12). Language has helped to conserve the culture. The inclusion of language in performance demonstrates this and enhances the Indigenous background of the production. Snippets of other forms of Indigenous Australian languages are also intertwined throughout other Company B productions, including Jack Davis' *No Sugar* and *The Dreamers* and David Gulpilil and Reg Cribb's *Gulpilil*. These occasional snatches of the Indigenous language throughout the dialogue accentuate the plays cultural significance and enhance the Indigenous characters of the play and their heritage.

Yibiyung also utilises physical material, which in the context, holds the association of traditional culture. For the setting of a traditional rural camp an open fire was lit and, on the edge of the stage, a thick layer of dirt had been laid to further symbolise the setting of the bush. At one point the dirt was also used by the actors to demonstrate how to leave minimal trace behind in the bush, promoting an understanding of traditional Indigenous way of life and the theme of survival to the audience.

To transition between scenes of Jack Davis' *The Dreamers*, produced by Company B in 1990, a traditionally dressed Indigenous dancer appears, unnoticed by the characters, and slowly makes their way across the stage. Referred to by Katherine Brisbane as "Aboriginal reality", this unique technique is described as:

"[T]he co-existence of a material and a spiritual reality represented symbolically, often by dance, or magic, which is introduced quite unselfconsciously into apparently realist drama."

(Brisbane 1999, p.39)

Though this theatrical technique is used for the structural purpose of creating a segue between the scenes, allowing for the suggestion of a change of time, it also acts as a way of incorporating traditional customs throughout the entire of the play. By ending each scene with the memorable image of a traditional Aboriginal dancer moving across the setting of a contemporary Indigenous household, the conflicting values of the two cultures is emphasised. The contrast is a reminder to the audience of the destruction and gradual loss of Australia's Indigenous culture.

With this utilisation of traditional performance practices and styles in contemporary work the preservation of Indigenous culture is encouraged. The development of Indigenous performance into what it is today has been greatly shaped by the values and customs of the traditional culture, and the incorporation of culturally significant material into work performed to a modern and culturally diverse audience, such as the one at Belvoir Street Theatre, assist's with Australia's understanding of traditional Indigenous Australia and how it has been carried through into the contemporary Aboriginal culture, thus changing and correcting perceptions of Indigenous people and their relationships with the wider Australian society (Gilbert 1998, p. 53).

European Influences

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" Since 1788 Aborigines have used narrative to make sense of the impact of European settlement and to perpetuate Aboriginal knowledge and cultural traditions. "

- Philip Morrissey, published writer of indigenous studies
(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 313)

The European settlement in Australia in 1788 and the events which followed this is undoubtedly the most significant impact and disturbance of Indigenous Australia in history. It is only natural therefore for the substance of work following colonisation to reflect the effects of these events and the issues which have arisen from then.

" The most overt postcolonial discourses emerge in the substantive content of the dialogue, often through direct commentary by Aboriginal characters on the depredation their cultures have endured since European invasion. As a way of rupturing the authorities and essential "truths" that have buttressed imperial history, these dialogues are both anodyne and necessary. "

(Gilbert 1998, p. 52)

However European settlement had not only an impact on the content on Indigenous performance, though also its overall structure and style. Obviously traditional elements are still incorporated into contemporary Indigenous theatre, though a large part of the work fits into the framework of Anglo-Australian styled theatre (Casey and Syron 2007, p. 8). English is the language predominantly used throughout Indigenous plays, and a strong realist slant has come over most works, contrasting to the traditional storytelling

nature of Indigenous performance (Narogin 1990, p. 27). At large, the genre is produced for non-Indigenous audiences, differing from traditional uses of Indigenous performance in ceremonies and as a way of passing information through generations (Klapproth 2004, p. 66).

Though this adjustment of Indigenous performance to European styled theatre can also be seen in a positive light when looking at the effects these changes in performance style has had on the integration of Indigenous performance into mainstream theatre. With a rise in the popularity and interest in the genre, the themes confronted in Indigenous works are able to be explored and explained to a larger audience, enabling the understanding of the issues which confront Indigenous Australia to resonate further into Australian society.

Themes and Stylistic Devices

“ Contemporary playwriting is searching out new ground to investigate; new performance practices have emerged out of a postmodern, bowerbird approach...there are developments in form and intent. The traditional practice of integrating art forms is being reinstated: a sophisticated rendering of design and the use of body as the site for performance are replacing the conventions of earlier works which traded in currencies of naturalism and biography. ”

- Wesley Enoch
(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 350)

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Wesley Enoch acknowledges that there are three themes in Indigenous theatre that appear to be inevitably integrated into every work: death and loss, family, and isolation.

“ Death and loss are often interconnected: they are played out with the death of a old person and the subsequent loss of knowledge and history, the loss of freedoms, or the search for the missing past. Funerals feature heavily in our lives and in our theatre. The strong emotional energy and ritual which surround death give Indigenous theater a cathartic and cleansing quality while providing a well-defined dramatic seam. ”

(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 352)

This is certainly true for the Indigenous productions of Company B. Davis' play *The Dreamers* explores the slow death of traditional Indigenous culture through the corresponding death of the strongly traditional and elderly character in the play. Also Davis' *No Sugar* looks into the loss of freedom for Indigenous people in the 1900s as a result of government policies. *Capricornia*, written by Louis Nowra and produced by Company B 2006 entails the main characters search for identity in his past. Winamar's *Yibiyung* and Nowra's *Radiance* in particular involve the strong themes of death and loss and both include a funeral.

Enoch continues by recognising that:

“ Family and community are the lifeblood of most stories; given the biographical nature of many works this is no wonder. Indigenous social structures, with their strong family matriarchs, large

extended families, and elders, provide an intricate pattern of respect and obligations to explore. Many plays require three generations on stage, or discuss the interplay of history and people."

(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 352)

The two of Davis' and Winmar's works which have been produced by Company B certainly involve the theme of family and community. *No Sugar, Yibiyung* and *Aliwa* are all somewhat biographical, and the persistency of this theme throughout all the works reveals the significance of unity and identity in the Indigenous culture, further educating the audience of Indigenous values. The mention of several generations included in one production is evident again in the work of Davis, in particular *The Dreamers*, which interplays between all three generations of the one family.

As a contrast to this, the theme of isolation is also featured heavily throughout Indigenous theatre:

" Isolation as both a personal and a political phenomenon is a constant: communities within communities, the struggle for individuality against the pressure to conform to community norms, physical and the spiritual isolation of trying to deal with an issue by yourself, searching for connection and continuity. Despite the inherently tragic qualities of these themes, indigenous theatre is above all celebratory. The use of humor and the inclusion of the audience through the relaxation of formal theatrical conventions provide a counterpoint, highlighting the humanity of the work. "

(Kleinert and Neale 2000, pp. 352-3)

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Again, Nowra's *Capricornia* specifically fits this description of isolation, as does *Yibiyung*. In both works the main characters work towards discovering where they belong though pursue this search predominantly alone. Enoch's final acknowledgement of the celebratory and humorous nature of many Indigenous works is true to a significantly large number of Company B's productions. The relaxed approach of such plays as Leah Purcell's *Box the Pony*, which for the most part is styled as stand-up comedy, and *Aliwa*, in which the actors continually interact and befriend the audience and at one point even offer them food, reflects a much more casual picture of Indigenous Australia, which is often masked by the seriousness of past events.

These unique approaches to performance have led to the establishment of range of common stylistic devices employed in contemporary Indigenous theatre.

" Music, agitprop, direct address storytelling, stand-up comedy, visual theatre, and singing are all now strongly part of our artistic arsenal. Contemporary Indigenous artists think nothing of massive stylistic changes midstream or of assuming knowledge in their audience. Our plays are no longer merely about the education of non-Indigenous Australia – they can celebrate and explore our voice, assuming a general level of understanding amongst the viewers. "

(Kleinert and Neale 2000, p. 351)

Purcell's *Box the Pony* and Jane Harrison's *Stolen* are a few of the many works which have contributed to this advance in theatrical techniques used in Indigenous performance. Purcell's play is made up of a single monologue which fuses stand-up

comedy with storytelling and throughout the performance continually breaks down the fourth wall. *Stolen* explores the lives of several children who were removed from their families by the government to be assimilated into white Australian society. The structure of the play changes randomly throughout, with the fourth wall continually being built and knocked down, and the movement from the focus of one character to another (Kleinert and Neale 2000, pp. 350-1).

Company B's involvement in the production of new Indigenous theater also contributes to the genre's development in terms of its style and structure. In the first staging of a play, the company works intensely with the playwright to develop the script and will also at times employ the resources of a dramaturg. Brenna Hobson, general manager of the company, explains that:

" [The process of development] varies a lot - but for 'Yibiyung' we had an established dramaturg working really intensely on that with Dallas Winmar. There are other works like 'Page 8', where because there were two people collaborating on the work together in a way it kind of "dramaturged" itself....So there are some different ways it can be developed. "

(Hobson 2010)

This variation in the approach to producing a play, in particular a work which has not been staged before, ensures that Company B develops the work to its paramount form so as to effectively portray the message to the audience. This continual development of different styles and approaches to contemporary Indigenous theatre allows the genre to

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expand and develop, becoming more effective in engaging the audience and presenting the issues facing Indigenous Australia in a manner which is both entertaining and informative.

Contemporary Indigenous Theatre at Company B

The reasons for Company B's attention towards Indigenous theatre has stemmed largely from the artistic director of the company, Neil Armfield. Having a strong personal interest in Aboriginal artists and works he has been a major contributor to the development of contemporary Indigenous theatre at Company B, being involved in the company since it was first established and has held his current position since 1994. Prior to this Armfield was part of the artistic council of the company, who collectively programmed the plays which would be staged each season. In 1990, Jack Davis' play *No Sugar* was performed at Belvoir Street Theatre, marking their first contemporary Indigenous theatre performance. Armfield did not solely make this decision, however he was essentially involved in this initial generation of Indigenous theatre at Company B. Armfield has looked on the history and culture of Indigenous Australia as an essential part of Australian theatre (Hobson 2010).

The general manager of Company B, Brenna Hobson, admits:

" [The continual production of Indigenous theatre has] largely been driven initially by Neil...but his philosophy has been very much that you have to let Indigenous artists tell their own story. And so he spent a lot of time looking for ways to facilitate that. "

(Hobson 2010)

Significance

Perceptions of the Aboriginal people of Australia have continued to adjust over time, especially due to significant events such as the granting of Indigenous land rights in the early 1980s to the ongoing move towards reconciliation with the more recent National Apology to the Stolen Generations⁶. These issues were highlighted in various productions by Company B, in particular Davis' *No Sugar*, dealing with the Indigenous peoples land and freedom rights, and Winmar's *Yibiyung* confronting the harsh reality of the trauma imposed upon the Stolen Generation. This continual attention towards Indigenous issues in the company's productions educates the audience of the

⁶ The National Apology to the Stolen Generations was a formal apology from the Federal Government of Australia to the Indigenous Australians affected by the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families. "This removal was official government policy from 1909 to 1969. However the practice took place both before and after this period. Governments, churches and welfare bodies all took part...Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were 'not of full blood' were encouraged to become assimilated into the broader society so that eventually there would be no more Indigenous people left. At the time Indigenous people were seen as an inferior race. Children were taken from Aboriginal parents so they could be brought up 'white' and taught to reject their Aboriginality" (Reconciliation 2010).

discrimination and disadvantage Indigenous Australians continue to tolerate, and encourages the audience to consider and challenge why tension between the two cultures still exists. Through the awareness of these issues, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Australia can begin to be bridged.

Conclusion

Through Company B's now annual performance of contemporary Indigenous theatre, the company has allowed artists to express and confront Indigenous issues in front of a culturally and socially diverse audience. This supports the development and expansion the genre, and also educates the audience of Indigenous culture and values and how these effect Indigenous issues in society. Having a non-Indigenous theatre company give Indigenous artists this opportunity also furthers the relationship between the two cultures. The acceptance of contemporary Indigenous theatre into mainstream theatre is a reflection of the acceptance of the culture, along with its values and history, into Australian society. Through the development of the production of Indigenous theatre and its content of Indigenous issues, Australia will gradually recognise the problems within society regarding Indigenous Australia and work towards finding a solution to eventually achieve total reconciliation for the past.

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Company B's development of contemporary Indigenous Australian theatre and its use of theatre to highlight the issues facing Indigenous Australians

Appendix

Company B Performance History (Company B 2005b)

Year	Shakespeare	Classic	Classic Australian	New Australian	New International
1985			Signal Driver <i>Patrick White</i>	Ha Ha Ha Perf Humans*	
1986				ABC <i>Holman</i> A Smile, A Song and a Lump of Wood <i>Kelso/Ackroyd</i> Pearls Before Swine <i>Watkins/Harriot</i> State of Shock <i>Strachan*</i>	Savanna Bay <i>Durah</i> Kids Stuff <i>Cousse</i>
1987				Cho Cho San <i>Daniel Keene</i> Magpie's Nest <i>Grattan</i> Europe <i>Michael Gow</i>	Lie of The Mind <i>Shepard</i> Shakers O' <i>Connell</i> Gertrude Stein and a Companion <i>Margoyles</i> On Parliament Hill <i>Greig</i>
1988		Les Enfants du Paradis <i>Prevert/Lerner</i> Ghosts <i>Ibsen</i> Drums of Thunder <i>Brecht</i>		Hate <i>Stephen Sewell*</i>	
1989		Diary of a Madman <i>Gogol</i> A Doll's House <i>Ibsen</i>		Greek Tragedy <i>Leigh*</i>	Conquest of the South Pole <i>Karge</i> The Wolf's Banquet <i>Cousse</i>

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1990	The Tempest		No Sugar <i>Davis#</i>	Call of The Wild <i>Kemp</i> Words of One Syllable <i>Barrett</i> Café Fledermaus <i>Archer</i>	
1991		The Masterbuilder <i>Ibsen</i>		The Royal Commisson into the Australian Economy <i>Clarke *</i> Buzz <i>Coleman/Coppin*</i> Headbutt <i>Abbot*</i> Diving for Pearls <i>Thomson</i>	Love and Magic in Mamma's Kitchen <i>Wertmuller</i>
1992		Diary of a Madman <i>Gogol</i> Frogs <i>Aristophanes</i>		<i>Cosi Nowra*</i> Popular Mechanicals 2*	The Cockroach Opera <i>Riantiaro</i>
1993				Aftershocks <i>Brown</i> The Exile Trilogy <i>Gilgul (Barrie Kosky)</i> Radiance <i>Nowra*#</i>	Scenes from an Execution <i>Barker</i>
1994				Hamlet All of Me <i>Legs</i> <i>on The Wall*</i> Dead Heart <i>Parsons*#</i> Blue Murder <i>Christian*</i>	Picasso At The Lapin Agile <i>Steve Martin</i>
1995	The Tempest	Splendids <i>Genet</i>	The Blind Giant is Dancing <i>Sewell</i>	Emma <i>Pitts</i>	
1996		The Alchemist <i>Jonson</i> View from The Bridge <i>Miller</i>	Night on Bald Mountain <i>White</i>	Up the Road <i>Harding#</i>	Wasp <i>Martin</i>

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1997		The Seagull <i>Chekhov</i> Lulu GW <i>Pabst</i> The Birthday Party <i>Pinter</i>		Black Mary <i>Jansen*##</i> The Governer's Family <i>Christian*</i>	
1998		Caucasian Chalk Circle <i>Brecht</i> Trouble in Tahiti <i>Bernstein</i>		Cloudstreet <i>Enright/Monjo*</i> Under The Influence <i>Legs on the Wall*</i> Welcome to Broome <i>Mellick*##</i> Love Burns <i>Nowra</i>	Judas Kiss <i>Hare</i>
1999	As You Like It		The Small Poppies <i>Holman</i>	Burnt Piano <i>Fleming*</i> Box The Pony <i>Purcell/Rankin#</i> My Vicious Angel <i>Evans</i>	Little Cherry Orchard <i>Alexej Slapovskij</i>
2000	Twelfth Night	Suddenly Last Summer <i>Williams</i> Figaro <i>Beaumarchais</i>	The Ham Funeral <i>White</i>	Stolen <i>Harrison#</i>	The Unexpected Man <i>Reza</i>
2001		Ubu <i>Jarry</i>	A Cheery Soul <i>White</i>	Emma's Nose <i>Livingstone*</i> Aliwa <i>Winmar#</i> Roulette <i>Cortese</i> Cloudstreet <i>Enright/Monjo</i>	The Laramie Project <i>Tectonic</i>
2002		Buried Child <i>Shepard</i> Waiting for Godot <i>Beckett</i>	The Dreamers <i>Davis#</i> The Aunt's Story <i>White</i>	Svetlana in Slingbacks <i>Levkawicz</i>	The Cosmonaut's Last Message to the Woman He Loved in the Former Soviet Union <i>Grieg</i>

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					My Zinc Bed <i>Hare</i>
2003	Macbeth	Threepenny Opera <i>Brecht</i>	William Yang Retrospective	Conversations with the Dead <i>Frankland</i> # Run Rabbit Run <i>Valentine</i> *	The Underpants <i>Martin</i> The Lieutenant of Inishmore <i>McDonagh</i>
2004	A Midsummer Night's Dream	What The Butler Saw <i>Orton</i>		In Our Name <i>Jamieson</i> * Life Times Three: Page 8 <i>Nowra</i> / <i>Page</i> *# Little Black Bastard <i>Tovey</i> # Gulpilil <i>Gulpilil/Cribb</i> # The Spook <i>Reeves</i> *	Our Lady of Sligo <i>Barry</i>
2005		The Chairs <i>Ionesco</i> Black Medea <i>Euripides</i> (<i>Enoch adapt</i>)#		The Sapphires <i>Briggs</i> *# Ray's Tempest <i>Rogers</i>	Stuff Happens <i>Hare</i>
2006		Peribanez de Vega	Capricornia <i>Herbert/Nowra</i> #	It Just Stopped <i>Sewell</i> * Keating! <i>Bennetto</i>	
2007		Exit the King <i>Ionesco</i> Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? <i>Albee</i>		The Adventures of Snugglepot & Cuddlepie and Little Ragged Blossom <i>John/Clarke/MacLeod</i> * The Gates of Egypt <i>Sewell</i> * Parramatta Girls <i>Valentine</i> *# Real Estate <i>Bennetto</i> * Toy Symphony <i>Gow</i> *	Paul <i>Brenton</i>
2008		Antigone <i>Sophocles</i>		The Seed <i>Mulvany</i> Yibiyung <i>Dallas</i> *#	The Pillowman <i>McDonagh</i>

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					Scorched <i>Mouawad</i>
2009		The Promise <i>Arbuzov</i>	The Man from Mukinupin <i>Hewett #</i>	Ruben Guthrie <i>Cowell</i> The Book of Everything <i>Tulloch</i> (adapted from international book by <i>Kuijer</i>)*	Baghdad Wedding <i>Abdulrazzak</i> Gethsemane <i>Hare</i>
Sub- total	7 Shakespeares	30 Classics of Rep	12 Classic Australian Works	62 New Australian Works	29 New International works
Total shows :	140				
	* = 33 world premieres # = 19 works with indigenous content				