

The MAGDALENA AUSTRALIA

An update on the women in contemporary theatre movement

Keynotes: Jill Greenhalgh to launch Magdalena Australia Festival

Jill Greenhalgh, the founder of the Magdalena Project, lives in the quaint and sleepy Welsh town of Llangrannog, nestled into the dramatic coastline of Cardigan Bay. Touched by a magic brush, the landscape is not unlike the spectacular eyeful you might catch driving down Australia's Great Ocean road.

Jill and her family moved to this picture book paradise from Cardiff. Cardiff is the capital of Wales and also the birthplace of the Magdalena Project. In 1986, Jill and her team organised a women's theatre festival here, bringing focus to an under represented area of original work by independent women theatre makers from around the globe.

The festival ignited enormous interest and energy and the Magdalena Project quickly fired up from a festival into a full time organisation, supported for its first ten years by Welsh Arts Council. In this time it developed a significant presence in many countries outside the UK.

As director of the Project Jill Greenhalgh has produced a wide spectrum of international theatre projects allowing her a unique perspective on the diversity of contemporary practice and the privilege of collaborating with hundreds of independent theatre makers from many different cultural and political contexts. Her work has also allowed her to travel extensively throughout the world and she has a particular and lasting attachment to theatre in both Latin America and New Zealand. At long last, she is coming to Australia. From April 10 – 25 you will have more than one opportunity to meet her.

Friday April 19, 12pm, a year out from the first Magdalena Festival ever to be held in this country, Brisbane is having a launch party. Thanks largely to support from the British Council, Jill is flying in as the guest of honour. Put the date in

your diary now and come along to the Brisbane Powerhouse for inspirational talks by Jill and other invited guests including Premier Peter Beattie. There will be performances by Scandinavian actress Birgitte Grimstad, Brisbane's own Roxanne Macdonald and diva Barbara Fordham. Make the most of it and join up for Brigette Grimstad or Jill Greenhalgh's weekend workshops April 20-21 (details inside).

The Magdalena Project has always acknowledged the importance of pedagogical work with regard to the support of the emergent generation of young theatre makers, and in recent years, Jill Greenhalgh has become much more involved in teaching. From her training the Cardiff laboratory Theatre, The Odin Teatret (Denmark), Grotowski's Laboratorium (Poland), Akademie Ruchu (Poland), Roy Hart Theatre (France), PICCOLO Teatro di Pontederra (Italy), Frankie Armstrong (UK) – just to name a few! – this producer / performer / writer / director has accumulated a body of knowledge of methods of both the creation of original works and strategies for artistic survival which she is now passing on.

Jill currently teaches at the University of Wales Aberystwyth and is engaged as an arts mentor for Cultural Enterprise Services in Cardiff. She is also developing a new international performance under the title of "Water[war]s" and collaborating as director with Nomad Theatre in Madrid Spain on their latest performance.

Before arriving in Brisbane, Jill will spend five days in Melbourne, with a weekend workshop at Playbox Theatre in Melbourne (April 13 and 14), and a lecture at Victorian College of Arts (April 12). Brisbane lectures include Australian Catholic University (April 16), University of Queensland (April 17), and Queensland University of Technology (April 18). Jill will also be speaking in a forum on Women and Solo Performance at Metro Arts on April 20. See you there!



From the Artistic Director

Welcome to Magdalena Australia, the newsletter designed to keep you abreast of developments towards the first Magdalena Australia festival to be held at the Brisbane Powerhouse, April 6-16, 2003. We hope also to welcome an increasing number of articles and news items relating to women in contemporary theatre, and to provoke debate about our role in the future of theatre in Australia.

The focus of this edition is the launch of Magdalena Australia in April this year at the Brisbane Powerhouse. We will be joined at the launch by Jill Greenhalgh (founder and director of the Magdalena Project since 1986), Scandinavian actress Birgitte Grimstad, and Premier Peter Beattie just to name a few!

To launch is to set something in motion, to propel with great force, and we plan to hurl ourselves forward in great leaps and bounds through the next 12 months leading up to our festival. This launch is also milestone, a marker, and a celebration of the total and enthusiastic involvement of everyone participating in the evolution of the Australian chapter of this international network. It is a time for re-focusing our energies and vision. It is also a time for impressing funding bodies, sponsors, partners, and the media with our passion, strength, drive and outstanding talent!



Jill Greenhalgh will be in Australia from April 10-25 and will be conducting workshops and giving guest lectures in Melbourne and Brisbane. Jill's visit is happening with the support of the British Council in Wales, Playbox Theatre in Melbourne, and the Brisbane Powerhouse. See this issue for more details of how to catch up with this extraordinary woman, director, performer and teacher.

A big thank you to everyone who wrote letters of support for our application to the Theatre Board of the Australia Council for the Arts to bring Odin theatre actress and inspired pedagogue of international renown, Julia Varley, to the festival in 2003. There will be many more funding and sponsorship applications through 2002 and we appreciate the time taken to demonstrate the support for this exciting event.

Thank you also to Jo Dwyer for registering the name and being ever present with sound legal advice. And a big thanks to Julie Robson and the newsletter team for their blood, sweat and tears in putting this issue together for you edification and reading pleasure.

We are pleased to announce the "Solo Smarts" season will take place at Metro Arts, 109 Edward St, Brisbane, in August 2002. This mini-festival will provide the opportunity for six Brisbane women to present early drafts of solo performances, promoting and supporting the long process of developing new and original theatre. It is envisaged that there may be opportunities for these to be further developed for inclusion in the Magdalena Australia festival program.



Dawn Albinger, (photo Suzon Fuks)

Magdalena Australia continues to grow. The trickle is fast becoming a stream, swelled by the perceived need for women around the country to celebrate their achievements nationally and internationally, to connect

The theme of this festival is Travelling, and we would welcome any anecdotes, thoughts, essays, articles and aphorisms on this theme for inclusion in future newsletters, and to help us flesh out the dramaturgy of the festival program. How has travel impacted on you as woman / performer / director / designer / technician / administrator / traveller? Write to us at PO Box 1437, Fortitude Valley, QLD, 4006. MagdalenaAustralia@hotmail.com. We look forward to your contributions!

Dawn Albinger

You are invited to the Magdalena Festival 2003 LAUNCH PARTY!

FRIDAY APRIL 19 2002

12.00 PM

Brisbane Powerhouse

Special Guest

Jill Greenhalgh

Performers

Birgitte Grimstad

Roxanne MacDonald

Barbara Fordham

ADMISSION FREE



Lamington Street New Farm Brisbane Qld

Getting Smart & Going Solo Update - Update - Update



Keep an eye out first of for *Solo Smart*, the Magdalena Australia's projects. Coming to Metro Arts in August 2002, *Solo Smart* is a festival featuring the work of six Brisbane solo artists - three established artists and three emerging artists - who will present their latest solo projects. The emerging artists will be supported by dramaturgical expertise and the mentorship of the established artists.

Sue Benner, the project's initiator, has confirmed that the project has received funding from the Brisbane City Council and a Project Manager will shortly be instated. The three established artists will be invited into the program and the emerging artists will be selected from the prolific span of young women artists from such organisations as Youth Arts Queensland and Backbone Youth Arts. The performances may range from works-in-progress to more fully produced works and the participants will use *Solo Smart* as a jumping-off point as they continue their creative development all the way up to the Magdalena Festival in April 2003.

A Plenary Session with the six artists is also planned. Focussing on the specific demands and rewards of solo performance, the session will take place at Queensland University of Technology's Gardens Point Theatre. This will be a great opportunity for the artists to discuss their work and to explore just what it is about the medium of solo performance that speaks to them.

On Saturday 20 April, there will also be a panel of women artists, including Jill Greenhalgh, discussing the nature of solo performance at Metro Arts Studio, from 5.30pm to 7.30 pm. All are welcome.

Watch this space for more details as they come to hand about this exciting festival at Metro Arts in August 2002.

WOMEN AND SOLO PERFORMANCE

PANEL AND DISCUSSION

5.30 - 7.30 PM

SATURDAY 20TH APRIL

METRO ARTS STUDIO

109 EDWARD STREET

BRISBANE

07 3221

1527

!Metro Arts

Support the Fundraising Effort!

Magdalena Australia is run by volunteers and relies heavily on the precious time and energy of people who believe in the value of the project. Fundraising power is essential to its operations and the next DreamGAS cabaret at the Zoo on Brunswick Street is an event to raise money for the Brisbane Launch party. Support a great cause while enjoying a night of home grown theatre and song. See below for the great line-up of artists..

COVER CHARGE IS \$8 AND PERFORMANCES KICK OFF AT 8PM.

dream GAS

E L I X I R

(featuring Katie & Nick from george)

Silver Circus

Rozi Pizzey (ex ISIS)

Sacred Cow

Caroline Dunphy

Lisa O'Neill

Andrew Cory

Damian Cassidy

Christine Sharp

(with gallery level one)

The Zoo

Sunday 7 April 2002



Metro Arts

If you are interested in donating any time to the Magdalena Festival, please contact us to find out ways of getting involved and actively bringing the 2003 festival to life! Drop us line at

MagdalenaAustralia@hotmail.com

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS WITH

JILL GREENHALGH

Since 1986, Jill Greenhalgh has been the Artistic Director of The Magdalena Project, an international organisation founded in order to bring greater focus to the area of original work by independent women theatre makers.

Over sixteen years the Magdalena Project has grown around the world fostering debate collaboration, opportunities and a voice for women working in theatre.

In April 2003, Magdalena Australia will host an International Festival of Women in Contemporary Theatre at the Brisbane Powerhouse, Brisbane, Queensland.

Launching the festival a year out, in April 2002 Jill will be facilitating two weekend workshops in Melbourne and Brisbane, focusing on

THE PRESENCE OF THE ACTOR

Workshop Focus

precision – dynamic – risk – control – trust – courage – direction – confidence – composition – energy – engagement

Elements essential in the mind and body of the actor to invoke the mysterious thing we call 'presence'.

How do we know when we are truly 'present'?

How do we maintain the engagement of our audience?

In these performance workshops, participants will work with training techniques that confront the above components and questions. Participants will work on individual and ensemble physical training exercises, improvisation and image training to develop visual and written material as methods for devising original and collective material.

Experienced and less experienced performers are welcome.

Melbourne Weekend @ Playbox
Saturday April 13 & Sunday April 14
10am – 4pm

Brisbane Weekend @ Brisbane Powerhouse
Saturday April 20 & Sunday April 21
10am – 4 pm

Cost: \$100.00 for each weekend

Please book early as places are limited.

To secure a place phone 07 3289 8005

Cheques and money orders made payable to

Magdalena Australia, PO Box 1437, Fortitude Valley, QLD, 4006.

A WORKSHOP BY SCANDINAVIAN SINGER/ACTOR BIRGITTE GRIMSTAD

Since 1986 The Magdalena Project has been bringing greater focus to the area of original work by independent women theatre makers. Over sixteen years the Magdalena Project has grown around the world, fostering debate collaboration, opportunities and a voice for women working in theatre.

In April 2003, Magdalena Australia will host an International Festival of Women in Contemporary Theatre at the Brisbane Powerhouse, Brisbane, Queensland.

Helping to launch the festival a year out, in April 2002 Birgitte will be facilitating a weekend workshop in Brisbane, focusing on basic voice training for actors, singers, teachers..
..and whoever wants to be heard..

THE VOICE

THE VOICE is the only soundmaking instrument made from flesh and blood and muscles. You cannot change strings or screws. It has to last your whole life so you must know how to take good care of it.

Facts about VOICE FUNCTION, and basic principles for VOICE WARM-UP and BASIC TRAINING of this instrument can do wonders.

WHAT WE DO:

**We warm up with simple body movement and free dance.
We explore basic BREATHING TECHNIQUES,
and how to use the whole body to make sound.**

**We try to answer questions of:
How to sing high tones or low tones?
How to speak loud and clear?
What does it take to be heard in a big crowd?**

**We also look at a text or a song and discuss ways of INTERPRETATION,
what are the feelings between the lines and behind the text?
How do feelings sound?
Bring your own song or text to read.**

Metro Arts, 109 Edward St, Brisbane
Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 April, 2002

Cost: \$100.00 for each weekend

Please book early as places are limited.

To secure a place phone 07 3289 8005

Cheques and money orders made payable to

Magdalena Australia, PO Box 1437, Fortitude Valley, QLD, 4006.

SOUND & LIGHT: *Travels Of A Woman In Theatre*

Brisbane is a city of light. The city meanders for miles in every direction while the commercial centre soars upwards, sparkling with reflected sunlight during the day, glittering glamorously at night, providing a colourful serpentine spectacle with a psychic geometry defying the mechanistic culture which put it there. At night, when you look up and out at the milky way, it is not sky you see so much as the Rest of the Universe.

I returned to Brisbane in 1996 after 30 years abroad, with a suitcase, a backpack, a laptop and a guitar. Ten weeks after my return I was called back to Scotland, where my husband Donneil, (we were separated), was extremely ill.

Glasgow is a great place, full of surprises. No-one really knows how long there has been a settlement there straddling the River Clyde from the foothills of the Highlands to the lush Clyde Valley. There are records of a medieval village on the site, already steeped in the customs of commercial enterprise. With a population size similar to Brisbane's, Glasgow encompasses an area roughly one third that of Brisbane. When you look up to the sky in Glasgow, you see only a small area between the buildings, and the omnipresent clouds are fairly low down, giving the impression of a dome of sky quite close above your head.

A month later Donneil was discharged from hospital, and I accompanied him to his home on the Isle of Tiree, in the Inner Hebrides, off the west coast of Scotland.

Tiree is 13 miles long, 8 miles wide, the wind-surfing capital of the British Isles fringed by bays of creamy white sand. Whichever way the wind blows (and there is always a wind blowing) you can find a beach somewhere with a decent breeze.

Donneil, Roderick, Flloyd and Iain Kennedy, Tiree 1973



We had moved to Tiree in the early 70s, running a licensed

restaurant and sub post office, romantically believing it would be a wonderful place to raise children. Three years of wind, bad business decisions and isolation cured me.



Donneil's condition deteriorated, and within a week we were back in Glasgow where I was invited to take my old voice studies class at Coatbridge College. It was during this work with a group of students that it hit me just how depressed I had become.

Specifically, we were warming up our voices, humming, concentrating on letting the vibration of the sound waves flow freely through our bodies. It is always a joy to be present when someone becomes aware of this sensation for the first time. Sound, vibration, travelling in waves from a relaxed and centred being seems to take on the directness, the clarity, the purity which we associate with light.

I hadn't been singing for some time. It's always the first thing to go when I am troubled. I may think of a song, even start to give voice to it, but it's no fun, so I stop. It is the beginning of the de-voicing process. After a while I couldn't be bothered phoning friends. I stayed in my room, pretending to be terribly busy, the sound of the phone ringing filled me with dread, rather than anticipation.

In ancient Greece the word for spirit was the same as the word for breath (and for soul) - hence our words 'in-spire' (give/receive spirit, breathe in), 'ex-pire' (lose spirit, breathe out), 're-spiration' (breathing process). We must breathe to live; our voices exist because we breathe out and the air excites our vocal chords. Hence life, voice and breath are intertwined in a unity of purpose - to connect with others and express our inner lives. We can speak carelessly, tell lies and use our voices to conceal, but oh, what power we have when we open up to inspiration and express ourselves freely.

When the spirit is low, the urge to share oneself - to 'be' in the world - diminishes. If you are wise, you realise that you need to be even more open to inspiration, even more relaxed, and especially even more generous. Unfortunately, as energy decreases, so usually does that kind of self knowledge. You see it when people are institutionalised. I observed it in Donneil, the longer he was in hospital. As he suffered setback after setback, he became progressively more paranoid, more concerned with the minutiae of hospital routine. His vocabulary shrank, his vocal range diminished.

I escorted Donneil back to Tiree, said my goodbyes and climbed back on the tiny plane to begin the next stage of my own journey - the process of recuperation, of looking for work, for inspiration, for that sense of myself which makes it worth the effort of existing.

If I found it weird to be rocketed back to Glasgow with its freezing misty rain when I thought I had left it for good, it was twice as weird being back in Brisbane where the dazzle of the light was so intense I was constantly looking for my sunglasses and finding them already on my face.

Nowadays, I often catch myself doing that essential but somehow neglected activity called breathing out. It is so easy to breathe in and clutch it until it is stale, creating tension and wasting energy. My life back in this country has gradually taken shape; there seems to be a genuine hunger in the land for the work I love.

In the evenings, I look out beyond the dark and comforting mass of Mount Coot-tha, and I see 'this most excellent Canopy the Air, this brave o'er-hanging firmament, this Majestical Roof, fretted with golden fire', and it appears to me no less than a 'wondrous and sweet-perfumed congregation of singing spires'.

© Flloyd Kennedy.

Extracts from "Journey into Light", *Erasmus*, Vol 1, Jun 98

Giving Voice Class Dec 2001 Photos: Conan Fitzpatrick

INVITATION FOR SUBMISSIONS

The theme for the Magdalena Australia Festival, to be held throughout Brisbane in 2003 is "Theatre-Women-Travelling"

The word travelling implies motion, women on the move, taking wing, taking flight. It embraces notions of Journey, Landscape and Migration; of Isolation and Congregation. It evokes dual feelings of celebration and lamentations. It recognises our physical need to cover great distances in order to meet and see each other's work, both at home and abroad.

Would you like to share your thoughts on what Women, Theatre and Travelling means to you?

What inspiring theatre have you seen travelling?

Is travel important to your art and arts practice? Why?

Send your newsletter contributions to

j.robson@qut.edu.au

We'd love to hear from you.

Deadling for next issue of the newsletter 31st May. 2002.

Newsletter

Editor Julie Robson
Artwork Lucinda Shaw
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Contributors

Grace O'Brien Leah Mercer Dawn Albinger

WHAT IS THE MAGDALENA PROJECT?

The Magdalena Project is an international womens' theatre organisation which aims to

Increase the awareness of women's contribution to contemporary theatre:

- Enable women to explore new approaches to theatre making that more profoundly reflect their own experience rather than that of men;
- Create the flora that can give voice to the concerns of women working in theatre;
- Encourage women to examine their role in the future of theatre and to question existing structures.

Those involved in the Project seek to achieve these aims by

- Providing opportunities for women to work together
- Providing opportunities for women to share, develop and pass on their work through performance platforms, festivals, pedagogical activities, workshops, collaborations, publications and conferences
- Adopting a rational approach to documentation and disseminating information
- Maintaining the flexibility of an organic structure, which will serve the expansion of the growing network.

If there is an overall objective it is to create the artistic and economic structures and support networks to enable women to work.



MAGDALENA AUSTRALIA
MagdalenaAustralia@hotmail.com

Po Box 1437 Fortitude Valley, Queensland Australia 4006

Australian Project Committee: QLD

Dawn Albinger	Nadine MacDonald
Sue Benner	Deb Bennet McLean
Therese Collie	Scotia Monkivitch
Caroline Dunphy	Sue Rider
Lana Gishkariany	Julie Robson
Flloyd Kennedy	Maryanne Stewart
	Anna Yen

NSW Donna Abela
VIC Louise Gough – Playbox Theatre
ACT Eulea Kiraly – Tuggeranong Arts Centre
NT Tania Lieman – Darwin Theatre Cmpany

National Advisory Group:

Robyn Archer Joanne Dwyer
Julie Holledge (Flinders Drama Centre)
Jenny Kemp Judith McLean
Anna Messariti

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Magdalena Festival 2003

OUR WEB SITE IS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION, AND THE FOLLOWING FORMS WILL BE PUBLISHED ON IT SHORTLY:

Application form to deliver a workshop
Application form to present a performance
Ordinary participant registration
Financial donation to the Festival

CALL FOR DELIVERING PRACTICAL / THEORETICAL WORKSHOPS
Deadline for workshop proposals: May 30, 2002.

TYPES OF WORKSHOPS
Magdalena Australia invites proposals for various types of workshops: practical and theoretical.

CALL FOR PERFORMANCES
Deadline for performance proposals: May 30, 2002

TYPES OF PERFORMANCES
Magdalena Australia invites proposals for various types of performances which may include full-scale, work-in-progress and online performance-based work.

WORKSHOP AND PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS
All proposals will be considered on the basis of their relevance to the themes and their quality. In making the final selection of contributions, the applicant's professional experience and balance in terms of gender and cultural background will be of particular importance. Application forms will be posted on our website soon, but applicants are welcome to submit proposals now by emailing MagdalenaAustralia@hotmail.com
Note: If you are submitting material such as videos, please post your application with the support material to PO Box 1437 Fortitude Valley 4006.

If the proposal is accepted, information may be used by the Festival organisers for the programme and marketing purposes. We reserve the right to have first refusal to publish the contribution in electronic, printed or picture form, or on the internet.

*For more information on how to get involved with the Magdalena Brisbane Festival contact
Dawn Albinger, Artistic Director, Magdalena Australia
Scotia Monkivitch, Executive Director, Magdalena Australia*

*Phone: + 61 7 3289 8005
Post: PO Box 1437, Fortitude Valley, Queensland, Australia, 4006.*

Email: MagdalenaAustralia@hotmail.com

Magdalena Australia would like to thank the following organisations for their on-going support of the newsletter and the Magdalena Project.



QUEENSLAND
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