

NAMATJIRA

SCOTT RANKIN

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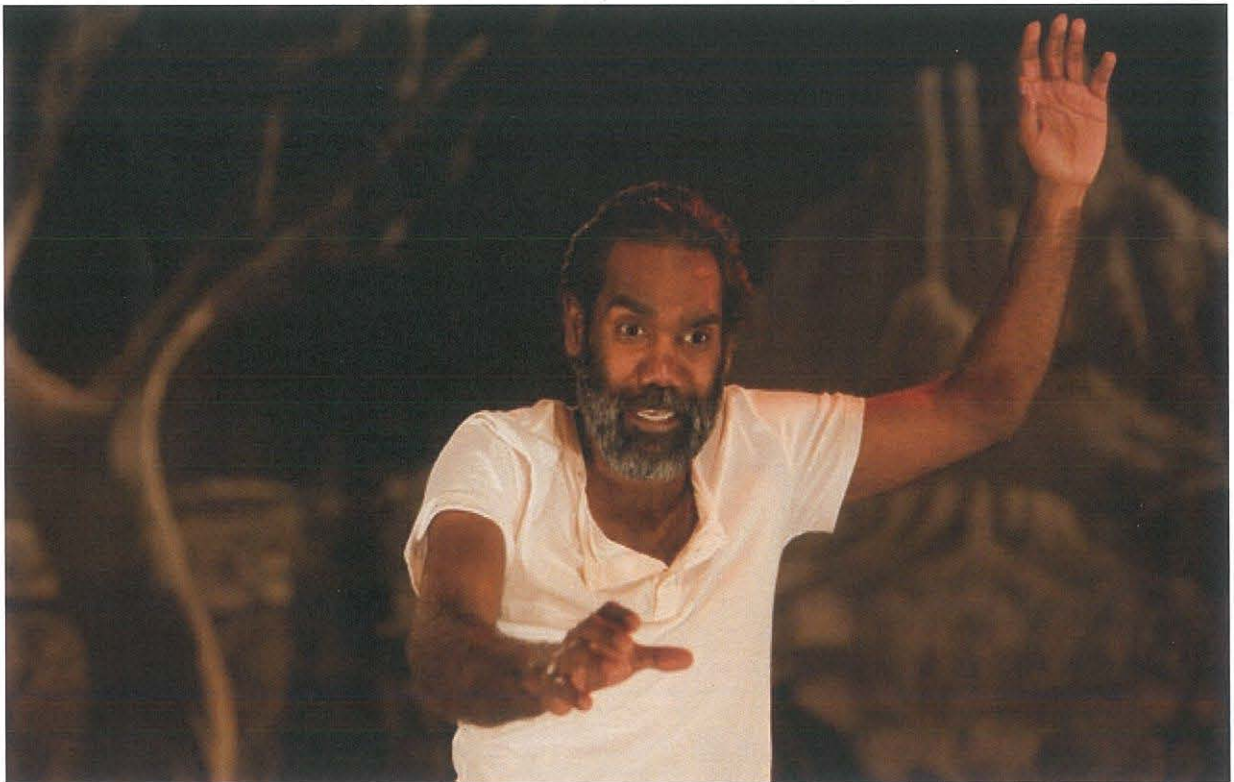
MALTHOUSE THEATRE

&

BIG hART Productions

Present

NAMATJIRA



Devised and created by Scott Rankin

EDUCATION NOTES

'...this great man we adored, used, abused and then abandoned...this first one...gone, onto the blue'

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Created by Meg Upton

CONTENTS

Cast and Creative Team

Introduction

Synopsis

Background information

- About Albert Namatjira
- About Aboriginal policies – flora and fauna / citizens
- About BIG hART Productions

Previous productions

- The Belvoir production - Reviews

About this production

- The Malthouse – Merlyn Theatre

Questions for Analysis and Discussion

- The world of the play
- Theatrical styles
- Structure of the play
- The performance space
- The actor/audience relationship
- Characterisation – use of expressive skills, use of space
- Acting - status and motivation
- Stagecraft
- Themes

Further resources

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ABOUT THESE NOTES:

Malthouse Theatre has pleasure in presenting teachers and students with these Education Notes. They are designed to enhance students' exploration and analysis of the production for the purposes of their studies in Theatre Studies, Drama, History or other curriculum areas including Art, Dance and Music. They are not offered as a definitive interpretation of the production but stand as a springboard to a broader exploration of the work. We hope that students approach *NAMATJIRA* with their own awareness in order to experience the work for themselves as an evocative and powerful piece of contemporary theatre. We invite students and teachers to explore the productions innate theatricality, its story and ideas and discover its relevance to their own and others' lives

Curriculum Links:

NAMATJIRA is a beautifully rendered production that can be enjoyed purely for the experience, but Malthouse Theatre acknowledges that many students and teachers will be attending the performance for the purposes of study and therefore suggests the following curriculum links:

The VCE Theatre Studies and Drama Study Designs

- VCE Theatre Studies – Unit 4 – Outcome 3: Performance Analysis
- VCE Theatre Studies – Unit 3 – Outcome 3: Analysing a Play in Performance
- VCE Drama Unit 1 – Dramatic Story Telling – Outcome 4: Analysing drama performances presented by other practitioners
- VCE Drama – Unit 2 – Creating Australian Drama – Outcome 4: Analysing Australian drama performance

VELS Level 6 – The Arts – Dimension: Exploring and Responding

The *Exploring and responding* dimension focuses on context, interpreting and responding, criticism and aesthetics. It involves students analysing and developing understanding about their own and other people's work and expressing personal and informed judgments of arts works. Involvement in evaluating meaning, ideas and/or content in finished products is integral to engagement in the Arts.

Teachers and students may also find the notes are useful for discussing and exploring the production through the lens of **Australian History, Politics, Visual Arts** or **Dance**.

Meg Upton, 2011

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Written & Directed by **Scott Rankin**
With **Trevor Jamieson & Derik Lynch**
Composer **Genevieve Lacey**
Set Designer **Genevieve Dugard**
Lighting Designer **Nigel Levings**
Costume Designer **Tess Schofield**
Sound Designer **Jim Atkins**
Creative Producer **Sophia Marinos**
Assistant Producer **Cecily Hardy**
Community Producer **Shannon Huber**

Also performed by **Robert Hannaford, Genevieve Lacey, Kevin Namatjira, Lenie Namatjira, Gloria Pannka, Ivy Pareroutja, Michael Peck, Elton Wirri, Hilary Wirri.**

Cultural Consultants: **Lenie Namatjira, Ivy Pareroutja, Betty Wheeler, Gloria Pannka, Mervyn Rubuntja, Hubert Pareroutja, Elton Wirri, Kevin Wirri, Hilary Wirri, Gregory Armstrong, Joseph Rontji, Rahel Engwanaka, Judith Ingkamala, Kevin Namatjira.**

Consultants: **Alison French, David Roennfeldt**

An Introduction - how to illustrate a life – *NAMATJIRA*

"I'm a storyteller here, rather than a character," says actor Trevor Jamieson. "I make it clear at the outset [that] I'm presenting Namatjira but being myself. . . . I'm out of my league with him, but I feel closer to him just by coming out here, meeting his families, going through workshops with them, explaining what we'd like to do on stage."

[Article by Nicolas Rothwell, *The Australian*, September 2010]

NAMATJIRA, a collaborative project by Belvoir and BighART, illustrates the life of an Australian Indigenous artist, painter Albert Namatjira; who took up the untraditional medium of water colour to paint the landscape so that everyone in the country saw it as if for the first time. This performance offers up a myriad of ways for students to engage with and experience his story through the arts. The Arts are central to Indigenous culture and traditions. Indigenous Australians hand down their stories orally, through song, music and dance. During each performance, while the actors tell his astounding story through words, movement and music, three of Namatjira's descendants (third generation water colour artists) will depict his country in chalk on the theatre walls. This theatrical story features live music that generates a score evocative of both European and Indigenous culture. Two actors play multiple characters across the span of 70 years. *NAMATJIRA* is a unique chance for students of theatre studies, drama and visual arts to observe the live creation of a vast and transient collaborative piece of art.

Albert Namatjira's story offers students insights into the role of the artist in different societies and cultures, as he negotiated living within his own community and the world of White Australia simultaneously. This perspective is broadened by the possibility for comparison with contemporary Indigenous art practice that can be viewed through performances at Malthouse Theatre, Drum Theatre and GPAC; an exhibition being held at Alcaston Gallery, and workshops in water colour at the Melbourne Museum in August. This provides an opportunity to understand the life and work of Albert Namatjira and for students to see how he has inspired generations of artists, and continued a tradition of storytelling through the Arts.

Creatively ambitious and uniquely possible through the longstanding relationship between Rankin and his Indigenous collaborators (including co-director Wayne Blair), *NAMATJIRA* is also a powerful story of a man riven between cultures: a celebrated artist who lost children to malnutrition, an ostracised figure who married a woman of the wrong 'skin' but on whom 600 family members were dependent, and the first indigenous Northern Territorian granted citizenship only to be unjustly imprisoned.

The Namatjira narrative and the legacy of his art through performance provides a timely prism through which we can view the current relationship of indigenous and non-indigenous Australia. Albert's life coincided with the first stirrings of popular media and television, enabling this quietly spoken man – who, with almost no training, could paint exquisitely – to make his far-off country accessible and familiar. He brought the alien desert to the living rooms of suburban Australia. The profoundly moving, energetic and humorous *NAMATJIRA* is a moving and joyous theatrical event to share with your students.

At the height of his fame, Albert Namatjira's shows sold out within minutes. Half a century after his death the charismatic Trevor Jamieson retells Namatjira's extraordinary life. The story of Albert Namatjira premiered to full houses at Sydney's Belvoir St Theatre in 2010 and is in turn compelling and hilarious. With evocative lighting and live music, Trevor Jamieson's *NAMATJIRA* is more than a performance at the theatre; it is a fascinating account of little known Australian history. It had audiences jumping to a standing ovation every night both in appreciation of the work and in acknowledgement of the importance of the story. It is how to illustrate a life on stage.

- This production is one part of a much larger project run by *BigART* called the Namatjira Project. This involved working closely with Namatjira's family to get permission for the production and decide which aspects of his story could be told and the ways in which the community could become part of the telling. It has also included watercolour painting workshops with Namatjira's family in Alice Springs & Hermannsburg.
- The play is partly about Namatjira's relationship with artist Rex Battarbee and their cultural exchange. Battarbee introduced Namatjira to watercolours; Albert opened Battarbee's eyes to his country.
- During the performance, some of Namatjira's descendants, third-generation water colour artists, will be chalking up on the walls of the theatre huge drawings of his country, based on Namatjira's own work.
- There are two actors, who each play many characters, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Some of these characters are Namatjira himself; his parents; his friend Rex Battarbee; the Pastor at Hermannsburg mission, Lady Huntingfield and the Queen (Elizabeth) as well as many minor characters.
- A musician is onstage throughout; playing live instruments to create a sound scape for the story.
- The story is told mostly in English but is also told in language (Aranda) and also some German (the language spoken at Hermannsburg mission). There are also songs in all three languages.
- Most of the events which the play retells happened during Namatjira's lifetime (1902-1959) and also earlier, during Rex Battarbee's childhood in Warrnambool, Victoria. During this time, Aboriginal people were not allowed to vote and had not yet been awarded Australian citizenship. They faced a huge range of legal restrictions and social injustices including

being banned from purchasing alcohol or land. The play explains these injustices that Albert and other Aranda people faced during this time, but students who are unfamiliar with this history might understand these aspects of the production better if they are briefed beforehand.

[BIGhART Productions, Malthouse Theatre Education, Belvoir St Theatre, Drum Theatre Dandenong, and Geelong Performing Arts Centre Education]

EXHIBITIONS:

Namatjira: Another Generation

Tuesday 2nd August - Friday 26th August 2011

Alcaston Gallery

11 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065

T + 613 9418 6444 F + 613 9418 6499

art@alcastongallery.com.au

Namatjira Family Watercolour Exhibition

Drum Theatre Foyer

226 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong, Victoria, 3175

Tuesday 2 Aug - Sunday 4 Sep (Please enquire as to opening times at time of booking)

Watercolour master classes (from 15 August to 31 August) @ Drum Theatre

REVIEWS

At the following links you can read reviews of the 2010 production of NAMATJIRA by BIG hART and Belvoir Street Theatre.

The Australian <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/portrait-with-dance-mime-and-music/story-e6frq8n6-1225932564634>

The Punch <http://www.thepunch.com.au/articles/namatjiras-story-a-lesson-for-everyone/>

Article from Sydney City Hub - <http://www.altmedia.net.au/theatre-namatjira/25168>

Article by Nicholas Rothwell of the process <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/all-the-drama-of-episodes-from-an-artists-life/story-e6frq8n6-1225916687286>

Profile of Wayne Blair, co-director - <http://www.timeoutsydney.com.au/theatre/wayne-blair--interview.aspx>

Article: The Australian <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/all-the-drama-of-episodes-from-an-artists-life/story-e6frq8n6-1225916687286>

ABOUT THE PROJECT AND *BIG hART*



Elton Wirri during a performance of Ngapanji Ngapanji

The project consists of ongoing creative development workshops with the Ngurratjuta Artists and their families and friends. The workshops include facilitated storytelling sessions, on-country painting trips, performance and leadership workshops. The workshops will culminate in a Community Presentation of the theatrical work-in-progress, and a preview of the accompanying watercolour exhibition, at the Araluen Centre, Alice Springs on the 7th and 8th of August, 2010.

From there, the show moves into rehearsal mode. The premiere of the Namatjira performance piece will be co-produced by Company B, opening in September 2010 at Belvoir Street Theatre, one of Australia's leading theatre companies and most prestigious venues. The season runs until the 7th of November. The accompanying watercolour exhibition will also be on display in Sydney at this time at the Birrung Gallery, Woolloomooloo. This provides a launch pad for Big hART to take this iconic story to national and international audiences, and for the project to continue into 2011 and beyond.

The Namatjira project is made in partnership with Ngurratjuta Many Hands Art Centre, which represents many of Albert Namatjira's descendants. Many Namatjira family members are involved in the creation of the show and exhibition, and some will even be performing on stage.

Big hART is adamant that the project work to the benefit of the Namatjira family and is currently discussing ways to ensure the positive outcomes of the project are sustainable and ongoing.

Namatjira, Albert (Elea) (1902–1959)

by Sylvia Kleinert

Albert (Elea) Namatjira (1902-1959), artist, was born on 28 July 1902 at Hermannsburg (Ntaria), Northern Territory, son of Namatjira and his wife Ljukuta. Elea belonged to the western group of the Arrernte people. In 1905 the family was received into the Lutheran Church: Elea (who was given the name Albert) and his father (who took the name Jonathan) were baptized, and his mother was blessed (as Emilie). Albert attended the Hermannsburg mission school. In accordance with the practice of the missions, he lived separately from his parents in a boys' dormitory. At 13 he spent six months in the bush and underwent initiation. He left the mission again at the age of 18 and married Ilkalita, a Kukatja woman. Eight of their children were to survive infancy: five sons—Enos, Oscar, Ewald, Keith and Maurice—and three daughters—Maisie, Hazel and Martha. The family shifted to Hermannsburg in 1923 and Ilkalita was christened Rubina.

READ MORE AT: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/namatjira-albert-elea-11217>

SYNOPSIS

The audience enters a space that is alive with a creative spirit. By the time the actual performance begins a landscape is being drawn across the blackboard backdrop to the playing space, and a portrait of the main performer Trevor Jamieson, is being painted while Trevor, seated on a stool, observes the audience.

When Trevor speaks it is as a friend and as a story teller. We learn that Albert's father – Namatjirrtja – came from the bush, fell in love with Ljukuta and they married. Elea was born in the desert in Aranda country, Central Australia, in **1902**. It was a time of drought and together Namatjirrtja and Ljukuta came to the German Mission seeking food and drink, they stayed and Elea was later baptized Albert.

Meanwhile in Warrnambool, Victoria at the turn of the 20th Century, a baby boy is born, Reginald Battarbee or 'Rex'. A small white country boy who makes friends with Wilmot, an aboriginal elder living nearby.

The story of Albert the artist and Rex the artist/soldier run parallel in this production. Albert grows up on the German mission where the pastor is caring, driven by his desire to bring the aboriginal people to God, but also to advocate on their behalf when necessary. Life is tough and sometimes babies die. Albert's father has been christened Jonathan, and his mother, Rubina. Albert is given to the mission to be raised. Meanwhile, Rex signs up for the Western Front and is sent off to the beaches of France where he is seriously wounded, scarred for life, a twisted hand and a withered arm. When he returns to Warrnambool to mend, he re-acquaints himself with Wilmot, the aboriginal man, who calls Rex the old water bird, a heron, because of the funny way he walks!

On the mission, Albert learns two new languages; some German and some English. Rex, returned now to Warrnambool, learns to paint with the gift of some water colours from his sister. Albert's father Jonathan returns to take Albert out into country to spend time with the men and become a man in the proper way, then falls in love with a beautiful young woman, Ilkalita and they elope. With two young babies to support they return to the mission.

One day a car arrives at the mission and it is Rex Battarbee, returned veteran and now artist from Warrnambool in Victoria. He brings paintings in watercolours and, especially, the colour BLUE. Albert asks Rex to teach him to paint with water colours and to create 'magic windows'. He sees painting as a way to create a life for him and his family. Albert takes Rex out into country and shows him his land, the meaning of country. Albert tells Rex that he can paint some things but not others. Some things are women's business and others are men's and still others are not of his community but are sacred. The narrator then talks about the importance of a sacred place and a sacred practice – Anzac Day and its place in the national psyche – highlighting the need for mutual respect and understanding with regard to sacred sites and sacred moments.

Albert begins to paint and so begins a desire to sell his work. The Pastor is his first client. It isn't enough. Meanwhile, traditional land is being settled by cattlemen, and stockmen drive the cattle through (White Faced Cattle song). Albert becomes a stockman like so many of his friends and family at the time. He now has eight children and needs a way out of poverty. Rex Battarbee takes some of his work to Melbourne and includes it in his own exhibition. It receives a warm reception, particularly by the society women!

Back on country, Albert and Rex go on a painting trip, sharing language and sharing thoughts. After this Rex takes more of Albert's work to Melbourne. A buzz about Albert's work begins and a famous society woman travels to Alice Springs to meet him. His work begins to sell and he begins to make some real money. He returns to country to paint, exhibits and sells. Now Albert is approached by family to help out and he freely gives. He builds Rubina a new house complete

with generated electricity. Soon Albert is supporting 600 people in his extended family. He gives freely because they ask nicely.

Rex returns to the mission with his fiancée Bernice to be married in the small stone chapel. These are the cross over days for Albert. He hunts and paints and it is his country. He paints a special picture for his friend Rex and his new bride who are now part of his country. He is admired by the elders who understand the special friendship between Albert and Rex. Then...bombs drop on Darwin and German Missionaries are now classed as enemy aliens. The Pastor is imprisoned and Rex becomes the new 'protector'.

After the war Albert's exhibition start to sell out and he becomes a wealthy man. In recognition the Australian Government makes Albert a 'citizen', meaning he can now qualify to pay tax! As a citizen he can vote, he can buy alcohol and he pays taxes. The alcohol becomes tricky because he will be 'humbugged' into buying it for others, the Aranda way. It's not all bad though. Albert can live in town and doesn't need to back on the mission at sundown...but in a cruel twist...his children do because they are not citizen.

The new Queen Elizabeth visits her empire including the Commonwealth of Australia and meets Albert Namatjira. She acquires a painting, loves it and Albert's work becomes even more popular. He advocates on behalf of his people and his family for the land that is being acquired by agriculture and pastoralists; all the good land, the land with waterholes. He isn't successful. A trip to Sydney causes much media attention and Albert is both a celebrity and an oddity as Australia's first black citizen He is painted for the Archibald Prize by Dargie and is given a two minute standing ovation at the theatre. He is given a car with his name painted on the side.

Why this ovation? What was it we were all yearning for in the cities? What was it about ourselves, that we saw as we stared through our little Namajira windows, our cheap prints, over the mantelpiece, in our rows of fibro 50s homes in brand new Kirrawee...who were we then, broken by war, 10 pound Poms, Italians with secret espresso machines, building the Snow Mountain Scheme, proudly polishing those first FJ Holdens...What was it Rex and Albert were showing us in their friendship...some other Australia? A generous one? Not this one, the one we've found ourselves sliding into... (Act II, Scene II, Trevor as narrator)

Albert is now torn apart. At home - grog, humbugged for money, can't keep up, shows others how to paint, the mission is falling apart and the Pastor, about to retire, questions it all. Albert begins to give his paintings away as gifts and in payment...for what? His father is passing. The Spirit comes and Albert tells it his name, his father's name, their real names.

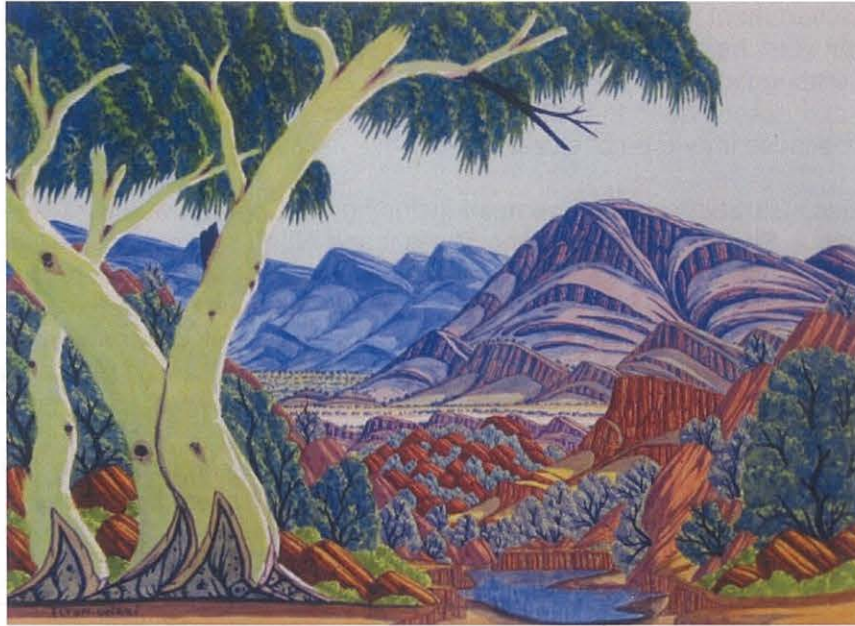
*That flying ant dreaming, he was (his father)
This Carpet Snake dreaming, I am (Albert)
Where did I go?
I am not a man?
Who am I?*

Albert is arrested and made responsible for the alcohol fuelled attack and murder of a local Pitjanjatjara woman. As the one 'citizen' he is brought to account and sentenced to six months hard labour. The media and society turn against him and he is allowed to return to country. But Albert Namitjira can no longer paint. His country is gone, the light is fading and slowly he is dying. Albert Namitjira is 57 years old.

The profoundly moving Namatjira narrative and the legacy of his art provides a timely prism through which we can view the current era, in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Albert's life coincided with the first stirrings of popular media and television, enabling this quietly spoken man – who, with almost no training, could paint exquisitely – to make his far-off

country accessible and familiar. He brought the alien desert to the living rooms of suburban Australia.

At the height of his fame, his life was a whirlwind of society functions. Yet Namatjira found himself caught in a strange cultural twilight that made little sense – by being made an honorary Citizen with his wife, they were no longer just “flora and fauna” – they were allowed to vote while the rest of their countrymen were not; they were allowed to own land and a house – yet their children couldn’t stay with them, because they weren’t allowed in town after dark; and they were allowed to purchase alcohol – but not to drink it with their friends. Eventually, the trap set by these contradictions would snap shut.



Petermann Ranges, by Elton Wirri, image courtesy of Ngurrarajuta Art Centre

THE 1967 REFERENDUM – WHAT DID IT INVOLVE?

Prior to the national referendum of 1967, Aboriginals were classified under the law as ‘flora and fauna’. The referendum asked Australians to decide whether to repeal that definition and to include Aboriginals as citizens of this country. The following two links provide a series of perspectives and facts about the referendum, events leading up to it and the results of the overwhelming support for the granting of citizenship to aboriginal Australians.

<http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/publications/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx>

http://www.wangkamaya.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=107&Itemid=1

Interview with Trevor Jamieson, Derik Lynch and Wayne Blair (director) at the Art Galley of NSW <http://www.namatjira.bighart.org/category/media/>

In this live interview at with the ABC during the 2010 season of NAMATJIRA the two performers and director outline the process of developing the production with BIG hART productions including:

- the cast and director’s research about the man, his life and his art (including learning to paint in water colours)
- the cultural sensitivities around developing the work and gaining permission from the family,

- painting and listening and the significance of sustained engagement in the development of the work
- Derik Lynch talks about playing nine different characters – five male and four female and how he has to create each of them with the assistance of costume

This is a very useful resource for developing an understanding of the making of Australian Theatre from a very particular stimulus – a man's life and history, impact and significance.

Questions for Analysis and Discussion

The following questions primarily address Theatre Studies Unit 4

The World of the Play

...the audience gets to experience it like a portrait being painted at the same time...

- Trevor Jamieson, interview at Art Gallery of NSW

While this is a contemporary production, the world of the play has a number of facets:

- What aspects of the production contribute to an historical world?
- What aspects contribute to a spiritual world?
- What aspects of this world are familiar? Unfamiliar?
- Who and what is the audience in this world?
- How do you feel about Trevor Jamieson's comment that you are witness to a portrait and landscape being painted?
- How does the experience of the live painting contribute to the audience's entry to the world of the play?

The historical period in which Albert Namatjira lived operated under very different politics.

- Consider the line, '...mmm Indigenous theatre, so intriguing, such rich cultural idioms...
- What politics is the play having fun with here?

Structure of the Play

NAMATJIRA is a scripted work that uses the device of narration in order to tell the story. Trevor Jamieson plays himself, Albert Namatjira, then several other characters within the production. Derik Lynch plays nine characters in total including all the women. The story of Albert Namatjira is linear but also compressed in time, key moments are re-created by the actors and these moments are held together by Trevor's narrative. Albert's story is told in conjunction with that of Rex Bartarbee's, born around the same time in Warrnambool, Victoria. Their meeting is critical to the story. The early scenes in the production clearly parallel the two men's early years and then the crucial meeting that takes place on the mission. The story spans 57 years.

- Discuss the structure of the production and how effective you thought it was
- Were you ever lost? Did you follow it?
- Comment on the balance between narration and re-creation/re-enactment of key moments in Albert's life.

Theatrical styles

NAMATJIRA is a production that uses several theatrical styles.

As the audience enter Trevor is seated next to a canvas. He is being painted by a portrait painter. Houselights are up.

In the very first moments of the production Trevor Jamieson assumes the role of story teller.

- Discuss the use of direct address in these first few minutes.
- How would you describe the tone? Conversational? Casual? Conspiratorial?
- How did you respond to Trevor introducing each of the artists?
- Note when Trevor returns to his stool, by the portrait and why the play is structured like this.

Further into the production, Trevor describes Albert and Rex's first visit to Albert's country.

- What style does the production work with here?
- How does the style chosen evoke the spiritual and the dreaming?

NAMATJIRA uses elements of dance

There are times when Trevor Jamieson uses aspects of traditional aboriginal dance in the work ie to illustrate totems and stories

- Discuss how the actor Trevor Jamieson uses dance to illustrate aspects of Albert's life.
- Discuss how contemporary dance is used by the actors in the production.
- When specifically is dance used? To what effect?
- Does the dance inform the narrative? Does the dance inform the characterisation?

In the online interview conducted at the Art Gallery of NSW, the interviewer asks the cast about the use of comedy in a show that is often deeply moving and very sad.

- How does comedy work in this production?
- In particular there are several comic characters – the society lady, the Queen, and the stockmen. Why do you think these characters are portrayed in comic way? Is this satire?
- HOW is the comedy achieved? Consider the use of characterisation, timing, focus, tension, language etc.

The production also uses aspects of musical theatre and heightened realism, particularly in the dance number between Albert and Rubina when they first meet, and also during the Stockmen song.

- Discuss the aspects of these styles and how these moments work within the play.

NAMATJIRA is highly non-naturalistic in style.

- Outline some of the theatrical conventions normally associated with non-naturalisms?
- What are some of the dramatic elements of non-naturalism?
- In particular consider use of stillness and silence, mood, rhythm, pathos, contrast, focus, timing and how these were evident in the production.
- Do you think this story could be told using NATURALISM? Why / why not?

The performance space

The production was originally designed for Belvoir Street Theatre <http://www.belvoir.com.au/>

The playing space was in a thrust configuration whereby the seating bank wraps around the space. In the Merlyn at the Malthouse Theatre, the configuration is similar. The stage thrusts into the audience with the seating wrapping around on two sides and some to the front.

- Why do you think this spatial design was chosen for this production?
- Where were you sitting in relation to the playing space?
- What types of directorial decisions would need to be made in such a space?
- What types of challenges would such a space create for the actors?
- How did the performance space enhance the artists working at the rear?
- Is this the type of production that could be performed in another configuration? Proscenium? In the round? End on? Traverse? Outdoors? Explain your answer.

The actor/audience relationship

Consider your discussion of the performance space and the overall design of the production, as well as the theatrical styles within the piece.

- What type of actor/audience relationship was initially created?
- How did the actor create this?
- What directorial decisions were evident in the establishment of this?

- Discuss breaking the fourth wall and its effectiveness to establish an actor/audience relationship.
- How important was the use of space in this production for establishing the actor/audience relationship?

Some of the action within the production took place behind the fourth wall and in the performance space itself. There are times when other types of actor/audience relationships are established. There is a strong moment in the first act when Rex Bartarbee returns to Warrnambool, broken by the War and Derik, playing old Wilmot, sits up stage with his back to Trevor playing Rex.

- Comment on the effectiveness of this. Why this choice? What did it represent?

Characterisation

In *NAMATJIRA* the actors each play approximately 9 to 10 characters.

Focus firstly on the actor Trevor Jamieson.

- How does he use his expressive skills to portray himself as the narrator? Consider focus, voice, gesture, movement.
- How does Trevor Jamieson convey the character of Albert Namatjira – does he embody him fully or only aspects of him?
- Other characters portrayed are Rex Bartarbee, Albert's father, Jonathan, and the German Pastor – how does the actor use accent in portraying these roles?
- How does Trevor Jamieson use dance and stylized movement to play Albert, Jonathan and the dreaming characters such as the water bird?

Derik Lynch plays both male and female characters.

- Female characters include: Albert's mother Emily, Albert's wife Rubina, a Melbourne Society Woman, the Lady Huntingdale, and the young Queen Elizabeth
- Discuss how the actor uses accent and gesture to create each of these characters.

In the production the actors sometimes transform character on stage. This is true of all of Trevor Jamieson's characters, but not all of Derik Lynch's. Sometimes he goes off stage and returns as a new character.

- How do the actors TRANSFORM character while on stage? What do they use as transformation devices?
- Comment on a particular transformation that you thought was done skilfully by one of the actors – why?
- Discuss how the overall convention of transformation of character worked in the production.

What role do the aboriginal artists play in this production? When are you aware of them and when aren't you? When are they directly spoken to and how does this help establish the world of the play?

Status and Motivation

There are several layers in the work that need to be discussed with regard to character status and character motivation.

STATUS:

- Comment on how the status between aboriginal and white Australians was portrayed in the production – perhaps choose two key moments to consider here
- For example when Albert Namatjira goes to Melbourne and Sydney, how is he regarded and how is he spoken about?
- What is the status of the aboriginal people on the mission? Is the character of the Pastor a high status character? What determined this?
- Discuss the status of Albert in his own community – consider his relationship with his father and the aboriginal elders, then his status with regard to the extended community

when he becomes famous. How does the actor convey status in these moments? Vocally? Movement? Use of Space?

- How does the law determine Albert's status?
- Do the actors use particular expressive skills including voice, gesture, focus, use of space to convey higher or lower status?

MOTIVATION:

There are several things that motivate the characters in this production including:

- Life circumstances / the requirement of basic needs
- Religious beliefs
- Nationalistic fervour – signing up to the war
- Artistic expression
- Financial imperatives
- The need to belong

Select a character that you believe could be linked to one of these and discuss how the actor conveyed this. Which characters are more clearly sketched in order to examine this?

Stagecraft

The overall **set design** of *NAMATJIRA* includes a blackboard backdrop, a representational rock with layers or sediments that could be manipulated to alter its appearance and use, an artists' frame, and a simple stool

- Select two set items and discuss in detail how the actor Trevor Jamieson used them to create the character of Albert Namatjira
- Did the set design reflect any of the major themes in the production?

Costume – costume tended to be representational in this production. Focus on the characters played by Derik Lynch:

- How did the actor use costume to create some of the female characters?
- What costumes were there and for which characters?
- How did costume act symbolically?
- How did he combine costume with expressive skills to enhance the characterisation?

Sound and music – there is a combination of live music (violin) and recorded sound effect in this production. There are several moments in the production where the violin is clearly heard.

- How did the live violin create mood and atmosphere?
- Was the violin tied to any themes in the production?
- What sound effects do you recall? How did they enhance the narrative of the production?
- How did the sound effects create mood and atmosphere?
- How did the sound effects work to create comedy?

The live art – as Trevor Jamieson says, the artists creating the chalk drawings are drawing the audience into the work (with an intended pun).

- How does the drawn background act as part of the set? What does it represent?
- When is your focus drawn to it and when does it recede? Is this deliberate? Directorial? Part of the story?

Lighting – there are some very evocative lighting states in *NAMATJIRA*.

- Consider how lighting works to separate the narrated moments and the enacted moments – did you notice any shifts? Colours? Intensities?
- Discuss how lighting worked to create location, particularly Albert's country
- Discuss how lighting was used in the musical theatre numbers such as the stockmen and the initial dance between Rubina and Albert – how did lighting work to create a sense of heightened realism or fantasy?

Themes

NAMATJIRA explores many poignant and important themes about Australia's history and its development as a nation. Some include: the establishment of white settlement, the importance and value of family, loyalty, friendship, sacred sites, whose version of history, cultural borders, discrimination etc. You may find many more.

- Discuss some of these themes in relation to your take on the production.
- How were the themes explored?
- What characters do you think embodied particular themes?
- How did the script itself set out to explore particular themes?
- How did aspects of stagecraft represent or align itself to particular themes.

FURTHER RESOURCES -

BLOG by Big hART about Namatjira - <http://www.namatjira.bighart.org/category/blog/>

2 minute video to watch about Namatjira – shot during Creative Development in March 2010 in Alice Springs

<http://vimeo.com/10598989>

James Waites has written about Namatjira on his blog here –

<http://jameswaites.ilatech.org/?p=5467>

Stateline (NT news) featured the Namatjira Celebrations in Alice Springs 9 Aug -

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/video/2010/08/06/2976191.htm>

Footage on the ABC online site here -

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/08/06/2975831.htm?site=alicesprings>

Scott Rankin & Trevor Jamieson speak about Namatjira on ABC's ARTWORKS -

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/artworks/stories/2010/2986612.htm>

You TUBE trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAq94AWwbOE>

Aboriginal cultural site:

<http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/arts/>