

## **Report on Artist Talk and Workshop with Petra Kuppers Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, DanceHouse, North Carlton**

**Discussion: ‘Dance in the community: a current perspective’ and  
Workshop: ‘Alternative approaches to storytelling as a community arts practice’**

These informal sessions were organized by a partnership of the Cultural Development Network and Ausdance Victoria. They were attended by about 45 people each, with considerable cross-over; a mix of artists, artsworkers, local government workers, academics and workers from community organisations. The presentations were followed by drinks and nibbles, which allowed all attending the chance to network and discuss issues of common interest.

### **Guest speaker**

Dr. Petra Kuppers was visiting Australia during her stay at the University of Otago, as the first Caroline Plummer Fellow in Community Dance. Petra is also Associate Professor of Performance Studies, Bryant University USA, and Artistic Director of The Olimpias Performance Research Projects ([www.olimpias.net](http://www.olimpias.net)), through which she runs community arts and disability culture workshops. Petra is the author of *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (2003) and *Bodily Fantasies: Medical Visions/Medical Performances*, (in press) and is currently writing *Community Performance: An Introduction*.

### **Discussion: ‘Dance in the community: a current perspective’**

The discussion led by Petra explored current initiatives, challenges and possibilities in community based dance, including issues of disability pride and culture.

Petra began by defining community dance around issues such as

- communally created
- process rather than product
- political labor, empowerment, analysis
- relation to professional dance practice
- different practices, different models of evaluation, skill-based and notions of success
- aesthetic challenge/aesthetic access

and issues for disability culture that included

- impairment/disability
- social model of disability
- disability pride
- politics instead of therapy; changing the world not just the self
- visibility
- respect for difference as an aesthetic driver
- The Olimpias project



*Petra in action*



*An Olimpias project*

Participants also responded to questions posed by the Australia Council's Scoping Study on Community Cultural Development, and this discussion formed the basis for Ausdance's response to the Scoping Study. (available for download from [www.culturaldevelopment.net](http://www.culturaldevelopment.net) also)

1. What are the achievements of arts programs in and with communities?
2. What do you think was the most important thing that contributed to this achievement?
3. What arts and cultural activities do you want to see in communities and what is inhibiting this?
4. What do you see as the emerging trends and needs in communities, and what role could the arts play in meeting these needs?



*Lucy Case, our youngest ever workshop participant, with her mum Vanessa*



**Workshop: ‘Alternative approaches to storytelling as a community arts practice’**

This workshop explored non-linear forms of holding on to local stories through movement and work with wool and fibre arts. Petra drew on her experience as a community dance artist in Dunedin, New Zealand, and her recent artist-in-residence work at Pukeha/Mount Bruce Wildlife Centre.



*Felt pieces handmade by Petra used as a stimulus for story telling and dance making*



Participant responses were very positive to the whole day, with almost everyone rating the events as *excellent* or *very good*. Participants particularly valued meeting and working with Petra, who was described by one as ‘*an inspiration and such a beautiful person*’. Petra’s inclusive and accessible approach was a feature commented on by many. Opportunities to discuss issues of concern and the chance to network with so many peers were also valued by attendees. Participant Ann-maree Ellis described her experience and the issues the event brought up for her in an article available for downloading from the Cultural Development Network’s website: [http://www.culturaldevelopment.net/downloads/Ann-maree\\_article.pdf](http://www.culturaldevelopment.net/downloads/Ann-maree_article.pdf)

One interesting outcome of the event, was the connection made between Richard Patterson of the National Wool Museum and Jacqui Dreessens, dance education lecturer at Deakin Uni, both based in Geelong. This connection has resulted in a collaboration between the Museum and Jacqui’s final year students, who have created an interpretation of the wool industry as part of an integrated approach to the curriculum. This activity is intended to inspire graduate teachers to think of their local cultural facilities as a resource and a possible site for integrated learning; involving dance and other curriculum areas such as history and geography.

Richard plans to invite local primary teachers to observe the outcome of the Deakin students' work, which will hopefully inspire them to connect cultural facilities and their curriculum in innovative ways.

Richard is also discussing possibilities for other collaborative activities with Ausdance, including similar workshops at the Museum as part of the annual dance teachers' conference. And for Richard, participation also had a personal professional outcome. As a self-described 'non-dancer', the accessibility of Petra's workshop resulted in him feeling confident enough to include dance for the first time in some of the activities he leads at the Wool Museum!

## EVALUATION RESPONSES

29 evaluations were received, an almost 70% response rate.

### **Overall assessment of the quality of the event:**

Excellent: 15    Very good: 9    Good: 3

### **Comments from evaluations included;**

- *Amazing and spiritual experience- WOW!*
- *Thank-you for organising the workshops with Petra. A great opportunity to network with others and be inspired by Petra's work. Really appreciated the opportunity*
- *Petra is an inspiration and such a beautiful person.*
- *Great session, well done*
- *Loved the feeling of belonging unquestioned*
- *Very accessible, clear instruction and approach*

### **People commented that they learned about**

- *New techniques*
- *How much more there is to know*
- *The value of storytelling as a starting point- the instant bonding it can create*
- *Keep it simple*
- *Deeper understanding of social/cultural aspects of dance/movement*
- *Different ways to evaluate community projects*

### **And as to whether their practice would be informed by knowledge gained, some comments included;**

- *Yes, by developing my skills in communication and inclusivity into my work*
- *Yes, methods of storytelling and sharing*
- *Introduced new ideas that I can incorporate into general workshops*
- *Incorporation of optimism and energy*

*Yes, by having the courage to approach new communities and engage them in community dance*

## Resources and information about community dance

### Petra's work

[www.olimpias.net](http://www.olimpias.net), Petra's website that lists her activities and publications including  
*Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (2003)  
*Bodily Fantasies: Medical Visions/Medical Performances*, (in press),  
*Community Performance: An Introduction*.

Contact details for Petra: [petra@umich.edu](mailto:petra@umich.edu)

### Dance specific resources

(mostly available from Ausdance: [victoria@ausdance.org.au](mailto:victoria@ausdance.org.au) 9417 1200)

*Dancers and Communities*, Poyner and Simmonds, 1997

*Face To Face: Making Dance and Theatre in Community*, Beth Shelton and Judy Fisher, Spinifex, 2002

*Positive/Negative - writings on integrated dance*, Assemble Arts, 2001

Available from the Dance-Movement Therapy Association of Australia [www.dtaa.org](http://www.dtaa.org)

*Come and Join the Dance: a creative approach to movement for children with special needs*  
2003, Jane Guthrie and Jan Roydhouse - AU\$13

*Dance Therapy Collections 1*, (1992) Editors: Robyn Rawson & Elizabeth Loughlin, \$11

*Dance Therapy Collections 2*, (1999) Editors: Jane Guthrie, Elizabeth Loughlin & Dianne Albiston, AU\$20

*Dance Therapy Redefined*, (1994) Hanny Exiner & Denis Kelynack, \$66

*Freedom to Move: Movement and dance for people with intellectual disabilities*  
(2003) Kim Dunphy & Jenny Scott, Elsevier - \$66

*Growing Older Dancing On*, (2003) Jenny Czulak-Riley, Council of the Ageing, \$32

*How the Arts Make a Difference in Therapy*, (1992) Ed: Warren Lett, Ausdance, \$11

*Invitation to the Dance: Dance for people with dementia & their carers*,  
(2001) Heather Hill, University of Stirling, Scotland

## Organisations

Ausdance [www.ausdance.org.au](http://www.ausdance.org.au)

The Cultural Development Network [www.culturaldevelopment.net.au](http://www.culturaldevelopment.net.au)

Community Dance UK, [www.communitydance.org.uk](http://www.communitydance.org.uk)

The Dance-Movement Therapy Association of Australia [www.dtaa.org](http://www.dtaa.org)

## General references about community based arts

*Art and Wellbeing*, Deborah Mills and Paul Thomas, (2004), Australia Council  
Art and Wellbeing assembles ideas and case study material which demonstrate connections between community cultural development and government 'wellbeing' initiatives under seven themes, Health, Ecologically Sustainable Development, Public Housing and Place, Rural Revitalisation, Community Strengthening, Active Citizenship, Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity.  
[http://www.ozco.gov.au/arts\\_resources/publications/art\\_and\\_wellbeing/](http://www.ozco.gov.au/arts_resources/publications/art_and_wellbeing/)

*Beginners Guide to Community Based Arts*, Keith Knight & Mat Schwarzman, (2005), New Village Press, [http://www.newvillagepress.net/pub\\_BegGuideCommunityArts.html](http://www.newvillagepress.net/pub_BegGuideCommunityArts.html)

*Champions of change: The impacts of the arts on learning*, Fiske, E.B. (Ed.). (1999). Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.  
This report compiles seven major studies that provide new evidence of enhanced learning and achievement when students are involved in a variety of arts experiences. "Champions of Change" was developed with the support of the GE Fund, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Arts Education Partnership, and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.  
<http://aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/ChampsReport.pdf>

*Evaluating Community Arts & Community Well Being: An Evaluation Guide for Community Arts Practitioners*, Clare Keating, (2002)  
Developed by Arts Victoria, VicHealth, Darebin City Council and the City of Whittlesea, this guide includes worksheets and tools to assist the community arts sector evaluate its work.  
[http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Content.aspx?topicID=239#cs\\_650](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Content.aspx?topicID=239#cs_650)

*The fourth pillar of sustainability: culture's essential role in public planning*, Hawkes, J (2001) Cultural Development Network in association with Common Ground Publishing.  
[www.culturaldevelopment.net](http://www.culturaldevelopment.net)

*Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts*  
Kevin F. McCarthy, Elizabeth Heneghan Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras and Arthur Brooks  
This new approach offers a more comprehensive view of how the arts create private and public value, underscores the importance of the arts' intrinsic benefits, and links the creation of benefits to arts involvement. <http://www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG218/>

*Literature Review: Community Arts Practice*  
This report reviews the evidence base of the VicHealth Arts for Health Program in the light of existing Australian and international studies on similar programs.  
[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/assets/contentFiles/Promoting%20Mental%20Health%20-%20Arts%20Participation%20.pdf](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/assets/contentFiles/Promoting%20Mental%20Health%20-%20Arts%20Participation%20.pdf)

*Literature Review Of The Evidence Base For Culture, The Arts And Sport Policy*  
Janet Ruiz, Social Research, Research and Economic Unit, Scottish Executive Education Department, 2004. <http://www.sportdevelopment.org.uk/evidencebase2004.pdf>



***Making Exact Change: How Arts-Based Programs Have Made Significant and Sustained Impact on their Communities***, research project on exemplary arts-based programs that have had a significant, sustained positive impact on their communities.

<http://www.lulu.com/can> or download as a free PDF from <http://www.makingexactchange.org>

***Promoting Mental Health & Wellbeing through Community & Cultural Development:  
A Review of Literature focusing on Community Festivals and Celebrations***

This report focuses on the impact of community celebrations on community development, health and wellbeing to determine what further evidence or research is required to build present knowledge in these fields and to provide assistance in developing policy or programs related to community celebrations.

[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/assets/contentFiles/PromotingMentalHealthCommunityCelebrationsFestival.s.pdf](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/assets/contentFiles/PromotingMentalHealthCommunityCelebrationsFestival.s.pdf)

***Putting people in the picture? The role of the arts in social inclusion***

Jo Barraket, Social Policy Working Paper No. 4, February 2005, Melbourne Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne, and the Brotherhood of St Laurence.  
[www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/barraket\\_arts\\_social\\_inclusion\\_1.pdf](http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/barraket_arts_social_inclusion_1.pdf)

***The origins and philosophy of the Community Dance movement in Britain and its effect on British dance culture***, [http://www.swissdance.info/svtc/HTML/community\\_dance\\_origins.htm](http://www.swissdance.info/svtc/HTML/community_dance_origins.htm)

***The Social Impacts Of Participation In The Arts And Cultural Activities***

Cultural Ministers Council Statistics Working Group, Australia, 2004

This report investigates the social impacts of participation in the arts and cultural activities. It comes with an annotated bibliography of research in a searchable Excel database.

[http://www.dcita.gov.au/swg/publications/social\\_impacts\\_final%20 2 .pdf](http://www.dcita.gov.au/swg/publications/social_impacts_final%202.pdf)

***The Social Impact of Arts Programs: How The Arts Measure Up,***

Australian research into social impact, Deidre Williams, 1996  
<http://www.artshunter.com.au/communityarts/papers/Commedia.htm>

***Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in Arts Programmes,***

Francois Matarasso, Comedia, 1997

This influential publication reports on the first stage of Comedia's research into the social impact of the arts. It analyses the social benefits of arts-based projects, from amateur to professional to community work, clearly revealing the important role that the arts can play by drawing on case studies in the UK, Ireland, Finland and New York.

<http://www.creativecommunities.org.uk/essaychunkpdfs/2.5UseorOrnamentWholeText.pdf>



The Cultural Development Network's Forums program  
is sponsored by the City of Melbourne

