Concept / Synopsis

A young woman stands in front of a crown to speak her memories, her truth and her construction. Reality gives way to memory and memory gives way to imagination. Constructing the set around her in real time, the performer acts as a conduit of multiple stories as reality, memory and imaginings play out in a filmic and sonic landscape. Based on the stories of lost loved ones collected in interviews with residents of her home town of Ayr, North Queensland, director Genevieve Trace explores the psychological construction of a life through the stories of what has past. Audiences will be left questioning the reality and imaginings of the memories of those they hold most dear.

Source: Director’s concept document

Background

Aurelian started as a short development and showing as part of La Boite’s Scratch Program in 2011. In 2012 it was selected as a Work in Residence with Metro Arts and over the course of 2012 the work has been developed through community-based research, creative development and audience feedback. In March 2012, Director Genevieve Trace interviewed community members of her hometown of Ayr who spoke about their memories of loved ones who had passed away. These interviews were then used as stimulus for a month-long development as part of Metro Arts’ Free Range. In the second half of 2012 the creative team took two week-long trips to Ayr (September and November).

The first of these periods was to capture the final visual and audio content and the second was to engage in a creative development within the region and a showing for the Ayr community.

Source: Director’s concept document
**Form**

Aurelian is an experimental hybrid performance drawing from visual theatre, film, audio storybooks, physical theatre, installation art and verbatim theatre. The work invites audiences to experience memory by engaging them through a heightened sense of space and sound.

Source: Director’s concept document

**Curriculum Connections - Dramatic Languages and Perspectives**

Dramatic Forms and Styles:

- Post-modern theatre
- Verbatim theatre
- One person show
- Visual theatre
- Physical theatre

Elements of Drama:

- Role
- Time
- Place
- Movement
- Symbol

Conventions:

- Intertextuality
- Appropriation
- Fragmentation
- Hybridisation
- Direct address
- Multi-media
- Multiple-roles?
- Non-linear narrative
- Viewpoints
Skills of Performance:

- Acting
- Designing
- Directing
- Performance technologies (sound, image and lighting)
- Movement
- Play building

Themes and Ideas

- Memories
- Loss of loved ones
- Grief
- Life in regional Queensland

Brisbane Festival’s Recommendation and Rating

Brisbane Festival generally suggests that Aurelian is appropriate for Drama Students in Years 11 and 12. Aurelian contains mature themes exploring grief and memories of loved ones who have passed away.

Three Questions with the Director: Genevieve Trace

1. Why is this production such a significant work for students to see?

The work is a good example of hybrid form employed as a direct result of the content of the show. The AV and sound exists as a construct of not only the form, but of the narrative of the work. The live performers exist as both manipulators and responders to the media. Throughout the work a tension between the live performer and the media grows. At first the media is there as a tool used by the performer to communicate stories. As one of the interview participants stated, “At times my memories can play out like a movie in front of me”. As the work goes on it becomes apparent that the performer is becoming more and more affected by the media, rather than affecting it. The media finally overtakes the space rendering the performer helpless as the images of memory flood the performance space. In this regard the work is important for students to see because it has a strong rationale for the integration of multimedia. I think one of the best questions to be used in discussing the work with students is about the use of media and the meaning they derived from its use.
2. What do you hope audiences will take away from viewing this production?

*Aurelian* audiences are invited to journey through both the stories of memory and the experience of grief. I hope that audiences go away with recognition of the multifaceted nature of grief so that when they are or someone they know experiences loss they can be aware of the nature of the emotion they are dealing with. To know that grief is something that does not follow a linear narrative leading to a sense of “getting over it” and that the trials faced by the people left behind can be cyclic, tangential and can take time to reach a new sense of equilibrium in their lives. I hope *Aurelian* creates an awareness of this so that the people who witness it can better support their loved ones in times of grief and loss.

Additionally, I hope the narratives that have been taken from my home town used in *Aurelian* inspire people to engage in their own storytelling of the ones they have lost. Storytelling is a cathartic experience for my family and allows us to not only remember my sister but is a subtle approach to letting each other know that we are still connected and there for each other as the years pass. Ultimately you are a changed person when loss hits you, but with the support of a community and family you are able to re-engage with your emotional self and the learning leaves you a better person. I know this sounds extremely optimistic and the work only really hints at this because I do not believe that I have reached that stage yet. I wanted to leave the audience with a sense of incompletion to the process so that they are aware of the time it takes to grieve and redefine your sense of self; a process I believe cannot be translated into an hour long show.

3. What have been the most challenging and exciting aspects of creating this production?

The most exciting aspect of creating *Aurelian* has been the interview process, to connect with my community and share stories of our past. I learnt so much, not only about the people I was interviewing and their loved ones, but about my community. I interviewed people from a cross-section of the cultures that reside in my community. I learnt about the history and what it was like to grow up in my town from different perspectives. I learnt how different people moved through the process of grief and how it changed them. I learnt a lot about faith, whether it prescribed to a religion or was based on a personal spirituality. So I guess my learning has been the most exciting facet of making *Aurelian*. 
The most challenging aspect has been giving myself permission to embed my story in the work. With so many voices making up the narrative (non-linear as it is) of *Aurelian* I struggled to allow the work to show my story. I think this is because I am not at the stage that a lot of the interview participants are at. I am still a little bit lost in the middle of my grief. I have a lot unanswered questions and unresolved emotions. But with the help of my creative team I have been able to highlight that journey and I believe it is embedded in the dramaturgical structure of the work. The coda that concludes the work is indicative of the unresolved relationship I have with my own grief.

**Useful Resources and Further Reading**

