

2007

Speakin' out blak: an examination of finding an 'Urban' indigenous 'Voice' through contemporary Australian theatre

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Blackmore, Ernie, *Speakin' out blak: an examination of finding an 'Urban' indigenous 'Voice' through contemporary Australian theatre*, PhD thesis, English Literatures, Philosophy and Languages, University of Wollongong, 2007. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/647>

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Speakin' out Blak:
An examination of finding an “Urban” Indigenous
“Voice” through contemporary Australian Theatre

Including the plays

Positive Expectations and Waiting for Ships

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award
of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

From

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Ernie Blackmore BCA MCA

School of English Literatures, Philosophy and Language

2007

Thesis Certification

Certification

I, Ernie Blackmore, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of English Literatures, Philosophy and Language, University of Wollongong is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Ernie Blackmore

April 10, 2007

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Abstract

This thesis attempts a complex negotiation between critical and creative writing modes, articulated through the prism of Indigenous issues. As an urban Indigenous writer and critic, I have sought to provide a platform from which it may be possible both to chart a recognisable urban Indigenous “voice” and to see how it can be given shape through the medium of contemporary theatre. Critically the thesis examines the absence of an urban Indigenous voice within mainstream Australia and the reasons for its absence. It asks how the identity, legitimacy and supremacy of that voice can be accommodated

The creative works contained within the thesis are disparate in time, “voice” and setting, demographics: *Positive Expectations* is contemporary and urban, a more conventionally structured drama looking at issues about racial and sexual identity and questions of family. *Waiting for Ships* is a dramatic monologue that addresses more personal issues to do with the Stolen Generations and the politics of child removal. Both provide different takes on what an urban Indigenous voice can sound like and the messages it can speak

This thesis argues that there has always been a need for an “urban” Indigenous voice, but that that voice has largely been silenced by academe, industry, politics. As a result, urban Aboriginal people may well experience a redoubled sense of cultural loss because of this effective denial of their identity. This thesis seeks to provide a platform for this Indigenous voice to be heard. Finally, this thesis argues for the connection between the theatre and the public and the need for theatre to be both a platform for didactic performance and the

vehicle to engage readers and audiences as essential participants in the process of reshaping views about the role of urban Aboriginal people in theatre, politics and nation.

April 10, 2007.

Acknowledgements

My initial and sincere thanks must go to my partner Phillip White for his total and unswerving support that has maintain me through my years at university and particularly through the last year of my Ph.D candidature. He has endured much.

To my colleagues at the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, Drs Colleen McGloin and Michael Adams my sincere thanks for their collegiality and unselfish support. To my 'brothers and sisters' Joanne Buckskin, David Kampers, Faye McMillan, Sharon Anderson, Evelyn Rankmore and Julie Booker who have been there for me through good times and tough times, in very special ways, my heartfelt thanks for your continued support. To Dr John Bern, thank you for your counsel, encouragement, and support for facilitating the conditions that enabled the completion of this thesis.

The past and extremely valuable members of the staff of the Aboriginal Education Centre in the 'old' house, Bill Harrison, Carole Speechley, Glenn Williams, Gail Hood and others who were instrumental in keeping me on track in my early days at Uni. To Julia St George my everlasting thanks as you went from ATAS tutor, to mentor, to life-long friend. Your good humour balanced with wisdom and good advice was instrumental in getting me to the point where I could contemplate higher levels of study. Your foresight was greater than mine at times but unerring.

To my co-supervisors, Dr Clem Gorman in those first few months, and Russell Gluck for an interesting and challenging eighteen months in the middle, my gratitude, and Dr Heather Jamieson whose unerring eye kept the writing on track, but to my primary supervisor Professor Gerry Turcotte, whose patience and understanding knew no bounds, there are no real words to say how I feel at this time. You have exceeded all the expectations I might have had of a supervisor, then exceeded those I could not have imagined and still you provided support at a level that has made it possible for me to have completed this task.

To my late father; you were never more wrong Jack.