

mtc MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

THOM PAIN (based on nothing) MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT

11.8.07

ADAM BENNETT, MTC MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER

RADIO

ABC RADIO VICTORIA

15.7.07

The Sunday Show

Neil Pigot completed live-to-air studio interview with presenter Helen Razer, broadcast statewide

SYN MELBOURNE

9.7.07

The Mess Room

Neil Pigot completed live-to-air telephone interview with presenter Gillian Terzis

PRINT

SUNDAY HERALD SUN

29.7.07

IE

Review by Kate Rose

HERALD SUN

14.7.07

Big Weekend

Editorial published with season, venue and booking information

16.7.07

Arts & Entertainment

Neil Pigot interview with Harb Gill published as cover feature with colour photograph

1.8.07

Arts & Entertainment

Review by Chris Boyd published with colour photograph

THE SUNDAY AGE

29.7.07

M

Review by John Bailey

THE AGE

13.7.07

EG

Editorial published with season, venue and booking information

16.7.07

Concierge

Season information published with booking details

20.7.07

Metro

Neil Pigot and Julian Meyrick interviews with Robin Usher published with colour photograph

20.7.07	EG Editorial published with season, venue and booking information
23.7.07	Metro Review by Cameron Woodhead published with colour production photograph
27.7.07	EG Editorial published with venue, season and booking information
THE AUSTRALIAN 23.7.07	Arts Review by Alison Croggon published with colour production photograph
MX 19.7.07	News Editorial published with venue, season and booking information
INTERNET www.abc.net.au 15.7.07	victoria/sunday Editorial posted
www.australianstage.com.au Jul-Aug 07	what's on Editorial posted with promotional photograph, venue, season and booking information
goaustralia.about.com Jul-Aug 07	theatre Editorial posted with promotional photograph
www.lookforward.com.au 19.7.07	events Promotional photograph posted with venue and season information
www.theage.com.au 20.7.07	news Neil Pigot and Julian Meyrick interviews with Robin Usher posted with colour photograph
theatrenotes.blogspot.com 24.7.07	reviews Review posted Alison Croggon

mtc

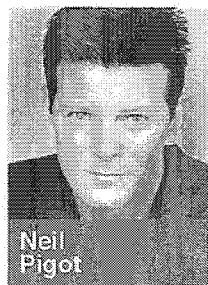
2007 Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Trudi Sheppard t.sheppard@mtc.com.au / (03) 9684 4528



Melbourne Theatre Company presents the Australian Premiere of



THOM PAIN

(BASED ON NOTHING) By Will Eno

Director Julian Meyrick
Lighting Designer Kerry Saxby

MTC's Studio Season
Previews from 19 July 2007
Opens Saturday 21 July 2007
At the beckett theatre, The CUB Malthouse
until 11 August 2007

"One of those treasured nights in the theater ... Run, don't walk. Four stars. Plus an extra ... Eno is a Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation ... A small masterpiece." – The New York Times

"Magnificent. It should be seen." – The Financial Times

"A sublime piece of trickery" – Time Out New York

"Dazzling" – The Daily Telegraph

There can be nothing more rivetingly theatrical than the one-person show, as evidenced by such recent MTC triumphs as Jefferson Mays in *I Am My Own Wife*, Jacki Weaver in *The Blonde, the Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead*, Richard Piper in *The Daylight Atheist* and Caroline O'Connor in *Bombshells*.

Now, MTC favourite Neil Pigot – under the direction of his long-time friend and colleague Julian Meyrick – joins their virtuoso ranks in the Australian Premiere of **THOM PAIN (based on nothing)** by Oppenheimer Award-winning playwright Will Eno.

A finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize, **THOM PAIN (based on nothing)** is a wry monologue in which an ordinary man, Thom Pain (Neil Pigot), muses on childhood, yearning, disappointment and loss. Cataloguing the eternal agonies of the human condition, Thom Pain draws his audience into his last-ditch plea for empathy and enlightenment.

THOM PAIN (based on nothing) premiered in 2004 at the Pleasance Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland and then transferred to the Soho Theatre in London in September of that year. In Edinburgh, the play won the coveted Fringe First Award, the Herald Angel Award and was cited by *The Guardian* as the best play at the Fringe. Its subsequent American Premiere played to standing-room-only audiences off-Broadway for most of 2005.

Will Eno is a Helen Merrill Playwriting Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, an Edward F. Albee Foundation Fellow and was awarded the first ever Marian Seldes/Garson Kanin Fellowship by the Theatre Hall of Fame, for which he was nominated by Edward Albee.

Green Room Award-winner Neil Pigot has previously appeared with MTC in *A Single Act*, *Dinner*, *Fred* and *Medea*.

Bookings: www.mtc.com.au or 1300 136 166

Ticket Prices: \$16 - \$41

Performance Schedule: Mon & Tue 6.30pm, Wed 1pm & 8pm, Thu & Fri 8pm, Sat 4pm & 8.30pm (21 Jul 2pm & 8pm)

Invitation



THOM PAIN
(BASED ON NOTHING)
By Will Eno

Melbourne Theatre Company and the University of Melbourne are pleased to invite you and your guest to the Australian Premiere of

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING) By Will Eno

With Neil Pigot

Director Julian Meyrick
Lighting Designer Kerry Saxby

beckett theatre, The CUB Malthouse,
113 Sturt Street, Southbank
On Saturday 21 July 2007 at 8pm

RSVP by Friday 13 July 2007
via email rsvp@mtc.com.au
or on (03) 9684 4557

This is a personal invitation and is not transferable.
Seats will not be available unless an RSVP is received
by the due date.

www.mtc.com.au

Melbourne Theatre Company is a department of the
University of Melbourne



mtc 007



Sunday Age

Sunday 29/7/2007

Page: 31

Section: Supplements

Region: Melbourne Circulation: 220,300

Type: Capital City Daily

Size: 130.80 sq.cms.

Published: -----S

Brief: MTC

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)

By the Melbourne Theatre Company.

The CUB Malthouse, 111 Sturt St,

Southbank. Until August 11.

\$27-\$38. Tel. 1300 136 166

★★★★

Plays that tackle life's essential meaninglessness, the nothing at the heart of existence and the futility of the human condition, can often be awful bores. After all, even if we are just dust in a vacuum, it's not too much to ask art to allow us to pretend otherwise, if only for a moment. New York playwright Will Eno's *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* is an absurd, existential piece that avoids such pitfalls, however. Though its subtitle might suggest a meaninglessness at its core, it's an ironic one. The one-man show, while focused on a character struggling with angst and loneliness, is above all about the quest to find something better, something truer to hold onto as we face the void. The production itself is appropriately stripped back. Eno mostly does away with various dull theatrical conventions — you know, set, character, plot — and instead confronts us with a sombre-suited stand-up comic shovelling out one-liners even he doesn't seem to have much faith in. From the outset, it's

sharp-tongued comedy delivered in the driest of tones, Neil Pigot offering a commendably restrained performance that instantly connotes world-weariness. Pain is a broken man whose quips are his last, perhaps only, defence against the failure of his life. But through the comedy, a portrait emerges of his past and the moments that have left him so bitter and ruined. The death of a childhood pet and the dissolution of a romance have made him what he is, but in processing these events — slowly, even reluctantly — we're made aware of a deep sorrow and regret he is attempting to counter. Pain's existential refusal of hope and a deeper meaning to life gradually comes to be seen as his feeble way of shoring up defences against a life whose meaning is too much to handle. He is his own worst enemy, in this way, but his tentative steps towards something else are at least instructive to his audience. Julian Meyrick's direction places the focus solely on his performer, all other details pulled back so that language — rich, constantly surprising language — becomes the real character we're witnessing. It's another deeply encouraging work from the MTC, of a style consciously removed from the realist dramas that often make up the bulk of its annual program. More, please.



Sunday Herald Sun

Sunday 29/7/2007

Page: 18

Section: Inside Entertainment

Region: Melbourne Circulation: 618,000

Type: Capital City Daily

Size: 137.13 sq.cms.

Published: -----S

Brief: MTC

Pleasure in Pain

O matter what difficulties Jean-Paul Sartre faced in his philosophical career, at least he never had to deal with sour moments shared by later thinkers who declared language to be meaningless.

Will Eno had no such luck, but uses those very lemons to make lemonade by exploring the realms of self and identity while foregoing fixed meaning in *Thom Pain*.

It is a one-man, one-act show centred on an Everyman looking back on life, loves and childhood, and asking what it all means without resorting to the ubiquitous catch-cry: whatever.

Neil Pigot becomes the lone character so completely it is almost impossible to look away from his poignant, despairing monologue as he bathes the stage in pathos.

The script is intriguing and, like the best post-modern work, relies heavily on reinterpretations of other texts. From Sartre's *Nausea* to the ideas espoused by Jacques Derrida through

THEATRE

Thom Pain (Based on nothing)

The Malthouse

★★★★½

→ In short: Much ado about nothing. Or something. Whatever.

to Shakespeare, Eno has created a playful, affecting piece examining the interaction between emotion and language.

Pigot even bears a passing resemblance to one of the pioneers of absurdist theatre, Samuel Beckett, as he paces the stage.

The stark set adds to the timelessness of the performance, and when Pigot starts speaking in absolute darkness there is obviously a clear refusal to play by well-established theatrical rules. The acting and writing are thorough, but the show's brilliance comes from the intellectual interaction demanded of the audience.

This is not a show of sound and fury, relying instead on head games and fast-paced non-linear narrative to keep the audience engaged.

Incidentally, The Malthouse Theatre should brush up on sound-proofing, especially if there's a loud musical show going on next door. I didn't see Renee Geyer listed on the credits for *Thom Pain*, but I certainly heard her.

KATE ROSE



Age
Monday 23/7/2007
Page: 14
Section: Metro
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Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 287.88 sq.cms.
Published: MTWTFS-

Brief: MTC

A play on words on a life forlorn

THEATRE **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)**

By Will Eno, Melbourne Theatre Company, CUB Malthouse, Southbank, July 21. Until August 11. Running time: 85 minutes, www.mtc.com.au

Cameron Woodhead Reviewer

WILL Eno's *Thom Pain* (based on *nothing*) is a brilliant and vexing play. For all its postmodern chicanery, it deals with a problem as old as language — namely, language. "Words, words," as Stoppard's Guildenstern says. "They're all we have to go on."

Thom Pain works in an artistic tradition that plays on limitations and conventions of form. It's meta-theatre, a shaggy dog story — the kind of play that, to paraphrase Northrop Frye, embodies a respect for art as process. And as with the greatest exponents of this tradition, Eno is both craftsman and prankster.

The name of the title character ironically recalls a towering figure of the Enlightenment, author of *The Rights of Man* and *Common Sense*. Our optimism and faith in human rationality have soured since the 18th century: the bright apple of reason sits in the same lunchbox as the vomit of consciousness, and

Thom Pain knows it.

What the aptly named Pain is desperately trying to communicate, largely unsuccessfully, is the precise contours of his own vomit. What is it to be Thom Pain? The answer arrives in fragments, tenuously linked by wild digressions, clever wordplay and recurrent doubt about the whole enterprise.

Pain reminds me irresistibly of Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy, who sets out to write his life story and, after hundreds of pages, still isn't born. But he is not as genial as Tristram. Like Joyce's Dedalus or Foster Wallace's Hal Incandenza, Pain's intellect is a lonely and besetting phenomenon.

Words fail him relentlessly, but he keeps on talking, making something out of nothing. And the nothing arrives in many guises: as an abortive attempt at audience participation; or the kind of formal linguistic nullities that have seen Eno compared with Beckett ("I daresay . . . no, I don't" and "I'll skip the details and the main bits"); or the moment where Pain declares "I have a rich interior life", before standing expressionless and silent for a minute or two.

Amid the rich humus of dead words at the forest floor, there's the occasional tree, etched in such striking detail that the verbal futility Pain insists on is temporarily subverted. A dog being electrocuted, a childhood ending, a wet dream, a love affair that went badly — all are made sublime by the sheer effort it takes to achieve them.

Neil Pigot renders the comic disillusionment of this one-man show with asperity and precision. He's depressive, dry and downbeat, spitting the world out of the side of his mouth. But he fails to capture with equal vividness Pain's small but fierce triumphs. Where is the glint in Pain's eye when he does manage to convey a fragment of feeling? Where's the jolt when he stops struggling and chokes on his words?

At the end of this beautiful, difficult play, I felt robbed of the thrill of human connection. It might not be a defect in the performance. That the chasm between people remains absolute is certainly a valid reading of *Thom Pain*. But if words are all we've got, it would be comforting to think that, sometimes, they're enough.



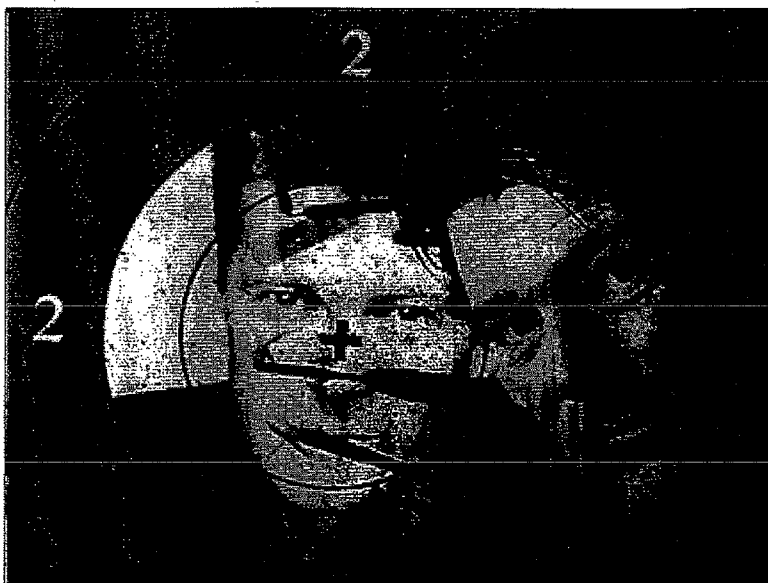
Spitting the world out of the side of his mouth: Neil Pigot as Thom Pain.

PICTURE: JEFF BUSBY



Herald Sun
Wednesday 1/8/2007
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Region: Melbourne Circulation: 525,000
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Brief: MTC



Hitting the target: actor Neil Pigot in *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)

Where: Beckett Theatre, Malthouse, until August 11

Reviewer: Chris Boyd

THE Melbourne Theatre Company doesn't just let its hair down when it puts on shows down the road at the Malthouse. It takes its britches down as well.

It's kind of cool that this city's flagship theatre company — which needs to make a mountain of money at the box office to merely survive — is prepared to take a punt on PoMo once in a while. Yes, the dreaded POst MOdern.

There's a brilliant academic at Swinburne who reckons postmodernism is the main reason behind the rise in suicide. With the death of the grand narrative come a whole lot of little deaths. Real deaths.

Thom Pain's narrative is anything but grand. The story of a painfully shy, bee-stung boy (and his electrocuted

dog!) who grows up to be stung again by love is splintered: smashed into razor-sharp shards of colour, kaleidoscopic fragments shored against his ruin.

It's not so much a stream of consciousness as a dribble — then a spurt. *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* is like a stand-up comedy routine by a man in mourning for his unlived life. Not glum or tragic, just wistful. And a bit angry.

This new production, directed by Julian Meyrick, comes after successful seasons in Edinburgh, London and New York.

The play was nominated for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize. Playwright Will Eno, though based in New York, is more widely produced in the UK.

His play is frustrating at times — the jokey games and puns ("love cankers all") get a bit threadbare — but it's more cleverly written than you might at first think.

And, be warned, it demands a degree of alertness you might not usually bring to a grand narrative play. But it will amply reward it.

Definitely one for the adventurous.



Everyman shares the pain

THEATRE

Thom Pain (Based on Nothing)

By Will Eno. Melbourne Theatre Company. Beckett Theatre, CUB Malthouse, Melbourne. July 21. Until August 11. Tickets: \$41. Bookings: 1300 136 166.

CHRISTOPHER Shinn, one of the rising stars of the American stage, recently observed ironically that most of his plays premiere in England. Is this a trend? His fellow New Yorker Will Eno, another exciting talent, seems to follow the same pattern.

Thom Pain (Based on Nothing) premiered at the 2004 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where it won a swag of awards. It then transferred to a successful season in London before finally opening in New York, and was ultimately shortlisted for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize.

Now the MTC, demonstrating an unusually acute eye for bold new writing, gives us a chance to see what the fuss is about. And it's easy to see why this monologue attracted notice. It's quite brilliant.

Thom Pain is really a poem: albeit a highly theatrical poem that owes much to the plays of Edward Albee and Thornton Wilder. But the writer who kept suggesting himself as I watched it was the 1950s New York poet, Frank O'Hara.

It's not so much style, though O'Hara and Eno have plenty of that, and Eno shares O'Hara's wit and lyrical gift, as sensibility. Like O'Hara, Eno is a writer who perceives human fragility and imperfection with a sceptical but wholly unironic compassion.

Neil Pigot's performance on an almost naked stage is all the more moving for its restraint. Eno has created a fragmented everyman, a damaged soul ill at ease in his mortal body.

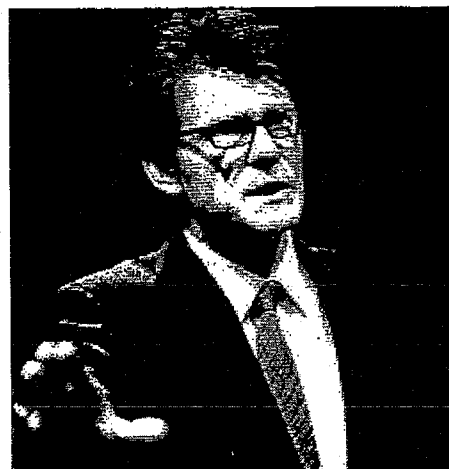
Pigot is superb, realising his fractured character with subtlety and heartbreaking candour. He stands before us, slightly dishevelled, in a plain suit and glasses, and delivers a painfully funny stand-up

routine (complete with a raffle that never occurs) in which he recounts for us the injuries of his life.

All his injuries are absurd and tragic, from the electrocution of his beloved childhood dog to his broken love affair: "I disappeared in her and she, wondering where I went, left. Isn't it wonderful," says Pain, with deceptive blandness, "how we never recover?"

As he makes clear at one point, he's a contemporary version of Tom O'Bedlam, a truly urban "unaccommodated man" who, for all his suit and tie, is no more than "a poor bare, forked animal". He is, in fact, an unexpectedly gentle reflection of our own unacknowledged pain. He offers himself in all his comic inadequacy and asks us squarely to let it be enough. And, you know, it is.

Alison Croggon



Superb: Neil Pigot in *Thom Pain*



Laughter and pain recipe for pure truth

Neil Pigot found words of substance amid
the theatrical cake. writes **Robin Usher.**

ACTING is all about taking a writer's words and making an imaginary character believable. It is a task that Green Room Award winner Neil Pigot has undertaken many times on television and on the stage.

But his latest role for the Melbourne Theatre Company is different. "What I want to say about life generally lines up with this play," he says of his character, Thom Pain, in a one-man show written by American Will Eno. "It's a story I need to tell because it's really close to my skin."

Pigot discovered the play, *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, when he read a *New York Times* review on the web that described it as "stand-up existentialism" inspired by Samuel Beckett. "I'm a bit suspicious of American reviews, which can be too sentimental. But I traced the play back to its premiere at the Edinburgh Festival and the British reviews were just as positive."

It won Edinburgh's 2004 Fringe First Award and other prizes before transferring to London. After opening in New York the following year, it played

to standing-room-only audiences for most of 2005 and went on to be a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Pigot tried to interest his friend, Julian Meyrick, who is associate director at the MTC, in the play but Meyrick thought at first that he was referring to something about the American revolutionary figure.

But in a strange coincidence, the MTC's artistic director, Simon Phillips, had seen *Thom Pain* performed in New York and returned to Melbourne, convinced it would suit both of them. The result is a production opening at the Malthouse tomorrow.

Although Meyrick admits it took him a long time to appreciate Pigot's view, he now agrees with his friend's statement: "If Julian and I could have willed a play to be written, this would have been the one."

Pigot plays the part of an ordinary man musing about his childhood, yearnings and disappointments. "It's OK if it is not everyone's cup of tea, because the writing makes you realise it's

impossible to please everyone," he says.

"It asks for individual responses, even if people laugh at the same time, and even cry." He says the play calls on people to engage privately with what he calls "pure truth".

Meyrick describes it as a "weird" mixture of late-Beckett monologue presented by a stand-up comedian. "The core emotion is a Beckett-like examination of the pain of life but, by contrast, the verbal surface is very witty."

He agrees with Pigot that, like late Beckett, it will not suit all tastes. But the actor insists it will add another colour to what he regards as theatre's increasingly monochromatic palette.



Age
Friday 20/7/2007
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Size: 595.74 sq.cms.
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Brief: MTC
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"We seem to be living in a culture that prefers labels to substance. There is always a lot of theatrical cake around, but every so often people feel the need for a Jatz with cheese on top," Pigot says.

It's a story I need to tell because it's really close to my skin. 7

NEIL PIGOT, actor

The play's 42-year-old author has won many fellowships but *Thom Pain* was his first big New York production. In the play, Eno is speaking to anyone who has ever felt "not really outfitted for this life, not properly clothed, not enough skin".

One of his early champions was the playwright Edward Albee, author of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*

Pigot is relishing the opportunity to perform the role, which has almost sold out even before it opens. "Something like this is cathartic," he says. "It's easy to get my teeth into a play that seems a combination of all the internal monologues I've been having with myself for the past 12 months."

Pigot's career has covered everyone from cops to Chekhov — he's best known for his semi-regular role as Inspector Falcon-Price in television's long-running *Blue Heelers*.

But he says it is only recently

that he has begun to relax with the idea of being an individual who may not always fit in "as opposed to a cobbled-together human being who pleases everybody".

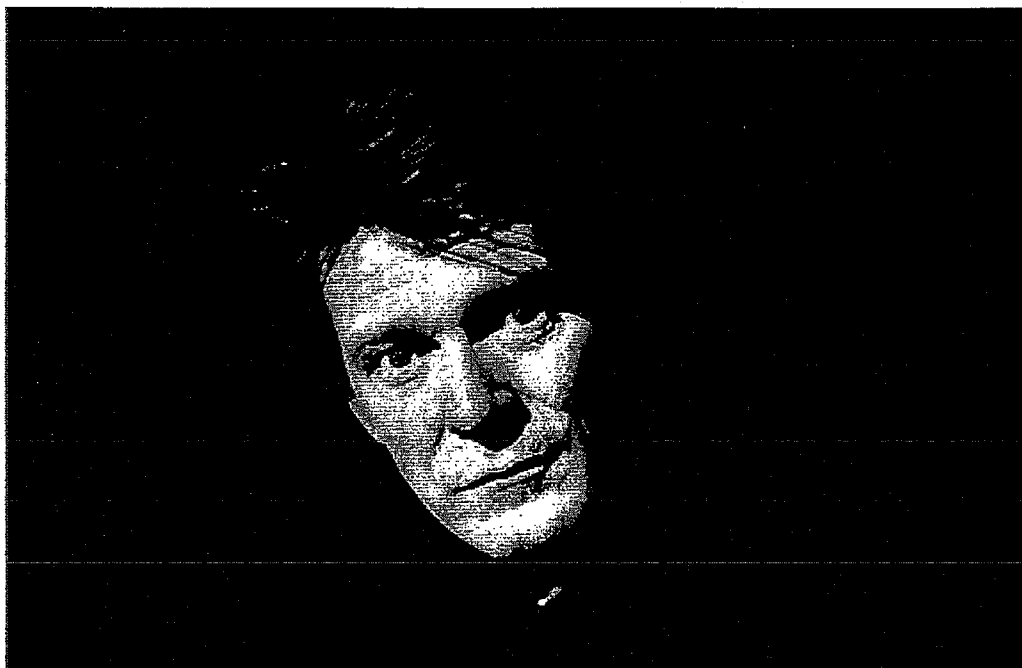
As well as Beckett, overseas reviews of the play also referred to the poetry of T. S. Eliot, which Pigot says is due to the "extraordinary beauty" of the writing.

"Eno puts words of substance in your mouth," he says. "It's an interesting sensation because they've got real bite."

Thom Pain (based on nothing), from tomorrow until August 11 at the Malthouse. Book on 1300 136 166.

LINK

► www.mtc.com.au



Actor Neil Pigot discovered *Thom Pain* when he read a US review of the work.

PICTURE: RODGER CUMMINS



Sharing the Pain

THEATRE

Harbant Gill

THOM Pain likes to berate his audience until at least one walks out. He yanks another on to the stage as he rants about the vagaries of life.

Why would anyone spend 70 minutes with such a Pain?

"He's the kind of guy I want to hang out with," says Neil Pigot, who goes solo in New Yorker Will Eno's play *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*.

"He's a feeling man and I feel we live in a world that is increasingly feelingless.

"Thom Pain is living his feelings, and when you live your feelings, not only do you feel happiness and joy and love, you feel all the other things as well, like pain and sorrow.

"In a world where we increasingly seem to try to get rid of the hard bits, Mr Pain, aptly named, is facing the hard bits.

"Despite Thom Pain's pain and his anguish, he has great joy and love and hope. Because hope comes with feeling as well."

For Pigot, the 42-year-old Eno's play is a timely opportunity to "peel back the skin and allow an audience to see something very raw and something very pure".

If that means losing an audience member or two, so be it. The play

demands the capacity, as in life, to hang in there. Pain's journey is necessarily intense, like "a compression of life in a feeling way".

"I wonder what life's like in that last minute," Pigot says. "I imagine it's a series of vignettes, a series of expressions of who you were and what happened to you and how you've ended up where you've ended up. If you were to cram every kind of feeling you had in your life into 70 minutes, bang."

Thom Pain, says Pigot, is a feeling man in a wordy body.

"What he's on about is that you're not what you say, you're what you do. We can all say a whole lot of things, but in the end it's what you do that matters.

"I said this to my daughter the other day... she hadn't brought the bins in," Pigot says with a chuckle as he remembers the father-daughter chat with his 16-year-old.

"I said, 'You can say as many things as you like. You can say you're concerned about the environment and still take a five-minute shower. You can say you don't like the way our country's being run, you can scream at the television as much as you like, but unless you actually do something about it, it means nothing.

"She's now taking two-minute

showers. And yesterday she brought the bins in."

Diving into life is what Pain is about. The best audience, therefore, would be "where they actually touch their inner-self".

Not for Pigot the slippery, quiet slide into a theatre seat, and out. He won't even have that at the Melbourne Theatre Company.

He has defied convention to transform his welcome poster at the MTC into a dart board, with a photo of himself at the bullseye.

"I offered everybody the opportunity to throw darts at my head," he says, pointing at the scorecard that's popped up among staff. "It's like what Thom Pain's on about. Things can get into a groove, can't they? People go to the theatre and they expect a particular kind of experience that unfolds in a particular kind of way.

"If a theatrical experience appears to follow those conventions and then turns them back on you, then maybe you have to wake up."

He says Eno is saying the audience is part of the theatrical contract.

"If you think you can just sit there and something marvellous is going to distract you for an hour and 15 minutes, then go," Pigot says. "Just go."

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)

Where: Beckett Theatre,
Malthouse, Thu-Aug 11
Tickets: \$16-\$41
Bookings: 1300 136 166 or
www.mtc.com.au



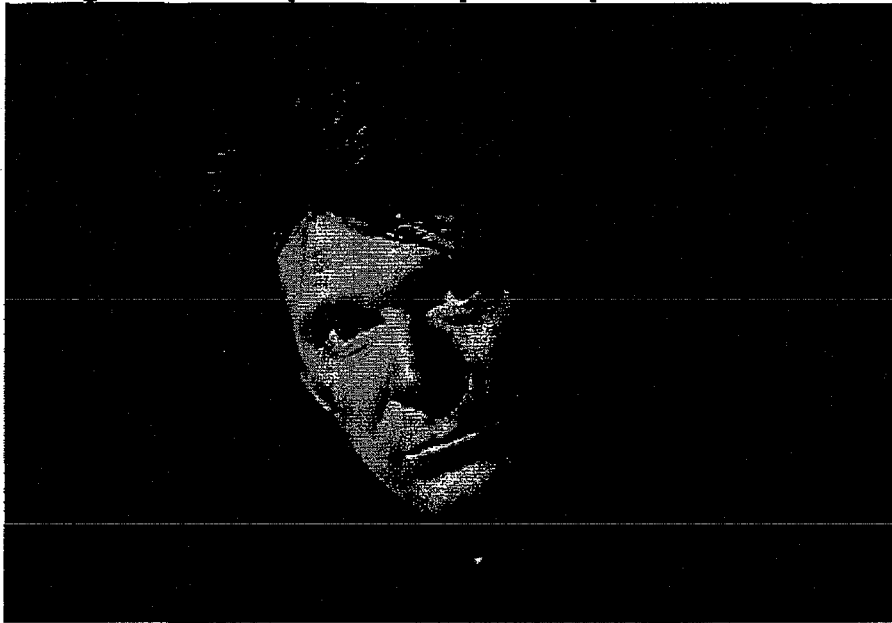
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Page 2 of 2



Darts the way: Neil Pigot hits the bullseye with *Thom Pain* (based on nothing). Picture: BILL MCAULEY

Laughter and pain recipe for pure truth



Actor Neil Pigot discovered Thom Pain when he read a US review of the work.

Photo: Rodger Cummins

July 20, 2007

Neil Pigot found words of substance amid the theatrical cake, writes Robin Usher.

ACTING is all about taking a writer's words and making an imaginary character believable. It is a task that Green Room Award winner Neil Pigot has undertaken many times on television and on the stage.

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He agrees with Pigot that, like late Beckett, it will not suit all tastes. But the actor insists it will add another colour to what he regards as theatre's increasingly monochromatic palette.

"We seem to be living in a culture that prefers labels to substance. There is always a lot of theatrical cake around, but every so often people feel the need for a Jatz with cheese on top," Pigot says.

The play's 42-year-old author has won many fellowships but *Thom Pain* was his first big New York production. In the play, Eno is speaking to anyone who has ever felt "not really outfitted for this life, not properly clothed, not enough skin".

One of his early champions was the playwright Edward Albee, author of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* Pigot is relishing the opportunity to perform the role, which has almost sold out even before it opens.

"Something like this is cathartic," he says. "It's easy to get my teeth into a play that seems a combination of all the internal monologues I've been having with myself for the past 12 months."

Pigot's career has covered everyone from cops to Chekhov — he's best known for his semi-regular role as Inspector Falcon-Price in television's long-running *Blue Heelers*.

But he says it is only recently that he has begun to relax with the idea of being an individual who may not always fit in "as opposed to a cobbled-together human being who pleases everybody".

As well as Beckett, overseas reviews of the play also referred to the poetry of T. S. Eliot, which Pigot says is due to the "extraordinary beauty" of the writing.

"Eno puts words of substance in your mouth," he says. "It's an interesting sensation because they've got real bite."

Thom Pain (based on nothing), from tomorrow until August 11 at the Malthouse. Book on 1300 136 166.

www.mtc.com.au

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More Entertainment

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Adam Bennett

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**Broadcast NewsAlert**

Adam Bennett - Melbourne Theatre Company

▶ **ABC 774 Melbourne (Melbourne)**
The Sunday Show - 15/07/2007 - 10:11 AM
Helen Razer
Station Ph: 03 9626 1771

Demographics

Male 16+	31000
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ABs	17000
GBs	32000

Interview with Neil Pigot, actor who says people want to be lead by banal rhetoric and reductive philosophies rather than engaging with the full complexity of life. He says politicians only want to tell people things that will make them feel good rather than the truth. Pigot and Razer both think Australia is looking 'pretty shabby' culturally at the moment. Pigot says the Victorian Government funds the arts less than any other government in the country. Pigot is playing in *Thom Paine* at the Malthouse Theatre from later this month. [Cont]
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Interviewees: Neil Pigot, actor
Duration: 11:15
Summary ID: M00027154979

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16/07/2007

What's On

Thom Pain (based on nothing) | Melbourne Theatre Company



There can be nothing more rivetingly theatrical than the one-person show, as evidenced by such recent MTC triumphs as Jefferson Mays in *I Am My Own Wife*, Jacki Weaver in *The Blonde, the Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead*, Richard Piper in *The Daylight Atheist* and Caroline O'Connor in *Bombshells*.

Now, MTC favourite **Neil Pigot** – under the direction of his long-time friend and colleague **Julian Meyrick** – joins their virtuoso ranks in the Australian Premiere of **THOM PAIN (based on nothing)** by Oppenheimer Award-winning playwright **Will Eno**.

A finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize, **THOM PAIN (based on nothing)** is a wry monologue in which an ordinary man, *Thom Pain (Neil Pigot)*, muses on childhood, yearning, disappointment and loss. Cataloguing the eternal agonies of the human condition, *Thom Pain* draws his audience into his last-ditch plea for empathy and enlightenment.

THOM PAIN (based on nothing) premiered in 2004 at the Pleasance Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland and then transferred to the Soho Theatre in London in September of that year. In Edinburgh, the play won the coveted Fringe First Award, the Herald Angel Award and was cited by The Guardian as the best play at the Fringe. Its subsequent American Premiere played to standing-room-only audiences off-Broadway for most of 2005.

Will Eno is a Helen Merrill Playwriting Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, an Edward F. Albee Foundation Fellow and was awarded the first ever Marian Seldes/Garson Kanin Fellowship by the Theatre Hall of Fame, for which he was nominated by Edward Albee.

Green Room Award-winner **Neil Pigot** has previously appeared with MTC in *A Single Act*, *Dinner*, *Fred* and *Medea*.

"One of those treasured nights in the theater ... Run, don't walk. Four stars. Plus an extra ... Eno is a Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation ... A small masterpiece" – The New York Times

"Magnificent. It should be seen" – The Financial Times

"A sublime piece of trickery" – Time Out New York

"Dazzling" – The Daily Telegraph

Melbourne Theatre Company presents
the Australian Premiere of
THOM PAIN (based on nothing)
by **Will Eno**

With **Neil Pigot**

Director: **Julian Meyrick**
Lighting Designer: **Kerry Saxby**

Venue: the beckett theatre | The CUB Malthouse

Previews: From 19 July 2007

Dates: 21 July 2007 - 11 August 2007

Times: Mon & Tue 6.30pm, Wed 1pm & 8pm, Thu & Fri 8pm, Sat 4pm & 8.30pm (21 Jul 2pm & 8pm)

Tickets: \$16 - \$41

Bookings: Ticketmaster 1300 136 166 or www.mtc.com.au

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Close



Age
Monday 16/7/2007
Page: 16
Section: Metro
Region: Melbourne Circulation: 202,500
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 59.74 sq.cms.
Published: MTWTFS-

Brief: MTC

CONCIERGE

OPENING

■ **MTC presents *Thom Pain***
(based on nothing), The Beckett
Theatre, Malthouse. July 21-
August 11. www.mtc.com.au

■ The Production Company
presents *Sweet Charity*, State
Theatre, Arts Centre. July 18-22.
Phone 1300 136 166;
theproductioncompany.com.au

■ *Reliquary*, fortyfivedownstairs,
city. July 18-22. Phone 9662
9966

■ *We like short Shorts!*
Dancehouse, Carlton. July 18-29.
Phone 9347 2860;
www.dancehouse.com.au

■ *The Lover*, by Marguerite Duras.
The Stork Hotel, city. July 18-
August 5. Phone 9663 6237

■ *The Eisteddfod*, Tower Theatre,
Malthouse. July 18-29. Phone
9685 5111;
malthousetheatre.com.au

ENDING

■ **MTC presents *Enlightenment***,
by Shelagh Stephenson, Fairfax
Studio, Arts Centre. Until July 21.
Phone: 1300 136 166;
www.mtc.com.au



Herald Sun
Saturday 14/7/2007
Page: 2
Section: Weekend
Region: Melbourne Circulation: 512,000
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 249.54 sq.cms.
Published: MTWTFS-

Brief: MTC

Big Weekend



MISS POTTER

Night in

NEW RELEASE DVD

RENEE Zellweger's delicate portrayal of one of England's most loved children's authors is like a warm glass of milk before bed. But in a good way. *Miss Potter* tells the story of Beatrix Potter's love for her publisher, Norman Warne (Ewan McGregor). Shot using the colour palette made famous in her books, the film celebrates the life of the talented writer and artist responsible for Peter Rabbit, Jemima Puddle-Duck, Jeremy Fisher and their friends.

Night out

THEATRE

MELBOURNE Theatre Company favourite Neil Pigot stars in Oppenheimer Award-winning playwright Will Eno's *Thom Pain* (Based on *Nothing*). The play, a 2005 Pulitzer Prize finalist, premiered in 2004 at Pleasance Theatre in Edinburgh. There it won the coveted Fringe First and Herald Angel awards. *Thom Pain* will be performed for the first time in Australia this week.

WHEN: July 19-August 11

WHERE: The Beckett Theatre, CUB Malthouse

COST: From \$35, concession and group tickets available

VISIT: www.mtc.com.au

JAZZ

IF JAZZ is your thing, drop into Bennetts Lane Jazz Club tonight for a performance by one of Sydney's best and most loved young talents. Vocalist Elana Stone is influenced by Ella



OLEG CAETANI

Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, Aretha Franklin and Sting.

WHEN: 8.30 tonight

WHERE: 25 Bennetts Lane, city

COST: Adults \$18, concession \$15

VISIT: www.bennettslane.com

CLASSICAL

IN CELEBRATION of its centenary year, Melbourne Symphony is performing all of Tchaikovsky's symphonies throughout this year. The orchestra's Classical Connections series-opener, *Echoes of Intimate Emotions*, is an all-Tchaikovsky concert by MSO chief conductor and artistic director Oleg Caetani. This time symphony Nos.2 and 4 will be performed. Caetani will discuss the works in a pre-concert talk.

WHEN: 8pm, July 21 (free pre-concert talk 7pm)

WHERE: the Arts Centre, Hamer Hall

COST: Adults from \$46, concession tickets available

VISIT: www.ticketmaster.com.au

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Helen Razer

Helen Razer

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Helen's Updates

• I am a terrible woman and the Lords of the internet will strike me down if I do not update with more regularity. I have an excuse. It was my birthday. It was the meanest, coldest age which one could fear to turn: 39. I became extraordinarily pouty in those days adjacent to this anniversary and spent my time feeling exceptionally old and meaningless. And then: 774 forgot to buy me a cake. Needless to impart, I caused such a funk of misery that I quickly received a belated Bigger Better cake and now, I am quite well. Soothed by baked goods. Yes, indeed, I am shallow. So, then, on July the 8th, I recall an immensely jolly program. It's all blurred now. But, if you'd really like to know, [Emaillez Madame](#) and she'll tell you. [Lloyd Cole](#) had a chat about books. I remember that. They were all quite blokey tomes. Go, son. Channel your inner Hemingway. And then [Dan Krige](#). Yes, he was fab. He has a new film called *West*. It's great. Truly extraordinary (but quite gut churning) cinema. I have rarely seen Australian masculinity decomposing quite so fast on film.



Helen Razer

And this week, [Craven](#) ambled in and amazed me with his unstuck Arts investigations as per. And [Neil Pigot](#) from MTC's new production of *Thom Pain* (penned by Hot Dramatic Property [Will Eno](#)) emerged as intellectually seductive. [Tania Doko](#) from the *Pet Shop Boys* production was superb and spunky and proved herself to be quite the comic knockabout.

Did I mention that [Neil Tennant](#) of the PSB is like a God to me? And others. Email me if you feel underdone in this, my humble update.

The great news is that next week, [Kristy Edmunds](#) of the Melbourne International Arts Festival will pop in to blather re her program. I'm prevented from spilling many beans in this forum. But, honestly, it does look like the kind of Festival that will send me broke. Should truly engage the persons of our beautiful town. And you shall soon find out all about it. That's it. Have a convivial week.

Posted by Helen Razer 12:12 PM 15/07/2007

• Oh, giddy buckets of untold delight unburdened themselves on the hitherto dry grounds of the airwaves once more. Caretaker of Peggy Guggenheim's legacy [Lisa Dennison](#) of the famous NYC museum took us on a turn through the NGV.

[Madame Eva](#) of the Caravan of Love showed us all the underskirts of cabaret and actor [Ian Stenlake](#) talked about his latest musical adventures at the Malthouse.

Anna's Blog

Guns and Roses

What a sad day when a family loses a husband, father and son. In a split second a selfless act turns....

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Alarm Bells

I think out of sight out of mind comes into play. Upon our arrival at the bolt hole last long weekend....

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Anna is Re-Grouping!

Anna is currently holed up in her stylish pied-a-bush and has no inclination to use the internet thi....

To view full information [click here](#)

[more on Anna's Blog](#)

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- [Take four...](#) [16/07/2007]
- [Eat up, and build up to prevent falls](#) [16/07/2007]
- [The lost is found](#) [16/07/2007]
- [We're through the looking glass here, people.](#) [16/07/2007]

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MX (Melbourne)
Thursday 19/7/2007
Page: 25
Section: General News
Region: Melbourne Circulation: 87,341
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Published: MTWTF--

Brief: MTC

Get theatrical

Thom Pain, Beckett Theatre,
CUB Malthouse, 113 Sturt St,
Southbank, until Aug 11.

Visit www.mtc.com.au

Neil Pigot stars in MTC's
latest production, a one-
man show by US playwright
Will Eno that explores
existential themes with
extreme theatricality.

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Thom Pain Australian Premiere Opens in Melbourne



The Australian premiere of Will Eno's one-hander, *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, goes into preview this week at the Beckett Theatre in Melbourne's [CUB Malthouse](#). The Melbourne Theatre Company production opens on Saturday, July 21.

Eno's work, a wry monologue in which an ordinary man, Thom Pain (played by Neil Pigot), muses on childhood, yearning, disappointment and loss, premiered in 2004 in Edinburgh, Scotland, before transferring to London. In Edinburgh, the play won the coveted Fringe First Award, the *Herald* Angel Award and was cited by *The Guardian* as the best play at the Fringe.

Its subsequent American premiere played to standing-room-only audiences off-Broadway for most of 2005.

Eno is a Helen Merrill Playwriting Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, an Edward F Albee Foundation Fellow and was awarded the first ever Marian Seldes/Garson Kanin Fellowship by the Theatre Hall of Fame, for which he was nominated by Edward Albee.

The actor playing Thom Pain, Neil Pigot, is a Green Room Award winner and has previously appeared in Melbourne Theatre Company's *A Single Act*, *Dinner*, *Fred* and *Medea*.

- [Booking Information](#)
- [Melbourne Theatre Guide: What's Playing in Melbourne](#)
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Photo: Neil Pigot as Thom Pain, courtesy Melbourne Theatre Company

Wednesday July 18, 2007 | [comments \(0\)](#)

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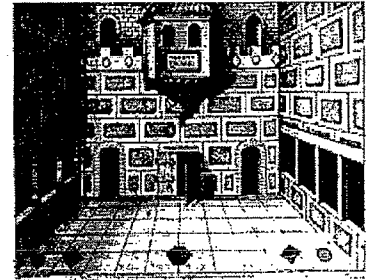
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theatre notes

Independent theatre reviewing and discussion by Alison Croggon

"It's not talent that produces theatre. It's a monstrous hunger."

Yoshio Wada, Director, Rakutendan Theatre, Tokyo



Tuesday, July 24, 2007

Review: Thom Pain/The Eisteddfod

Thom Pain (Based on Nothing) by Will Eno, directed by Julian Meyrick. Lighting by Kerry Saxby, design consultant Meredith Rogers. With Neil Pigot. Melbourne Theatre Company @ the Beckett Theatre, CUB Malthouse, until August 11. Bookings: 1300 136 166.

The Eisteddfod, by Lally Katz, directed by Chris Kohn. Design by Adam Gardnir, lighting design by Richard Vabre, sound by Jethro Woodward. With Luke Mullins and Katherine Tonkin. Stuck Pigs Squealing @ the Tower Theatre, CUB, produced by Malthouse Theatre, until July 29. Bookings: 9685 5111

It's a common idea that if a work is "intellectual" or "cutting edge", it must be cold and emotionless, a thing of steel and ice that is above the messy, smelly business of the human heart. Conversely, it's assumed that anything with feeling can't also be "intellectual". Feeling and intelligence, so this logic runs, are opposites, and an excess of one means an inevitable lack of the other.

This weird binary has long puzzled me. For one thing, it's so manifestly untrue: writers like Edward Said, Robert Musil or Hélène Cixous show that the intellect is in fact an instrument of passion. Far from being incompatible opposites, I think that feeling and intelligence are both required to articulate the process of consciousness. Particularly, it seems to me, in works of art.

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phillips stc store room stuck pigs squealing
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About TN

This blog is kept by me, Alison Croggon, a writer who lives in Melbourne, Australia. I am presently Melbourne theatre reviewer for The Australian. Between 1989 and 1992 I was Melbourne theatre reviewer for The Bulletin.

I write poetry and novels as well as criticism, and have an abiding interest in theatre as both practitioner and critic. I edit the literary webzine Masthead and am married to the playwright Daniel Keene. I am a panellist for the 2007 Green Room Awards and was a member of the

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◆ Ah man, you gotta



Anyway, that is a long and complex argument, and I should drag myself to the matter to hand. These ruminations occurred after seeing *Thom Pain (Based on Nothing)* and *The Eisteddfod*, both now on at the CUB Malthouse. I suppose they both might be placed under the deathly rubric of "cutting edge" art, which is to say that they don't obey conventional ideas of narrative or dramatic structure. Both, in this sense, are experimental (another useless term, since art is, strictly speaking, always experimental, unless it is dead).

But what strikes me primarily about both plays is that they are, fundamentally and crucially, about love. And loneliness. And all those other human, messy things.

Thom Pain is an MTC show, and it's frankly brilliant to see them programming writing of this quality from the more innovative edge of contemporary American writing. It's had an interesting history, considering Will Eno is a New Yorker - this play premiered at the 2004 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where it won a swag of awards, and transferred to a successful season in London before finally opening in New York. It was ultimately shortlisted for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize.

It makes me wonder what American theatre is thinking, if a work as funny, smart and moving as this has to prove itself in the British provinces before it gets a look at an American stage. It's really a poem: a highly theatrical poem which owes much to the plays of Edward Albee and Thornton Wilder. But the writer who kept insisting himself as I watched it was the 1950s New York poet, Frank O'Hara. It's not so much style - though both O'Hara and Eno have plenty of that, and Eno shares O'Hara's wit and lyrical gift - as sensibility. Like O'Hara, Eno is a writer who perceives human fragility and imperfection with a sceptical but wholly unironic compassion.

There is much here of sheer writerly intelligence, that witty play of allusion and metaphor that (sometimes rightly) is often taken as an

2005 and 2006 Awards for Best Play

evasion of feeling. But, as its name suggests, this show is actually about human pain. The comedy is often cruel (as comedy almost always is), but it functions as a kind of tact which permits us to see this fictional character's vulnerability and, through his, our own. In its honest examination of the emotional cauterisation of trauma, it is very moving; but it is not – save for a misstep at the end, a direct plea to the audience that somehow lets us off the hook – in the least sentimental.

In the figure of Thom Pain, Eno has created a fragmented Everyman, a damaged soul ill at ease in his mortal body. Thom Pain – performed with a mixture of superbly nuanced restraint and sheer front by Neil Pigot – recounts for us, in an ad hoc, disorderly manner, the injuries that have marked his life. His wounds are at once absurd and tragic – from the electrocution of his beloved childhood dog to his broken love affair (as he sums it up, in a particularly beautiful line, "I disappeared in her and she, wondering where I went, left.")

He is, in fact, an unexpectedly gentle reflection of our own unacknowledged pain, the shaping hurts that damage us for the rest of our lives. "When did your childhood end?" he asks. "How badly did you get hurt, when you did, when you were this little, when you were this wee little hurtable thing, nothing but big eyes, a heart, a few hundred words?" And, responding almost involuntarily to this direct question, we find out with a pang of memory that yes, the loss of innocence happens to all of us.

Julian Meyrick directs with a light hand: it is given a stripped, bare production, forgoing any sense of theatrical illusion in order to focus attention on the script and the performer. The set is a bare stage, marked out in squares, with a life-size cardboard image of Pigot in one back corner, and a chair in another. Neil Pigot realises his fractured character with subtlety, comic chutzpah and heartbreaking candour. He stands before us, slightly dishevelled, in a plain suit and glasses, and delivers a painfully funny stand-up routine (complete with a raffle that never actually occurs) that works off our own sense of discomfort.

As he makes clear at one point, Thom Pain (a wry spin, I presume, on the famous American revolutionary Tom Paine) is a contemporary version of Tom O'Bedlam, a truly urban "unaccommodated man" who, for all his suit and tie, is no more than "a poor bare, forked animal". If this play has a message – not that a message is the point – it is simply that those wounds never actually heal, and we cannot live hiding from our own anguish. "Isn't it wonderful," says Pain, with deceptive blandness, "how we never recover?"

The unhealable wounds of childhood is also an abiding theme of *The Eisteddfod*, Lally Katz's disturbingly funny fantasy of suburban childhood. I saw its first full production at the Store Room three years ago, my first experience of Stuck Pigs Squealing, and was impressed. The Malthouse is now giving it a welcome remount in the Tower.

Since its first outing, *The Eisteddfod* has had seasons at the PS122 and Ontological-Hysterical Theatre in New York and Belvoir

- May (20)
- April (11)
- March (14)
- February (9)
- January (9)
- 2006 (161)
- 2005 (48)
- 2004 (38)

thoughtful and
extremely eloquent"
*Encore Theatre
Magazine*

Note to theatres

I always try to see as many shows as I can, but life (that thing that happens when you're making other plans) limits my spare time. Please don't be discouraged if I don't make it; remember that I don't get paid for this; and keep in touch.

Top image: Globe theatre by Robert Fludd (1619) from "Ars memoriae".

Email

My email is alisoncroggon at aapt dot net dot au. Send me a note if you would like to be put on the mailing list for update alerts.

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9251827

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St in Sydney, and a cast change (Katherine Tonkin takes the role of Gerture, originally played by Jessamy Dyer). But it remains as fresh as ever, a darkly comic meditation on the perversities of longing, loneliness, pain and erotic love.

Gerture and Abalone (Luke Mullins) are brother and sister, living together, after the bizarre death of their parents, in a claustrophobically destructive relationship of mutual need and resentment. Their longings are played out through various fantasies – Gerture's masochistic relationship with a sadistic lover, Ian, or their parents' dysfunctional marriage – as Abalone rehearses the part of Macbeth for an upcoming eisteddfod, in which he plans to unleash his true genius on a dazzled world.

Lally Katz is a true original, and so confounds all attempts at categorisation. She is not quite like any writer I have encountered, although her work calls up shades of Pirandello, Cocteau, Chekhov and a bunch of other people. There is an anarchy in its core which means that anything might happen, a perilous sense that the whole might disintegrate into total nonsense: but it never does, because also at work is an unobtrusively steely discipline and a very sharp wit.

She's well served by her performers, who match Katz's precision and wit as they scramble over Adam Gardnir's ingeniously claustrophobic set. Mullins' performance is a sheer joy, and often simply hilarious, as he metamorphoses between Gerture's brutish lover, his own father, a Sean Connery-inspired Macbeth and the vulnerable, jealous persona of Abalone himself. Tonkin is a perfect foil as the alienated Gerture, the victim of every male she encounters, who finally reaches out and discovers her own freedom.

Calling on my frustratingly imperfect memory (I'll read my earlier review later) it seems to me that Chris Kohn's production is, unsurprisingly, a highly polished version of what I saw three years ago. Certain details – a puppet, a balaclava – have vanished, and the play itself somehow seems cleaner and more focused, perfectly complemented by Jethro Woodward's unobtrusive but beautifully textured soundscape. And while its humour always emerged from a dark place, and the violence in the centre of Gerture's and Abalone's childish games was always close to the surface, this time I was struck most forcibly by its sadness.

I think this production has grown in depth: it was always a play of brilliant surfaces, but now those surfaces open to unsettling abysses, and the final dialogue, a meditation on a pathetic suicide, resonates with an acute and haunting melancholy. It's a wonderful piece by some of our most unfairly talented young artists. Miss it at your peril.

Picture: Luke Mullins and Katherine Tonkin, *The Eisteddfod*

A version of my review of *Thom Pain* appeared in Monday's Australian. Weblink if and when one appears on the site.

Posted by Alison Croggon at 7:19 PM Full post DiggIt! |
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Labels: chris kohn, lally katz, malthouse, mtc, review, stuck pigs squealing, will eno

4 COMMENTS:

Art said...

Hi Alison,

I completely agree with your point about Thom Pain. Nice to see you can put it so eloquently.

When I reviewed it last year:

<http://mirroruptolife.blogspot.com/2006/10/being-unalone-thom-painbased-on.html>

I said the following:

"But aside from the structure, there is even more to discover about this play. Given much of the talk around our theatrical blogosphere regarding experimentation and provocation, it was interesting to see that a play considered to be a very fringe and confrontational work, would have such a big, shaggy, lovable-mutt heart at its center."

4:20 AM, July 25, 2007

Chris said...

One man's "big, shaggy, lovable-mutt heart" is another man's "poorly thought-out bird" with "burned open" eyes and "blistered off" paws.

6:33 PM, July 25, 2007

Alison Croggon said...

Ah man, you gotta work on those ears of yours, Chris. Shame about the end, which after all that delicate balance hurt mine - but poorly thought out? What do you mean by that?

10:22 PM, July 25, 2007

Alison Croggon said...

Hey Chris, rereading this in the cold light of dawn, I think I mistook your meaning here. I thought you were being a smartypants, quoting the play to diss it. For the record, I didn't see a loveable shaggy mutt either...

8:41 AM, July 26, 2007

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