

This summary is part of research on performance training in Australia undertaken by Professor Peta Tait and Dr Melanie Beddie in 2017 funded by La Trobe University. It researched the influences on, and the training of, prominent teachers working within key training institutions circa 1980 to 2010.

## Wal Cherry

Wal Cherry 's interest in teaching performance skills began in student theatre at University of Melbourne, 1951-54. He graduated in 1954 and became manager of the Union Theatre at the University of Melbourne. In 1956, he was appointed director of the Union Theatre Repertory Company (UTRC), which later became the Melbourne Theatre Company. Cherry served as director at UTRC from 1956 to 1959 where he directed texts by Bertolt Brecht and contemporary British and American playwrights such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

In 1958 he travelled to Europe on a study tour and saw the work of the Berliner Ensemble and other companies. His production in 1959 of *The Threepenny Opera* was the first professional production of Brecht in English in Australia, and was a collaboration with John Willett, Brecht's translator. In 1962 together with George Whaley, Cherry established Emerald Hill Theatre Company in South Melbourne, an ensemble theatre, where he experimented with introducing new forms and new writing from around the world. He worked there on several projects with Aarne Neeme who also became a significant director and actor trainer. The company closed in 1966.

In 1967 he became the foundation Professor of Drama at Flinders University, South Australia. The curriculum aimed at teaching students a company-workshop model, integrating the teaching of theatre, film, radio and television. Key books included those of Stanislavski, Brecht, Artaud and Richard Schechner.

Cherry received two Fulbright Scholarships in 1972 and 1976, for further study in the USA at a number of institutions including Cal Arts, University of San Diego, Riverside. He also received a fellowship to study in Japan from the Cultural and Social Centre for the Asia-Pacific Region in 1973. In 1980 he was invited to become Professor of Theatre at Temple University, Philadelphia and in 1985 became associate director of The Boston Shakespeare Company. He died unexpectedly in 1986.

