

BLANCHARD, Michelle

Michelle Blanchard is an Indigenous woman from Minjeeribah (North Stradbroke Island, Queensland, Australia), a descendent of the Nunucle and Nugi clans. Her passion and interest in writing include poetry, prose and writing for performance. She graduated from the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur with a Master of Arts (Creative Writing) and is enrolled in her PhD with the University of Technology Sydney. Michelle has had her work produced in theatre and on radio. She has taught in the field of Indigenous studies across a wide range of disciplines. Michelle is currently Deputy Director of the Koori Centre, University of Sydney.

ABSTRACT

"Exit stage left.....Contemporary Indigenous Australian Theatre"

This paper, seeks to encourage a deeper knowledge of the intersections of history, culture and performance through exploring the role of conventional drama criticism. I believe that this is a very important area of research given the current political and inter-cultural climate of multi-cultural Australia. It would appear that academic writings in the field of Indigenous contemporary theatre is discussed from a place, drawn largely from either an anthropological gaze, or alternatively through the current post-colonial lens. Research that examines the way in which contemporary Indigenous performance is studied can lead to a greater understanding of how many western theoretical approaches to the topic both consciously and subconsciously envelope and shift, and even imagine Indigenous meaning. From this point a subtle irony occurs, in that many post-colonial writing within the field discuss Indigenous works in search of an expectation, an 'exotic' voice that gives meaning to 'difference', a distinct culturally drenched quality, easily identifiable. I pose the question. What if these expected 'cultural' signifiers are not found, how then, are these works perceived, received and/or critiqued? How is the contextual nature of contemporary Indigenous theatre defined?