

URBAN THEATRE  
PROJECTS

UTP creates distinctive new theatre for Australian and international audiences that reflect stories and images of contemporary life. The company explores new territory in contemporary arts practice and collaborative processes, through a synthesis of artists, site, ideas and public dialogue.

In 2010, the company's most recent work *The Fence*, premiered at Sydney Festival. The *Football Diaries*, written and performed by Ahilian Ratnamohan, will be presented at the National Arts Festival Grahamstown, South Africa.

Over the last 12 years the company has made over 20 new works, including Artistic Director Alicia Talbot's *The Last Highway* (Sydney Festival 2008) and trilogy *The Cement Garage*, *The Longest Night* (both presented as part of Adelaide Festival 2002), and *Back Home* (Sydney Festival 2006). *Back Home* toured to The Dreaming Festival in 2006 and Toronto's international arts festival LuminaTO in conjunction with a development project commissioned by Harbourfront Centre in June 2007. In 2002, Urban Theatre Projects was awarded the Sydney Myer Award in recognition of the company's outstanding contribution to Australian theatre.

Urban Theatre Projects is assisted by the Australia Council, the Australian government's arts funding and advisory body, the NSW Government through Arts NSW, and Bankstown City Council.

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PERFORMING LINES

Performing Lines develops, produces and tours new Australian performance nationally and internationally — across genres including physical theatre, circus, dance, Indigenous and intercultural arts, music theatre, hybrid work and text-based theatre.

General Manager: **Wendy Blacklock AM**  
Producers: **Harley Stumm, John Baylis, Annette Downs, Fiona de Garis, Joanne Kee**  
Associate Producer: **Hannah Sanders**  
Office Manager: **Larina Hansen**  
Accounts: **Linda Luke**

Performing Lines is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

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ARTS HOUSE

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Arts House is a City of Melbourne contemporary arts initiative. Each year Arts House presents a curated program of contemporary art featuring performances, exhibitions, live art, installations and cultural events.

Arts House operates as a multi-dimensional resource hub for artists: producing, programming, devising, supporting and funding. Work is presented across two sites: Arts House, North Melbourne Town Hall and Arts House, Meat Market.

Arts House values arts and culture that help create a world where people are actively engaged, aware and empowered to participate, politically and culturally, to make positive change.

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THE  
FOLDING  
WIFE

BY PASCHAL  
DAANTOS BERRY  
AN URBAN  
THEATRE  
PROJECTS  
PRODUCTION

“THIS LOVINGLY REALISED  
AND BEAUTIFULLY  
PERFORMED WORK  
ESCAPES ITS OWN  
CULTURAL LIMITATIONS  
OF PLACE.”

The Sydney Morning Herald



ARTS HOUSE  
NORTH MELBOURNE TOWN HALL  
WED 26 - SAT 29 MAY

**ARTS HOUSE**



# THE FOLDING WIFE

## BORN ON THE FAULT LINE

### PASCHAL DAANTOS BERRY TALKS ABOUT THE FOLDING WIFE by Urszula Dawkins

Writer Paschal Daantos Berry arrived in the Australian Outback from the Philippines when he was 11. He remembers a landscape that was hot, faded and silent; a rusty truck; and the broad twang of his new father.

There are worse things than assimilating, though, he says with irony. Connected by birth to a land of violent seismic activity and political upheaval – “where nature is as threatening as your dictator-in-waiting” – he and sibling Valerie Berry know well that there is no such thing as permanence.

After the death of their mother, Paschal and Valerie decided to work together as artists, to explore the fragmentation that characterises the lives of many migrants. He began by writing a long poem, a subversion of Henry Lawson’s short story, ‘The Drover’s Wife’. In it, he replaced the embattled archetypal ‘battler’ with a Filipina woman: “this Asian woman folding into a hostile Australian landscape,” he says.

A lengthy development period ensued, during which Paschal and performer Valerie began to work with collaborators including Filipino multimedia artists Anino Shadowplay Collective and Director Deborah Pollard. What began as a requiem for their mother – and a very personal expression – transformed into a truly joint work that explores strength and resilience through three Filipina characters of different eras.

“Once Deborah came into the picture, and Anino came in with their visual language,” says Daantos Berry, “it was clear that the script was going to develop into something that we could all claim co-authorship. After a while the women just wrote themselves, and the youngest one, Grace, who is telling the story, anchors them all.”

“I think it helped that Deborah was outside the culture, because it allowed us to step outside any kind of ‘dangerous’ reverence or, God-forbid, self-pity. The process was incredibly enjoyable and full of laughs.”

Daantos Berry was excited by the hybrid visual style of Anino Shadowplay Collective, whose tools of trade notably include the humble overhead projector, employed to create entrancing, ever-changing effects.

“I really loved the handmade projections, using coloured and painted gels, cutouts, printed transparencies – then add to that

[the use of] overhead projectors, candles, torches and light bulbs as your light sources for projecting image,” he says.

“There is something really incredible about consciously limiting your use of technology to create; sometimes people misunderstand that as a third-world aesthetic, when in reality it is a deliberate choice of mediums. In most part this choice is also about presenting an environmentally viable art... These guys as individual artists are [also] quite tech-savvy and that aspect of what they do is also very exciting for future collaborations.”

**The Folding Wife** is the story of three women – Clara, Dolores and Grace – whose lives span more a century of Filipino and Australian history. All three are played by Valerie Berry; and all of them, says Daantos Berry, explain in different ways the historic conditioning of their times.

“Clara, the grandmother,” he says, “is really a playful homage to that fierce middle-class Filipina matriarch of a bygone era – who by the way shares exactly the same qualities as most people born [in the early] 1900s.”

“She is really defined by three events – the historic handover of the Philippines to the Americans after nearly 400 years of Spanish theocracy – the violent Japanese occupation in World War II – and 25 years of Marcos dictatorship. When you weigh up the countless broken hopes and aspirations with almost a century’s worth of political and socio-economic insecurities then a pretty bitter but resilient matriarch is bound to manifest.”

Clara’s daughter, Dolores, is of the wartime and post-war generations, “...old enough to remember the total devastation of being in the centre of one of the most contested territories in World War II and partly shaped by the anxiety of curfews, political riots, and the corrosion of human rights that were common practice during the Marcos era.”

“She has come to Australia to forget and assimilate, but she is surprised by what she perceives as a cultural vacuum.”

Grace, says Paschal, is the “archetypal migrant child”, struggling with imposed values and riding the uncomfortable fault line between cultures.

“[Grace] is torn between duty and mapping out her own belief system. Somewhat weary of the old culture and thrilled by the new. She is also the central narrator and the way she tells the story shifts from being respectful to being subversive.”

Daantos Berry perceives a deep joy in Filipinos: “It’s this instinct to laugh at adversity – and I think that’s how we deal with our polarities – by having a really good belly laugh.”

“I also believe that’s where our resilience lies, we have been placed in such states of extremities that we have learned how to adjust and have a sense of humour about them,” he says.

The Filipino polarities he describes are many and varied.

“One can be vulgar and love God; be garish and strive for simplicity; have no money but feed all your friends; be in love with your wife but keep a mistress; be flamboyant but hide in outer suburbs; praise our colourful history but curse the poverty we have inherited. We are comfortable too with our many ghosts: the saint who became a whore (from a Spanish colony to an American colony); the steel butterfly who created beauty out of her people’s misery (Imelda’s beautification of Manila during the 1970s). Somehow we can laugh at these imperfections because I suppose we understand and we have lived the fragile marriage between the sacred and the profane.”

Through a poetic, layered text, carefully fragmented narrative and shape-shifting visuals, **The Folding Wife** honours and reflects the oppositions, fragmentation and contradictions of Filipino life and culture, as it tells the story of these “essentially abandoned people who have spent their lifetime waiting for things to get better”.

But the enduring qualities of these characters have resonances with all of us, says Daantos Berry – not just for those who have experience of the diaspora.

“Behind the migration narrative there is a very human analysis of intergenerational dynamics, and the kind of baggage we take from our parents and our ancestors,” he says.

“I think we all fold. I think we all experience not being who we want to be – either in relationships or in roles that require us to alter our behaviour. I think most Australians forget that we all come from migrant pasts, unless of course you’re Indigenous. We have all been folding into this landscape in varying lengths of time and we are all carrying our parents’ anxieties and hopes within us.”

## CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Director: **Deborah Pollard**  
Writer: **Paschal Daantos Berry**  
Performer: **Valerie Berry**  
Multimedia Artists: **Datu Arellano and Teta Tulay (Anino Shadowplay Collective)**  
Lighting Designer: **Neil Simpson**  
Production Manager: **Joshua Emanuel**

The Folding Wife premiered at Blacktown Arts Centre in April 2007, with the support of Blacktown City Council.

**The Folding Wife** is toured by Performing Lines for Mobile States: Touring Contemporary Performance Australia, a national touring initiative supported by the Australia Council, the Australian government’s arts funding and advisory body, and through the national performing arts touring program, Playing Australia.

## DIRECTOR’S NOTES

**The Folding Wife** is a unique marriage of text, multimedia imagery and contemporary performance making.

Using the text as the starting point, the artistic team worked closely to extend the life of the word into a rich tapestry of visual nuance and dramatic subtext. From the outset we sought to integrate the various artistic languages of the group so that each art-form was created in support of the other. Such tightly woven integration is possible when all the artists are able to collaborate together from the very beginning. Instead of working separately on each component, whether that is text, performance or multimedia, we continuously worked together from the very first rehearsal.

The work takes on a joint authorship, the writer remains present in the rehearsal room throughout the process and the script alters depending on the ideas explored by the creative team. Added into the mix is Anino Shadowplay Collective’s unique aesthetic and cultural perspective and Valerie Berry’s wonderful ability to interpret poetic language through physicality and strong characterisation. Their input gave us fresh perspectives and new possibilities for creative play.

In staging **The Folding Wife** Paschal Berry was interested in selective memory and how this could be played out through broken narratives and visuals. This less linear approach to writing gave us the freedom to explore other readings through the various artistic mediums.

It was a playful process with many laughs and much respect and consideration for each others’ work. It is wonderful to be given the time to explore a work with such a generous and creative team.

I am very pleased **The Folding Wife** has been given a second outing through this tour.

**Deborah Pollard**

## ABOUT THE COMPANY

**Deborah Pollard** is a performer, artist and director.

She has worked with Urban Theatre Projects, Version 1.0 and Performance Space among others. She was Artistic Director of Salamanca Theatre Company in Hobart from 1997 to 2000. Since 1993 Deborah has collaborated with Indonesian performance and installation artists, creating large-scale performance works, most notably Postcard (1995), Badai Pasir (1996), To Eat Flowers and Walk on Glass (1999) and Girt By Sea (2002). She has also performed and co-devised the Version 1.0 productions of CMI (2004) and Wages of Spin (2005). In 2006/07, Deborah was Interim Artistic Director at UTP, where she directed The Folding Wife. Her performance installation Shapes of Sleep toured the UK in 2006, and Singapore in 2008. Her last performance Blue Print premiered in October 2007. Deborah has been a recipient of the Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship (2000), the Rex Cramphorn Scholarship (2001) and an Australia Council NMAB Fellowship (2002/03) and is currently undertaking a Doctorate of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong.

**Paschal Daantos Berry** is a writer/dramaturg. His work includes Jerusalem Syndrome, The Great Tale, Found Objects, Triptych, Ancestry of My Eyes, Conversations Through the Wall, Defecating Jesus and Querida. Awards include Belvoir Street’s Asian Australian Young Playwrights Award (1996) and a London Royal Court International Residency (2000). His work has been presented for Radio National, Griffin Theatre, Australian Choreographic Centre, Belvoir Street, Performance Space, ATYP, Multicultural Theatre Alliance, Platform 27 and Canberra Youth Theatre. He is currently working on Within and Without, his second collaboration with The Folding Wife creative team; Anino Shadowplay Collective, Deborah Pollard and Valerie Berry.

**Valerie Berry** trained as an actor at The Centre for the Performing Arts in Adelaide, SA. Valerie has worked with: Theatre Kantanka (Missing the Bus to David Jone’s), Urban Theatre Projects (The Folding Wife, Marinheiro, Speed Street), Branch Nebula (Plaza Real), Performance Space (TransLab ‘09: Within and Without; Museum of Fetishized Identities with La Pocha Nostra), Sydney Theatre Company/ Performing Lines (Tour Germany and Adelaide Festival: UrFaust), Belvoir St Sydney Asian Theatre Festival (Lotus War; Season to Taste), Bell Shakespeare Company and Canute Productions (Sadako and the thousand Paper Cranes), Australian Theatre of the Deaf, Sidetrack Theatre, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Platform 27, Jigsaw Theatre, Murray River Performing Group, Junction Theatre and Red Shed Company (Adelaide). Valerie’s film and television

credits include: Matrix Reloaded; The Great Raid; Spirited (Foxtel), A Difficult Woman (ABC), Big Sky (Ten Network), Rope Burn and Eve (AFTRS). For Radio, Valerie has worked with ABC Radio National: Conversations through the Wall; Ancestry of My Eyes; Earthenware Head; Rita’s Lullaby and Lotus War.

**Neil Simpson** has been involved in theatre for thirty years. He has worked with many companies including the Nimrod Theatre under the direction of Richard Wherrett, John Bell and Ken Horler. He works primarily as a Lighting Designer and Production Manager and has been involved with over 300 productions crossing many art forms, with artists and companies that include Performing Lines, Neil Armfield and Belvoir St, The Performance Space, BigHart and Scott Rankin, Leah Purcell, The Song Company, Richard Bradshaw, Richard Vella, and the Seymour Group. He has worked on numerous festivals in Australia and overseas.

**Anino Shadowplay Collective** is a group of multimedia artists dedicated to popularising the art of shadow play, established in 1992. Towards this end ANINO undertakes live performances, exhibitions, video, publication, and workshops in a wide context. Their aesthetic borrows from a wide canvas, taking influence from Filipiniana (nostalgia) to Japanese manga. They deal with questions of Filipino identity through projected images and hybrid theatrical styles.

Datu Arellano and Teta Tulay perform on the 2010 tour. The original 2007 season featured Datu with Andrew Cruz, with input from other Anino artists in the Philippines, including Don Maralit Salubayba, Araceli Victoria Arellano, Teta and Marc Cosico.

Visit Anino at [www.anino.sining.net](http://www.anino.sining.net)