

Are you ready to play?

Zen Zen Zo presents Sub Con Warrior 1.

Game On.

THE ZEN ZEN ZO COMPANY

Walking on the Wild Side

Very rarely is a project inadvertently stumbled upon, and its creatives launched into a career spanning years of innovation and invention. For Zen Zen Zo's Lynne Bradley, the conception of her company was one such "happy accident". In 1992, bushy-tailed, University of Queensland Honours student Bradley returned from Japan, where she had been studying the Avant-Garde dance/theatre form Butoh. At a time when the genre was almost unheard of in Australia, Bradley had spent the previous years brazenly telephoning its founders and interviewing (read: buttonholing!) them over saki and Dictaphones. Upon her return and now infatuated with the form, a number of the city's most exciting young artists were enlisted to create the first Butoh performance Brisbane had ever seen. Staged at University of Queensland's home theatre The Cement Box, "Never The Elephant" was "ridiculously, stupidly successful", and at once showed Bradley that Eastern performance traditions were as much sought after in Australia as their European counterparts. Although a little intimidated by its success, the creatives behind the production concurred that an entity more concrete had to be formed: and Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre was born. A veritable production whirlwind resulted from that day, pushing the performance company into the forefront of the city's local arts scene, to a place where each and every one of its productions demands a reaction from its audience. Physical and emotional reactions spectators can't help but experience.

Billed as a "physical theatre performance company and training centre", Zen Zen Zo has grown from producing only performance, to establishing a smorgasbord of training opportunities for actors, teachers, directors and producers. Throughout the last 14 years, husband and wife team Lynne Bradley and Simon Woods (Artistic and Executive Director) have developed close working relationships with a plethora of young artists; some of which are incorporated into the group as Core Company members. Current Core Company Steven Mitchell Wright (Associate Director) and Katrina Cornwell, Katie Hollins, Robbie O'Brien, Kat Scott, Simon Tate and Peta Ward have worked together for several years; so cohesively that they are credited by Bradley for delivering Zen Zen Zo's "coming home". Their passion for their art, methods and work as "teaching

artists” has allowed the company to do what it does best; providing experience for young artists. Bradley happily admits that as Zen Zen Zo receives no regular funding, this offering of ‘experience’, (in the form of training and teaching) is the primary reason that it is able to stay afloat financially in an stormy economy such as ours.

THE IN THE RAW SEASON

Get Ready...

While much of the company’s recent production history has focused on classics (“The Odyssey,” “Romeo & Juliet”) and devised text-based works (“The Man Who Sold The World,” “Wicked Bodies”), Bradley has recognised a need to return to the experimental performance roots of the company’s earliest years.

Beginning in 2005 with “Those With Lucifer,” Zen Zen Zo has introduced a new season, the annual **In The Raw**. Much more visceral than other projects, In The Raw’s objectives are two-fold: firstly; to provide an opportunity to showcase the energy that launched the company 14 years ago and secondly; to appeal directly to the tastes of the company’s identified 14-29 year old youth market; “those who crave experience”.

SUB-CON WARRIOR 1

Do You Want To Play My Game?

Those who saw last year’s “Those With Lucifer” can attest to the confronting spatial nature of Zen Zen Zo’s current aesthetic: performance that challenges, and at times violates the still apparent barriers between spectator and actor. While in retrospect a reasonably traditional promenade set up, Lucifer caused unprecedented exhilaration within the general public – excited by the notion of not having an allocated seat, or being forced to face the same direction for two hours. For those who are accustomed to performance with a participatory edge, sit back and let the games begin. For everyone else; hang onto your hats and (perhaps literally) buckle your seatbelts!

Zen Zen Zo’s next In The Raw brainchild, **Sub-Con Warrior 1**, will transport its audience into the world of a computer game; enlisting them as players, and bringing them into direct contact and cooperation with the types of weird and wacky characters recognisable from our childrens’/brothers’/flatmates’ all-too-large collection of games. Audiences are left guessing from the moment their ticket is booked; when no performance location is revealed, and the mysterious message “An SMS will be sent to you on the date, informing you of the starting location” is delivered instead. Upon arrival at the previously unknown location,

audiences board a bus with 38 other buzzing spectators (“players”), and are promptly whisked away on a moving journey through Sub-Con Warrior 1, a game that turns familiar locations from our everyday lives into the pixelated infrastructure of another world. Yet however intriguing the premise of the project may be, the real thrill lies in the details that are left to the imagination, and teasingly revealed. Who designed this game? Why are you in it? How do you complete it? Can everyone be trusted?

Bradley dreamt up Sub-Con Warrior 1 in 2005, using the many car trips to and from the office to lose herself in the possibilities; leaving even her own Core Company in unbearable anticipation with regular utterances of “I’ve got a great idea...but I can’t tell you yet!” A self-confessed technophobe, Bradley forced herself to keep the idea secret until sufficient hours had been spent researching the virtual world, thumbs sprained on evil consoles and coffees consumed with more technologically able friends. Finally, the concept was ready to air – and her company hasn’t looked back since.

For your playing pleasure, a cast of 15 and an impressive line up of Australia’s finest have come on board for the ride. Featuring the likes of Keith Armstrong (New Media Director), Tyrone Noonan (Sound Designer), Jonathon Oxlade (Designer), David Walters (Lighting Design), Scott Witt (Fight Choreography) and Kathryn Kelly (Dramaturg), Sub-Con Warrior 1 is a melting-pot for Australian talent, and a testament to where performance can take an unsuspecting audience. With July’s season as a precursor to a greater vision, future renditions of “Sub-Con Warrior 1” will be pitched at an international festival level – allowing audiences to play within an unknown city.

This July promises to be an adventure for all. Whether you are a Diehard Zenner, or a Zen Zen Noooo; throw away your expectations – Sub-Con Warrior 1 is like nothing you have seen, let alone been a part of. With only four short months before the game is released, take a good look at the city, because it may never be the same for you again!