

**Title of Thesis:**

Jimmy Chi: Hybridity and Healing

**Thesis statement:**

That Jimmy Chi's work offers a social healing process through the creative envisioning of 'a gentler society' (Chi 1996: 3), where complex personal identities and histories are embraced and celebrated.

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**Candidate's Certification:**

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis



**October 23, 2010**

A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Master of Arts (Honours) Theatre Studies  
of the University of New England.

## **Acknowledgements**

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the Broome region, namely the Yawuru and Djugun, Baad, Jawi, Nimanburu, Nyul Nyul, Jabirr Jabirr, Karajarri and Nyangumarta peoples.

As a woman of Scottish and Cornish descent, living on the north coast of eastern New South Wales, I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the Coffs Harbour area, the Gumbaynggirr nation.

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance with this thesis:

Jimmy Chi, Stephen Pigram, Micky Manolis and Stephen 'Baamba' Albert for their generosity with official interviews and friendly conversations.

Professor Adrian Kiernander and Dr Elaine Rabbitt for prolonged supervision and encouragement to continue.

Pamela Farrell for permission to use her extensive files on *Bran Nue Dae* and *Corrugation Road* and for sharing her memories and personal photographs.

Kathryn Wood and Sandy Taheny for assistance with formatting and layout.

Russell 'Captain' Kardos for many hours of conversation about Broome and for excellent boating adventures.

Viking and Gabriel for years of patience.

## **Abstract**

### **Title of Work:       *Jimmy Chi: Hybridity and Healing***

This thesis examines the notion that Jimmy Chi's two musical plays, *Bran Nue Dae* (1990) and *Corrugation Road* (1996) offer new ways of thinking about Indigenous identities.

The works are discussed in terms of the physical context in which they were created, namely the Dampier Peninsula in the Kimberley region of north Western Australia, and the historical events which occurred in that area during the process of invasion and colonisation. They are also placed within the development of Indigenous Theatre in Australia, against a framework of post-colonial theory.

My research methodology included immersion in the cross-cultural Kimberley culture by living and working there for two years, as well as re-enacting the journeys undertaken in the two plays. I also conducted many formal and informal interviews with the creators of the works, including Jimmy Chi, Stephen Pigram, Michael Manolis and Stephen 'Baamba' Albert.

The backbone of this project is the detailed contextual annotation of the two plays, using information gained from the interviews, primary sources and from anecdotal evidence from other Broome locals. This material is then compared to the critical literature.

My conclusion is that Jimmy Chi's work offers a departure from previous models of Indigenous theatre, including the 'documentary realism' school. Jimmy Chi's appropriation of the musical form and road trip genre paved the way for younger artists to experiment with form and structure, and to move on from representation of Indigenous characters as powerless victims.

Jimmy Chi himself stresses the importance of the songs to the productions, and it is true that the songs cover an extraordinary range of styles, subjects and even philosophies.

Jimmy Chi's envisioning of 'a gentler society', outlined in his song 'Streets of Your City' (1996), accords with the great post-colonial theorist Edward Said's contention that 'There is the possibility of a more generous and pluralistic vision of the world' (Said 1993: 277, in Gandhi 1998: 124).

## Table of Contents

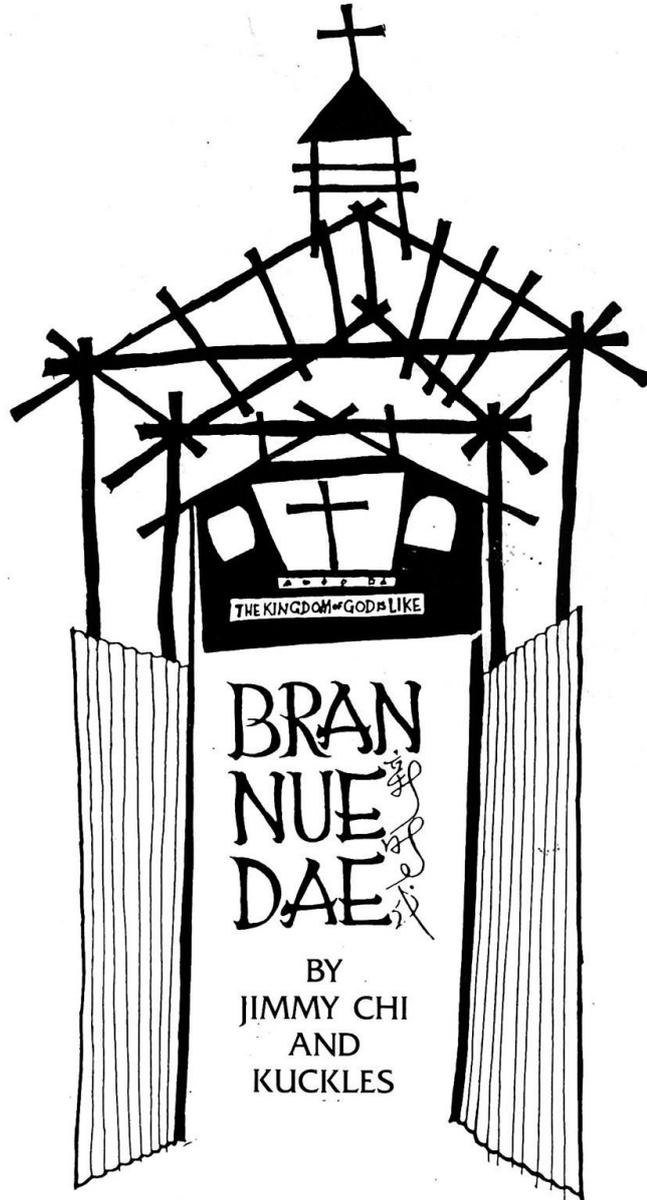
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
A Brief History of Indigenous Theatre in Australia.....	11
From Pre-invasion to Genocide: Corroboree .....	12
A Brief History of Indigenous Theatre in Australia (Part 2).....	21
From Invasion to Self-Determination .....	21
A Brief History of Indigenous Theatre in Australia (Part 3).....	27
<b>Chapter 2.....</b>	<b>38</b>
History of Broome.....	38
Pre-Contact History .....	39
Contact History: Pearlring and Pastoralism to 1900.....	41
History of Broome (Part 2).....	48
<b>Chapter 3.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<i>Bran Nue Dae</i> : Contextual Annotations on Act 1 .....	59
<i>Bran Nue Dae</i> : Contextual Annotations on Act 2 .....	70
<b>Chapter 4.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<i>Corrugation Road</i> : Contextual Annotations.....	81
<b>Chapter 5.....</b>	<b>96</b>
The Road Trip .....	96
<b>Chapter 6.....</b>	<b>111</b>
Conclusion: Hybridity and Healing.....	111
<b>Postscript: The Film .....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>121</b>



FESTIVAL OF PERTH  
1990  
THE MYER FESTIVAL

BRAN NUE  
DAE  
PRODUCTIONS

THE WESTERN  
AUSTRALIAN  
THEATRE  
COMPANY



BRAN NUE DAE