

2006 Neil Curnow Award Announced

Local actor Hew Parham has been announced as the winner of the annual Neil Curnow Award, worth \$10,000. The Independent Arts Foundation Awards Coordinator Marjorie Fitz-Gerald will present theatre-training award to Hew at an IAF dinner on June 10 at the Hyatt Hotel, Adelaide.

Hew Parham graduated from Flinders University Drama Centre in 2001. At the 2002 Adelaide Fringe Festival Hew was a core member of Adelaide's *Berlin Cabaret*, which won the Fringe Award for Best Cabaret, Messenger Light Year Awards for Best Cabaret and The Adelaide Critics Circle Award for Innovation. The show continued to run for three years until December 2004.

Hew has also performed in the acclaimed one-man show *The Idiot*, film *Travelling Light* and a cabaret of Tom Waits songs *My History of Obsession with Tom Waits*. He has featured in three plays by local writer/director Sean Riley, *Pounding Nails into the Floor with my Forehead*, *Significant Others*, and *Boo!* with Windmill Performing Arts. *Pounding Nails into the Floor with my Forehead* was presented at the 2004 Melbourne Fringe where Hew won the Best Spoken Word Performance Award

The Neil Curnow Award will enable Hew to study at the Hunter Gates Academy of Physical Theatre in St Albert, Alberta, Canada. "Being an actor means to continuously search for new ways to extend my skills in as many areas as possible," says Hew. "The Hunter Gates Academy can give me the challenges I need to progress and develop."

The one-year full time course at the Hunter Gates Academy of Physical Theatre is devoted to the development of fundamental skills, leading into an intensive focus on performance and creative development. The course has a focus on using physical traditions of the past, from tragic to the comedic, combined with observations of everyday life.

This award is made possible through the generous bequest of the late Neil Curnow and is open to acting graduates from Flinders University Drama Centre and Adelaide Centre for the ARTS. It allows the recipient to undertake further study interstate or overseas.

In the 1950s South Australian born Neil Curnow left Australia to study theatre in the UK and the USA. After some years acting and directing in British Repertory he returned to Adelaide to teach drama. In 1974 he left Australia again to spend 16 years in Papua New Guinea teaching English and drama as personal development. He returned to Adelaide in 1990, pursuing acting engagements, undertaking several minor film roles, commercials and voice-overs, while running his own Speech and Presentation Studio.

Neil Curnow made provision for the award in his Will, which was enacted after his death in December 2002. In his Will he wrote, "I feel I have had a fortunate life, and a life greatly enriched and coloured by my time in theatre, and my time in the company of theatre people. This was promoted by a number of awards, grants, scholarships, and other assistances in my early years in theatre, allowing me experiences and giving me skills I could not otherwise have afforded. This award is my way of passing on something of those generosities to another generation."

The Neil Curnow Award is administrated by the Independent Arts Foundation in collaboration with the Helpmann Academy and Arts SA.

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