



SHELAGH MAGADZA Theatre Warrior

The War of The Roses will be performed at His Majesty's Theatre from Friday, February 27, until Thursday, March 12. Nostalgia will be performed at Pavilion Six of the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre, Friday, February 13, until Saturday, February 21. Bookings can be made through the Perth Festival website perthfestival.com.au or by calling (08) 9484 1133.

Speaking from the back of a taxi as she zooms through the streets of Sydney, Perth International Arts Festival director Shelagh Magadza tries to catch her breath as she relays the excitement of having just attended the Australian premiere of theatrical epic *The War of The Roses*, at the Sydney Festival, the previous night. "It's faaaaantastic!" reveals Magadza, before continuing to share her joy. "I'm so humbled, and very excited that it's coming to Perth. It condenses eight plays, and it's a very convoluted plot in the middle, where everyone's politicking and fighting. But it's articulated so clearly, making it very accessible to people who don't know the plays."



The eight hour long theatre piece, starring Sydney Theatre Company's Cate Blanchett, will make its premiere in Perth as part of the Perth International Arts Festival this February. In Magadza's opinion, "The play went very quickly. There wasn't a moment there when I was thinking 'Hmm when's it going to end?'. The whole time I was wondering what was going to happen next." This is no doubt good news for Perth theatregoers questioning their ability to sit still for the Shakespeare-a-thon. Yet more importantly, because the play was a joint commission of the Sydney and Perth Festivals, says Magadza, "The War of The Roses has given Australian artists, such as the play's director Benedict Andrews, and script writer Tom Wright - whom are both exciting, young, creative minds that are defining where theatre's going in this country - the potential to create new work, that is as amazing in quality and integrity as acts halfway around the world."

It looks like Magadza is doing a fair share of 'defining' herself, flying to Japan in June of last year to bring Yukichi Matsumoto's jan jan opera, *Nostalgia*, to Perth, so that Western Australians can experience, most likely for the first time, this incredibly unique style of opera. *Nostalgia* is unlike anything fans of Western operas have seen before. "Jan Jan is a style of theatre making that nobody will be familiar with at all," Magadza explains, "The first ten minutes everybody will be sitting there going 'What is going on?' Then, once you realise what Matsumoto's language is, you get sucked up by the magic into this great, big world."

Taking its emphasis on movement from the avant-garde Japanese dance form *butoh*, jan jan opera is based on "repetitive movements, using both chance and physicality" clarifies Magadza, before suggesting that watching *Nostalgia* "Will require a bit of an open mind, and an open heart. The thing about Matsumoto's work is that it is very filmic, it's performed in an incredibly visual way. The way he sets the stage also drives the narrative along in a way that increases your understanding of the piece."

Nostalgia also provided Magadza with one of her biggest logistical challenges of the PIAF festival, having to transport over an incredibly large scale cast, as well as having to build a stage in Perth's convention centre, as the *Nostalgia* set was too big for the original venue. "Our technical team are peddling furiously at the moment to make it all happen," finishes Magadza, stepping out of the taxi, and into what looks like a very busy summer of theatre indeed.

JANE MARSHALL