

Learn a language while seeing a show!

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Arts Hub coverage of the Ninti Launch April 2006.

Arts Hub

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If you ever wanted to combine your love for languages, and your love for theatre, now's your chance! Ngapartji Ngapartji theatre arts project invites the audience to learn Pitjantjatjara online. The six-month course takes about one hour per week of your time, and once you've finished, you will be able to attend the project in Melbourne.

The performance, Ngapartji Ngapartji (Naa-par-gee), was presented in a sell-out season in Melbourne as a work-in-progress. Now it will be presented as a full-scale production at the 2006 Melbourne International Arts Festival, followed with a tour to Perth in 2007. The intergenerational language-based theatre event began in Alice Springs. Pitjantjatjara is a central desert language spoken by roughly 2500 people, and is one of more than 500 Indigenous dialects that face extinction; the dialects made up roughly 250 languages, and 55 of these are now lost to the ages. The Pitjantjatjara term Ngapartji means reciprocity and exchange; I give you something, you give me something. This reciprocity is what the performers hope to encourage.

The event is created by BighART, with performer Trevor Jamieson telling his family story, and explores the problems of preserving Indigenous languages. The first time it came to Melbourne, the performance team set out to teach people on the street and in the theatre Pitjantjatjara words and phrases. A series of language lessons were presented on stage, with two thirds of the audience attending five consecutive nights of performance.

Now, audiences can take part in learning the language from young people and elders, before attending the show, which will be performed entirely in Pitjantjatjara.

Alex Kelly, the project's Creative Producer, said: "Technology has made it possible to enter into a relationship with the Pitjantjatjara community. We are made to feel welcome and become part of this unique online experience to learn Pitjantjatjara, participate in its preservation and to enrich our experience of the Ngapartji Ngapartji performance. In the true spirit of the meaning of Ngapartji Ngapartji - I give you something, you give me something - we exchange the time to hear deeply and clearly this personal experience of contemporary Australian life while keeping this beautiful language alive."

All are welcome to enrol for the course that is expected to start on the 24th April 2006. For more information, visit www.ngapartji.org.