

(Edited)

By Laura Money

*Tim Brain is the innovative co-founder of From The Hip Productions and a teacher at Murdoch University. Born out of a desire to work with young theatre-makers, Tim and his performers devised The Hostage – a taught thriller with all the twists and turns usually found in its filmic counterpart.*

I wanted to work with this group of actors – here at Murdoch there are some quite extraordinary actors coming through, and there's a group of four that I really wanted to work with. I kept wanting to do something with them that would allow them to stretch themselves, to give them more experience, something dramatic, something they hadn't done before, characters they hadn't been able to play.

I had a basic plan of where I wanted to start and finish, and between the five of us, we workshopped it and pooled our ideas, and thought about where we'd like to see these characters go. Then I took all of that workshop material and went away and wrote the script and came back and we workshopped it a little more, and changed this and changed that – then I'd go away and write a bit more.

So it's my script but it's still essentially a devised play. They all had very much an input into the work itself, which is great because we all have ownership over it as well.

One of the things we've been so successful in here at Murdoch in the last five or six years is, creating what we like to call "theatre makers." They actually devise their own theatre, they write their own theatre, and create their own theatre. I wanted to introduce this group to that – and have them become creators of their own work, and in control of their own work.

I just wanted to stretch them again so that they can experience different styles and genres of theatre. I think there's something visceral for an audience in the thriller genre, we see it a lot in the movies but it's not used very much in theatre. There's something about being in the room, live, where things that are extraordinary are happening. Is someone getting killed? Are these things happening? And they're happening right in front of you, it increases the blood flow and gets the juices flowing, and hopefully we can get the audience really excited by what they're seeing. It's a lot more difficult than a movie, because you can't have jump cuts, and big sound tracks, and things screaming out at you, so you have to really craft it a lot better to get the audience in the right headspace to feel the thrill. Hopefully they will, this one is a kind of psychological thriller as well. There are a lot of twists and turns in this story – what happens at the beginning is not necessarily what happens at the end.

I suppose what we're trying to do is play on assumptions that the audience makes, we're playing with the audience, you know giving a red herring, giving the audience an idea of what's going on without actually saying what's going on, you've got to make sure that you explain what's going on without hitting people over the head with it, it's a delicate balancing act.

In a way, it's down to the actors' ability to get that message across and then it comes back to why we chose this genre. It challenges them – it's something that pushes them. It's a genre that people don't do a lot, that psychological drama/thriller, so it's good to have them experiment with that, and understand what's required in the genre.

I think they're a brilliant group of young actors – but they're still only first and second year students. When you see them, you'll be quite amazed, they do some beautiful work.

## **About writer/director Tim Brain**

Many, many years ago he studied theatre at Murdoch University, back in the eighties and got a degree in Theatre and Media, then in the nineties, with his wife, they started their own company called From The Hip Productions. They do all kinds of things – theatre work, film work, they put a feature film together which was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award, they've done a variety of plays, worked with companies like 20th Century Fox, Sony and Disney and pitched movie ideas to Hollywood studios.

Eventually, though Tim just wanted to come back to theatre, so when the opportunity came up he came back to teaching and has never really looked back. He really enjoys working with students and helping them get better, that's what it's all about.

He hopes to provide young theatre makers with opportunities, to allow them to grow and experiment and really that's what this piece is about – providing these actors the opportunity to show everybody what they can do