

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The services of Suzanne Spinner and Peter Cope-
man generously donated by the Northern Territory
Government Office of the Arts.

This project is assisted by the Literary Arts
Board and the Creative Development Unit of the
Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council,
the Federal Government's Arts Funding and Advisory
Body.

Darwin Theatre Group is assisted by the Perform-
ing Arts Board of the Australia Council and the
Northern Territory Government Office of the Arts.

Dr Bob McDonald, Vietnam Veterans Counselling
Service

Di Knox
Glenda Strippling
Steve Wallace
Bob Roberts
Dick Lowe
Jock Rutherford
Tony Wyles



W.O. Graham Brammer, Norforce
Paul Myhill

Buu and Anh Nguyen
Son, Nuung and Quynagiao Nguyen
Thien Le

Sylvia Langford
Jane Carpenter

Mary Hickson
Cameron Thompson
Roger Woods



Grateful thanks to Neil Benton and David Hemmings
and the Royal Australia Artillery Association.

DARWIN THEATRE GROUP



PRESENTS



D	U	S	T			
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V	I	E	T	N	A	M

a staged reading of
4 new plays by DTG writers

WAR MUSEUM GUN EMPLACEMENT

9/10/88

BACKGROUND

DUST OFF VIETNAM is the result of a collaborative writing process undertaken by members of Darwin Theatre Group.

The initial aim of DUST OFF... was to provide local theatre group members with the opportunity to develop their play-wrighting skills through the creation of a play on Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.

Originally the project was launched under the co-ordination of Peter Copeman, and in the six month period December 1987 to May 1988, initial research was commenced.

Suzanne Spinner and Gordon Williams came into the project in August of this year. The scenarios and texts of the plays you are 'seeing' tonight have all been finalized in that time.

An early decision made in August was to bring the subject matter within the experiences and/or interests of the participating writers. Initially the project was to have been based on Terry Burstall's The Soldier's Story, an account of a participant in the battle of Long Tan.

In the process 'the team' has established close relations with the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service and as a result the plays now have a strong domestic base.

Each writer was encouraged to develop his/her own scenario and thus the concept of a single committee-devised full length play has been modified to produce four discrete, consecutive yet interlinked play-lets.

"Dust Off Vietnam"

DUST OFF VIETNAM was developed by a Writing Group of members of the Darwin Theatre Group under the guidance of, and contribution of, a Facilitating Writer, Dramaturg and the workshop actors.

Writing Group Members:

Elisabeth Abbott
John Jenkins
Tina Stubbs

Workshop Actors:

Ken Conway
Terry Kenwick
Tessa Pauling
Rebecca Riggs
Christine Wyatt

Facilitating Writer: Gordon Williams

Dramaturg: Suzanne Spinner

NOTE ON THE TITLE

"Dust Off" refers to the evacuation by helicopter of soldiers in the field. It was a term used in the Vietnam War and is used here with a double meaning, referring to the dusting off of the twenty years since that conflict.

THE CONSCRIPT WHO ASKED NO QUESTIONS

by John Jenkins

The Conscript: Terry Kenwick
Gordon Williams

THE PROTESTOR WHO THOUGHT SHE WAS RIGHT

by Tina Stubbs

(One scene: Darwin, 1987)

Julia: Tessa Pauling
Sam: Rebecca Riggs
My-Van: Christine Wyatt
'Vic': Terry Kenwick

THE VETERAN WHO COULDN'T FORGET

by Gordon Williams

(Five scenes: 1. Mindil beach and market
2. Ministerial Offices, Darwin
3. Peter's home
4. Nguyen's home
5. Heavily timbered scrub near Darwin, 1988)

Victoria: Rebecca Riggs
Peter: Ken Conway
The Minister: Gordon Williams
Mr Nguyen: Terry Kenwick
The girl: Christine Wyatt

THE WOMAN WHO DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW

by Elisabeth Abbott

(Three scenes: 1. Melbourne, 1966
2. Darwin, 1970
3. Alice Springs, November 1983)

Laura: Rebecca Riggs
Jane: Tessa Pauling
Malcolm: Gordon Williams
Paul: Ken Conway
[Dave:
[Bob: Terry Kenwick
[Jake:
Lee: Christine Wyatt
The Magistrate: Ken Conway

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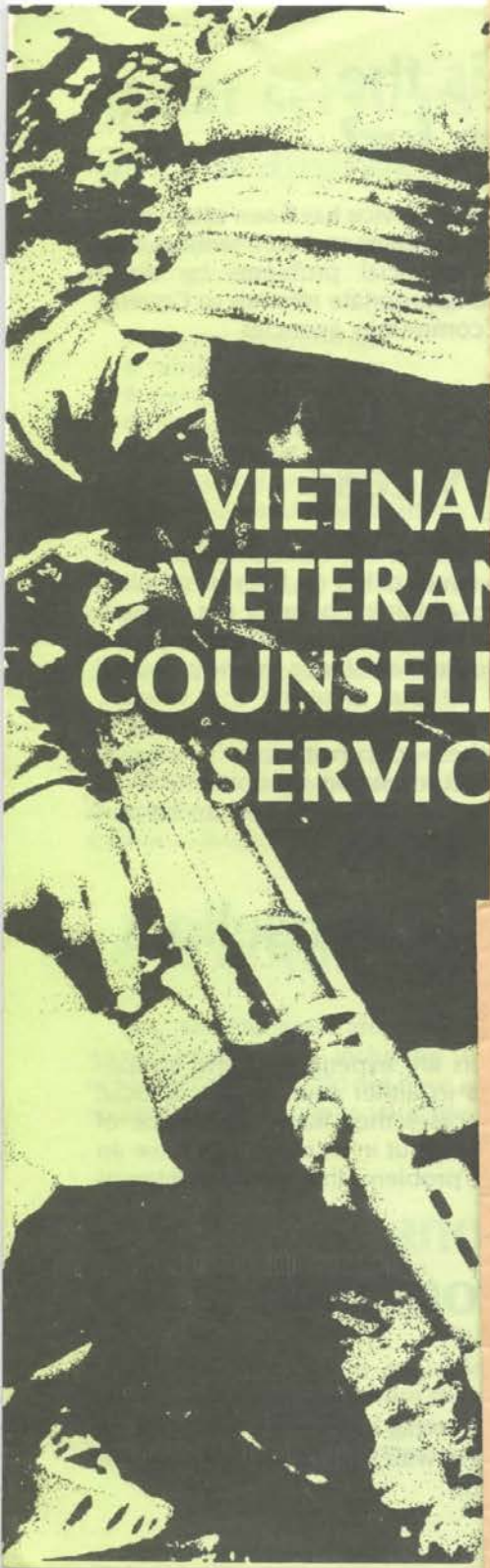
DIRECTORS: Ken Conway
Suzanne Spinner
Rebecca Riggs

DESIGN/
STAGING: Suzanne Spinner

LIGHTING: Tom Lewis

OPERATION: Val Witt





**VIETNAM
VETERAN
COUNSELLING
SERVICE**



DTG actor Terry Kenwick rehearsing at East Point Gun Turrent - for "Dust Off Vietnam".

New playwrights "dust off Vietnam"

The setting is Darwin, 1988, and four people are looking back at their whereabouts and feelings during the turbulent Vietnam War period.

A once-devout protester has come to recognise the suffering of those who fought in the war. A soldier still relives the horror of his jungle combat.

The time and place are far removed from the conflict which ended 15 years ago, but the Darwin Theatre Group's latest project - "Dust Off Vietnam" - will show the topic of the war is still relevant to locals.

The play is a series of four sketches devised by Darwin-based writers and tackles the personal views of the Vietnam War from both soldier and civilian perspectives.

The novice playwrights have drawn on their own recollections of the conflict and project co-ordinator/facilitating writer Gordon Williams says four very different stories have emerged.

Mr Williams said the sketches - which will be read at a special one-off event - should appeal to a wide audience.

He said people would be able to identify with the setting even if they were not directly involved in the war.

"There is a large number of veterans in the Top End. It's also the only place in the country where war has actually touched," he said.

The play, which was inspired by Terry Burstall's "The Soldier's Story", will be performed by actors Rebecca Riggs, Terry Kenwick and Ken Conway.

Renown writer Suzanne Spinner, whose play "Running Up A Dress" received acclaim earlier this year, has been working with the group as dramaturg or overseer to strengthen the play-writing skills.

Ms Spinner said she had never worked with a group of writers on a project before and found the process most interesting.

"This was an unusual situation and I thought if there were going to be four people wanting to write there shouldn't be a sense of them trying to compete with one another," Ms Spinner said.

"The only perimeter I set up was for them to each write 20 or 30 minutes worth of material, rather than one play - which was the original idea."

Ms Spinner said while there had been some editing involved, the writing had been extremely creditable and some playwriting talent had been uncovered.

The project, which has been funded by the Performing Arts and Literary boards of the Australia Council and the NT Office of the Arts, will culminate in a public playreading at the beginning of National Arts Week.

"Dust Off Vietnam" will be read at the East Point War Museum, Fannié Bay, on Sunday, October 9, 7pm.