

This summary is part of research on performance training in Australia undertaken by Professor Peta Tait and Dr Melanie Beddie in 2017 funded by La Trobe University. It researched the influences on, and the training of, prominent teachers working within key training institutions circa 1980 to 2010.

Aarne Neeme

Aarne Neeme was Head of Theatre at Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) from 1985 to 1989 where he taught acting and theatre history alongside colleagues, Lisle Jones and Chris Edmund. There he first encountered the work of Robert Benedetti which was to become an important influence. Neeme set up the inaugural theatre studies course at the University of Singapore in 1992 where he was a Senior Fellow. He has also taught screen acting at Adelaide College of the Arts and Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) and directed training productions at Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI), Singapore. From 1994 to 1995 he was artistic director of the Actors Centre, Sydney.

Neeme's approach to actor training is influenced by reading the work of Stanislavski and of Michael Chekov. He combines this with an interest in the movement vocabulary of Rudolf Laban and improvisational games as devised by Viola Spolin.

Born in Germany into an Estonian family, Neeme moved to Australia when he was four years old. He initially trained as a dancer and performed with the National Theatre Ballet Company. From 1963 to 1965 he was a fulltime member of the Emerald Hill Theatre Company in South Melbourne and was trained in acting and mentored by Wal Cherry. In 1966 he joined the newly established Drama Department at University of New South Wales (UNSW) where he was taught by Phillip Parsons and was a student alongside Rex Cramphorn. At UNSW he became involved with the Drama Society and began directing and teaching workshops as well as acting.

Neeme's extensive professional directing career encompasses being Resident Director at Nimrod Theatre Co. 1971-72, and Artistic Directorships of the National Theatre Company, Perth, and Hole in the Wall Theatre, Perth and the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, Newcastle. He has directed productions at numerous major theatre companies in Australia, Singapore and New Zealand. In 1978 Neeme received a Churchill Fellowship to travel to Europe and the UK. Neeme was awarded an Order of Australia (AM) in 2013.

