

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.

John Bolton

In 1991, John Bolton founded the John Bolton Theatre School which teaches a theatre-making and performing curriculum based on the work of Jacques Lecoq. This school runs in both Australia and in New Zealand where Bolton has a number of professional relationships including as a visiting director at Toi Whakaari, The New Zealand Drama School. Bolton was Head of Acting at Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) from 2002 to 2005 working closely with Lindy Davies who was then Head of Drama. During this time Bolton was awarded a VCA Arts Teaching Excellence Award.

Bolton was born in England and educated at Rickmansworth Grammar School where his interest in the performing arts was fostered. The nearby Watford Palace Theatre also provided inspiration through a theatre -in-education programme. He viewed the work of Marcel Marceau, Tadeusz Kantor, Steven Berkoff and the Shared Experience Company which provided important influences. Bolton has been resident in Australia since the mid-1980s. Awarded a senior fellowship by the Australia Council, Bolton is an accomplished actor and director and a key actor trainer whose approach focuses on the creation of highly physicalised performances.

John Bolton trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, 1969-71, where he was taught by mime artist Ben Bennisson. From 1977 to 1979 he trained further at L'École International de Théâtre with Jacques Lecoq. During the 1980s Bolton was Director of Theatre at the Theatre Workshop, Edinburgh which at that time created works for children. He also co-founded Artworks, creating large-scale works in Britain and Europe, and he has toured with the experimental theatre group, Welfare State.

Bolton's engagement with Zen Buddhism, and in particular his training with Ekai Korematsu Osho, the Abbot of Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community, is a strong influence on his approach to performance training.

