

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. Interview with Peta Tait 15 November 2018.

Julie Holledge

Julie Holledge was the artistic director of the performance training course at the Drama Centre, Flinders University, from 1981 to 2010. Holledge directed over twenty productions and is internationally recognized for her scholarship on Henrik Ibsen’s writings, feminist theatre, and intercultural theatre; she was made a Professor of Drama in 2000. Holledge’s training at Bristol University and with Old Vic Theatre School teachers, was a combination of intellectually rigorous theoretical studies and a thorough training in physical and vocal techniques applicable to multiple stage and screen genres.

Holledge trained in performance (stage and screen) at the University of Bristol 1969–1972 in the first specialist drama programme at a British university. Professional directors and Old Vic School teachers provided the actor training components of the course; theoretical influences included Meyerhold, Brecht, and Freud. From 1972 until 1981, Holledge worked within the British alternative theatre movement, and major influences included German political theatre and Brecht, and feminist theatre. She joined the Women’s Theatre Group and was its first director from 1978 to 1981.

Holledge’s mother, June Myles, studied acting at the Royal Academy of Music in the 1930s. She was trained in new performance techniques imported from Russia, particularly through the work of Theodore Komissarzhevski, and was taught a British tradition of characterization that originated with the eighteenth-century actor, David Garrick. Holledge’s early understanding of the actors’ craft came from Myles, and it led her to adopt a technical approach to the teaching of physical and vocal transformation, which was further mediated by exposure to Australian culture and Asian theatre forms.

Holledge seeks to develop the professional performer by asking the student: how do you want your audience to think and respond? Her approach derives from theatre semiotics and combines a view from the auditorium with a view from the stage. It draws on diverse western and non-western techniques to provide actors with a ‘tool kit’ to shape the meanings in their performances and the accompanying theoretical studies changed over time to reflect contemporary discourses

