

Vanishing Point

Philippe Genty delivers a new work to the stage. By Ruby Boukabou



It's the day before the Sydney premiere of *Vanishing Point* and the Philippe Genty Company are about to project their magic onto the city. In a Franglais phone conversation with Brag, Artistic Director Genty, the master of visual theatre, reflects on his theatrical journey with Australia.

Genty's voice is not as you'd expect from one with a reputation for driving a work so dynamically - it is not harsh or direct but warm, soft and full of tales that he wanders and meanders into chuckling and openly sharing.

It was in 1963 as a 20yr old that Genty first arrived in Australia. In Freemantle, authorities stopped him and his French entourage for their little French car- "It looked like a tin. They didn't believe it was a real car and had to call to France to check...." In the meantime, six months went by and Genty and friends managed to get funded by their adult education school to tour, with the Tin, to the northern territory. "At the time no companies went where we did, across deserts and far north." It was probably during this tour that he fell in love with the country... and developed some of his inventive thinking that transposes into theatre and illusion. "We were crossing the desert and ran out of petrol... (he laughs)... we had some bananas and used them in the petrol tank to get us to the other side- it worked."

Since the 'tin' expedition, Genty has toured globally many times. It was for the project *Stowaways* that he returned to Australia to create. "Rob Brookman kept asking me to come... I was not sure so I said 'ok in two years'- thinking he would forget ..." but two years came and Brookman kept up his demands so Genty fulfilled his promise and arrived in Australia for the creation. "It was a long journey inside. A dreamscape." Nine months of dream analysis created the "in" to the piece that Genty describes as being set in our world yet a world beyond; and that toured the world to sell out big theatres with wonderful reviews.

After opening night of *Vanishing Point*, while his company works around Australia, Genty will return to France to work on the next production, "La Fin de Terre"- the End of the Earth.

Working with a mixed race cast and crew, Genty finds Australian performers enriching. "They have a vitality that sometimes Europeans lack." The mixed bag of creatives in any case is working for him.

Vanishing Point opens plays in Sydney till July 31. "Six actors, a host of puppets and a cascade of stunning visual effects on a grand scale combine to create a unique universe that is constantly surprising, full of humour."