

# Culture in the balance

By SARAH THOMAS

**W**HILE it is important to familiarise Australia's youth with the arts, for some groups naturalistic theatre may be a bit too much to grasp. Many of the younger inhabitants of Aboriginal lands in the north of the country, in particular, are not familiar with theatre.

Some of them don't speak English, which is why local performers Caroline Daish and Stephen Noonan have devised a spectacular physical theatre work to take to the Northern Territory.

The work, called *Soft Crash*, has no dialogue but Daish says it speaks volumes about the value of friendship and growth as an individual. Relying heavily on their mime and circus skills, the couple has devised the work which tells the story — through movement — of two people and their journey towards independence. The characters rely on each other for support mentally and physically in their growth.

The seven performances, running from today until May 17, will be held outside against the stunning backdrop of the Pitjantjatjara lands.

Daish and Noonan say that if this tour goes well, they will tour rural South Australia.

They have worked together previously with such innovative local companies as Slack Taxi and Restless Dance.

"We wanted to do a two-hander physical theatre show different from those of Slack Taxi," Daish explains. "We had worked together under the direction of Jen Martin and she had directed real cabaret physical theatre.

We wanted to try more of a dance piece." Working as freelance performers, the two approached the Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal Lands Schools, which agreed to buy the show.

Daish and Noonan will also conduct workshops in movement with the students.

These students, Daish explains, have had not much more than television in the way of entertainment in the past few years.

"I think you need a balance where you are not just looking at the outside world via television but having people from other places come to you," she says. It's also important for people who live in the city to go out to these rural areas. It's going to be a big eye opener for us." Daish says the Aboriginal children should associate well with this kind of theatre. "I don't think a piece of naturalistic drama would go down too well," she says.

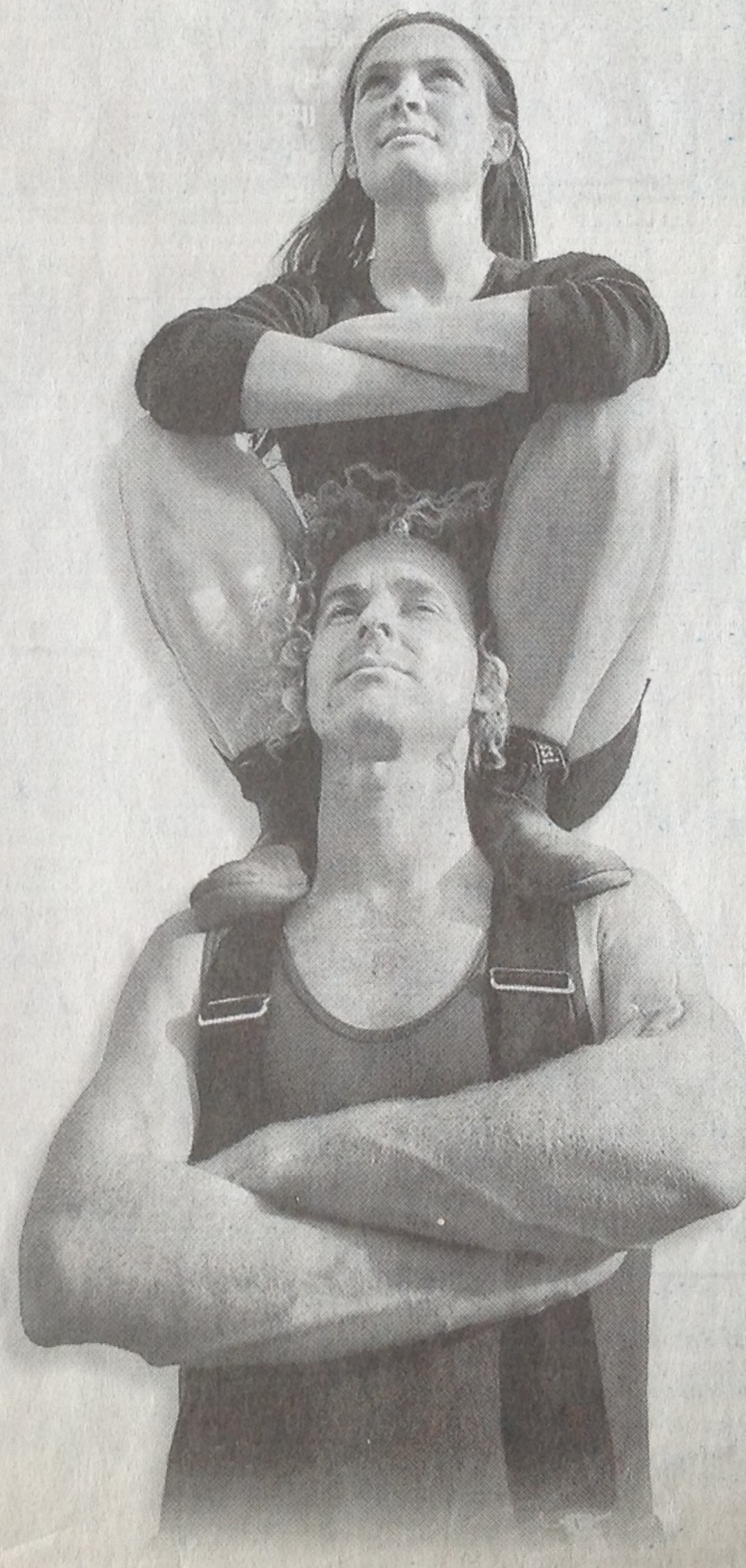
Daish says she is keen to go up north because "I have toured around the metro area a lot with Patch (youth theatre company)".

"I just wanted to see a different culture to give me perspective in a different part of Australia," she says. "It's easy to get tied up in what you are doing here and now."

And if there is a message to be found in *soft crash*, it is a message of friendship.

"Going from dependence to independence with friends, using that relationship you have with another person," she says.

◀ Relying heavily on their mime and circus skills, the couple has devised the work which tells the story — through movement — of two people and their journey towards independence ▶



Performers Caroline Daish and Stephen Noonan. Picture: Grant Nowell.