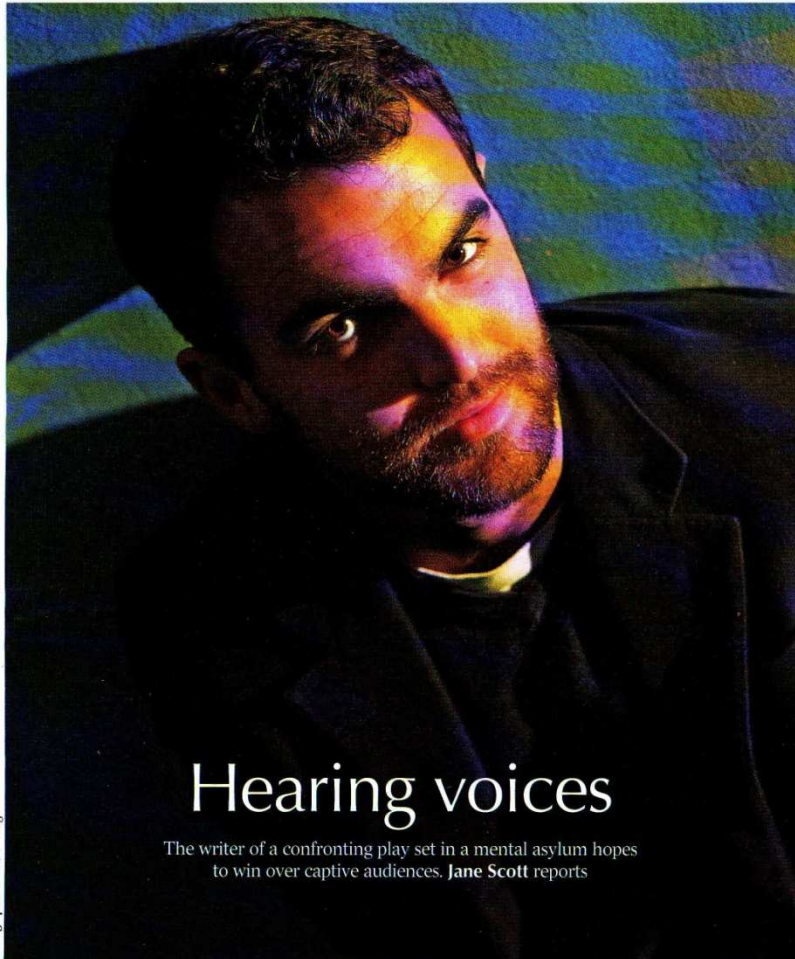


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'Portrait' focus: David Burton, JUMP mentee 2010



on portrait

Queensland playwright David Burton describes theatre as "a kind of direct IV line of communication with people", and while he's only 23, communication is a skill he's been working on his whole life.

"I was brought up in a world where communication was a daily challenge and adventure," says David, who was raised in Toowoomba with twin brothers, now 21, who have Asperger's Syndrome. "I understood that if I was going to have a relationship with them, I needed to reach out and see what I could learn from them.

"I become angry with others who don't give them that same respect, in terms of just giving them the time to communicate what they need to communicate."

His frustration fuels his latest play, *Furious Angels*. Set in a mental asylum in the 1930s, it's a one-man play about five characters, including one who speaks only in quotes from Shakespeare.

"The most direct personal connection in the play is the character who speaks in Shakespeare, because 90 per cent of what my brothers say comes from TV and film, which they're obsessed with. It's not that what they're saying has any less worth [than what we say], it's just said differently," says David.

From the subject matter to the setting, this play has presented a challenge for David, who's been writing consistently since he was a theatre arts student at the University of Southern Queensland and was ready for something completely different.

"*Furious Angels* was about being as bold as possible," he says. "With one actor playing five characters, you have a lot of balls in the air, and it has to be possible and plausible. "The story is basically a comic love triangle, but there's a lot of history in there too. I was interested in learning about mental health treatments at that time, how we have and haven't progressed. Once I had that background, the story came easily."

The ultimate challenge, of course, is seeing how the audience responds.

"Theatre is my preferred medium because it's the most direct and confrontational way to entertain," says David. "It's difficult to leave a play once you've sat down, so, if you're good at [playwriting], it's the quickest way to get a laugh, summon tears, or to touch people. I really like sitting with an audience and being on that journey with them."

FURIOUS ANGELS, Nov 3-20, from \$12, Metro Arts, 109 Edward St, city, ph: 3002 7100. www.metroarts.com.au