

HIP-HOP GETS GRANT

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SYDNEY'S **Death Defying Theatre** (DDT) will stage a huge youth arts event next year in four car parks around the suburbs of Auburn, Bankstown, Parramatta and Casula, bringing to the city's western suburbs their very first self-skilled, self-styled and very own Hip Hopera.

Using video screens, hip-hop music on blasting sound systems, especially constructed dance floors and rebuilt cars, Hip Hopera will be a collaborative event between DDT and the young people of the area - especially those from non-English-speaking backgrounds - with performances planned for four consecutive Saturday nights.

Hip Hopera is among several youth performance projects that are recipients of the Australia Council's Community Cultural Development Board round of grants for next year, to be announced today.

DDT's \$26,325 grant will be used to develop Hip Hopera by collaborating with young people using "the relevant forms of their own culture", the **theatre** company's artistic director, Fiona Winning, said yesterday.

"That is, car culture, hip-hop music and video. These are all forms young people here are very familiar with," she said.

"Hip-hop music is really strong here. I would say hip-hop took off here in the western suburbs before it was even known anywhere else in Australia. Though it is American in origin, they picked up on it immediately because it is very urban, it's about discrimination and racism - which they know all about - and there is a kind of freedom of expression in it that doesn't require traditional musical skills."

Winning said cars are also an essential part of the culture. Hip Hopera will include choreographed "synchronised street machine" driving formations in the car parks.

Today's round of grant allocations were cause for a double celebration for Winning. She was one of four people to receive a fellowship from the community arts board to the value of \$35,000.

Dubbing them as "quiet achievers", the board said each fellow had had a profound impact on both the people they work with directly and the wider community. Other recipients were the visual artists Megan Evans and Sally Marsden and the writer Catherine Murphy.