

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

**20 November 2008**

### **Australian actors reveal the reality of 'extraordinary rendition'**

**WHAT: Performances of *Rendition Monologues***

**Scripted by Christine Bacon, with an original score by Michael Edwards**

**WHEN: December 1, 8:00pm, Belvoir St Downstairs, 25 Belvoir St, Surry Hills, NSW  
December 10, 8:00pm, fortyfive Downstairs, 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne**

Actors for Human Rights, the outreach network of London-based iceandfire theatre company, is giving a voice to people who have suffered torture and abuse under the CIA's counter-terror method known as 'extraordinary rendition'. They will be performing their new production *Rendition Monologues* in Melbourne and Sydney with an all-star cast including Marcus Graham and Tom Long.

Extraordinary rendition is the kidnapping and illegal transport of terrorism suspects and others for interrogation in countries with a reputation for torture. A long list of nations, including Australia, has colluded in these rendition flights. Australian citizen Mamdouh Habib was kidnapped in Pakistan and taken to Egypt where he was held and tortured for six months, before being sent to Guantánamo Bay. He is now suing the Australian Government for its complicity in his treatment. *Rendition Monologues* will bring harrowing first-hand testimonies of victims of this practice to Australian audiences.

The Sydney show (December 1) will feature **Marcus Graham, Wayne Blair, Kate Atkinson** and **Damian Walshe-Howling**. Melbourne audiences will have the opportunity to see **Kate Atkinson** along with **Alice Garner, Tom Long, Neil Pigot** and **Syd Brisbane**. The Melbourne show is on December 10 to coincide with the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Christine Bacon, who hails from Melbourne, is the Director of Actors for Human Rights UK. She compiled the script using material available on the public record, including testimonies from four men who are victims of extraordinary rendition. She says:

"Because of the secrecy surrounding this issue, it tends to be cloaked in a conspiracy-theory haze. With *Rendition Monologues*, we want to remind people about the human beings behind the headlines and contribute to a full reckoning of the human rights abuses committed in the name of the 'War on Terror'."

Despite the recent election of Barack Obama and the control of Congress by the Democrats, Ms Bacon says it is yet to be seen whether the US will continue this practice:

"Even if the new administration ceases these practices, we need to ensure these stories are not forgotten and pressure must be brought upon the on the US Government and all other Governments which have colluded with them to conduct a full investigation into the crimes committed."

Bisher al-Rawi, a former Guantánamo prisoner saw one of the first performances of *Rendition Monologues* in London in June. He was deeply affected:

For more information about this press release and interviews with Christine Bacon or Kate Atkinson, please call 0466 622 466 or email [actors@iceandfire.co.uk](mailto:actors@iceandfire.co.uk)  
[www.iceandfire.co.uk/afhr](http://www.iceandfire.co.uk/afhr)

"Really, I am almost lost for words. The show was really very moving, scarily so. The performance really brought it home. I was almost living through their experiences and mine as well."

The two Australian performances are supported by Liberty Victoria, Amnesty International, fortyfive downstairs and Belvoir St Downstairs Theatre.

Actors for Human Rights was formerly known as Actors for Refugees. The original network was formed in Melbourne by *Seachange* stars Kate Atkinson and Alice Garner in September 2001, as a response to the controversial actions taken by the then-Australian Government towards asylum seekers. The UK actors' network was launched in London in June 2006 at the Amnesty International offices and now consists of well over 300 professional actors and musicians. Kate Atkinson says:

"It's been amazing to see how the Actors for Refugees concept has grown and started to take on new and important issues on the international stage. I'm delighted to be involved in these two performances and I hope that it will contribute to a wider discussion about Australian involvement in the 'War on Terror'."

**Tickets are \$20**

**Bookings:** [www.belvoir.com.au](http://www.belvoir.com.au) or **02 9699 3444 (Sydney)**  
[www.fortyfivedownstairs.com](http://www.fortyfivedownstairs.com) or **03 9662 9966 (Melbourne)**

### **Background Notes:**

**iceandfire** creates compelling theatre that makes real and relevant the impact of human rights issues on our everyday lives. The company was founded in 2003 by playwright Sonja Linden inspired by her seven years as writer in residence at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. Over the last six years they have become a theatre company with a distinct, contemporary voice creating work of excellence across our four work strands: production, outreach, education and participation. [www.iceandfire.co.uk](http://www.iceandfire.co.uk).

**Actors for Human Rights** is iceandfire's national outreach network, made up of over 300 professional actors who are dedicated to drawing public attention to a range of contemporary human rights concerns. The performers involved donate their time and their profile to encourage public acceptance of human rights and to give voice to people whose basic human rights have been violated. [www.iceandfire.co.uk/afhr](http://www.iceandfire.co.uk/afhr)

**Liberty Victoria** is one of Australia's leading human rights and civil liberties organizations, campaigning for over 70 years. Liberty works to defend and extend human rights and freedoms in Victoria. [www.libertyvictoria.org.au](http://www.libertyvictoria.org.au)

**Amnesty International** is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights for all. They have more than 2.2 million supporters in more than 150 countries and regions. [www.amnesty.org.au](http://www.amnesty.org.au)

**Michael Edwards** is a London-based Australian composer and pianist who splits his time between composing music for film, co-writing with singers and touring as a keyboard player. Notable credits include co-writing the music for *Whale Rider* (2001) and *Layer Cake* (2004). [www.sonority.tv](http://www.sonority.tv)

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